



International Year of Millets

For Prelims: Millets and its Significance, UNEP FAO, Food Security

For Mains: International Year of Millets 2023 and its Significance

Why in News?

India has shared the vision to make **International Year of Millets 2023** a 'People's Movement' alongside positioning **India as the 'Global Hub for Millets'**.

What is International Year of Millets?

▪ About:

- India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023 was approved by the **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** in 2018 and the **United Nations General Assembly** has declared the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets.
- This was adopted by a United Nations Resolution for which India took the lead and was supported by over 70 nations.

▪ Objectives:

- Awareness of the contribution of millet to **Food Security** and nutrition.
- Inspire stakeholders to improve sustainable production and quality of millets.
- Focus on enhanced investment in research and development and extension services to achieve the other two aims.

What is Millet?

▪ About:

- Millet is a **collective term referring to a number of small-seeded annual grasses** that are cultivated as grain crops, primarily on marginal lands in dry areas in temperate, **subtropical and tropical regions**.
- Some of the common millets available in India are Ragi (Finger millet), Jowar (Sorghum), Sama (Little millet), Bajra (Pearl millet), and Variga (Proso millet).
 - The earliest evidence for these grains has been found in **Indus civilization** and was one of the first plants domesticated for food.
- It is **grown in about 131 countries** and is the traditional food for around 60 crore people in Asia & Africa.
- India is the largest producer of millet in the world.
 - It **accounts for 20 % of global production** and 80% of Asia's production.

▪ Global Distribution:

- **India, Nigeria and China are the largest producers of millets** in the world, accounting for more than **55% of the global production**.
- For many years, **India was a major producer of millets**. However, in recent years, millet production has increased dramatically in Africa.

▪ Significance:

- **Nutritionally Superior:**
 - **Millets are less expensive and nutritionally superior** to wheat & rice owing to their high protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals like iron content.
 - **Millets are also rich in calcium and magnesium.** For example, Ragi is known to have the highest calcium content among all the food grains.
 - **Millets can provide nutritional security** and act as a shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among children and women. Its high iron content can fight high prevalence of anaemia in India women of reproductive age and infants.
- **Gluten-free a low Glycemic Index:**
 - Millets can help tackle lifestyle problems and health challenges such as obesity and diabetes as they are gluten-free and have a low glycemic index (a relative ranking of carbohydrate in foods according to how they affect blood glucose levels).
- **Super Crop at Growing:**
 - Millets are **Photo-insensitive** (do not require a specific photoperiod for flowering) & **resilient to climate change**. Millets can grow on poor soils with little or no external inputs.
 - Millets are **less water consuming** and are capable of growing under drought conditions, under non-irrigated conditions even in very low rainfall regimes.
 - Millets have **low carbon and water footprint** (rice plants need at least 3 times more water to grow in comparison to millets).

What are the Related Initiatives Taken by the Government?

- **Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millet Promotion (INSIMP)**
- **Increase in Minimum Support Price (MSP):** The government has hiked the Minimum Support Price of Millets, which came as a big price incentive for farmers.
 - Further, to provide a steady market for the produce, the government has included millets in the public distribution system.
 - **Input Support:** The government has introduced provision of seed kits and inputs to farmers, building value chains through Farmer Producer Organisations and supporting the marketability of millets.

Infographic on Millet

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to 'Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millets Promotion', which of the following statements is/are correct? (2016)

1. This initiative aims to demonstrate the improved production and post-harvest technologies, and to demonstrate value addition techniques, in an integrated manner, with a cluster approach.
2. Poor, small, marginal and tribal farmers have a larger stake in this scheme.
3. An important objective of the scheme is to encourage farmers of commercial crops to shift to millet cultivation by offering them free kits of critical inputs of nutrients and micro irrigation equipment.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- **'Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millets Promotion' Scheme** aims to demonstrate the improved production and post-harvest technologies in an integrated manner with visible impact to catalyse increased production of millets in the country. Besides increasing production of millets, the Scheme, through processing and value addition techniques, is expected to generate consumer demand for millet-based food products. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Technology demonstrations in compact blocks would be organized in selected districts for four categories of millets – sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet and small millets. Poor, small, marginal and tribal farmers have a larger stake in this scheme. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- There is no such provision to encourage farmers of commercial crops to shift to millet cultivation. **Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**
- **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

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