# Importance of International Year of Millets

## Why in news?

*As proposed by India, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has declared 2023 as International Year of Millets (IYM).*

## What are millets?

- Millets are a group of cereal grains that belong to the *Poaceae* family (grass family).
- Millets are primarily grown during the kharif season in rainfed areas as these crops require less water and agricultural inputs than other cereals.
- It is widely consumed in developing countries of Africa and Asia.
- Millets are rich in dietary fibre and this helps control blood pressure and sugar levels.
- Millets have gained popularity in the West because they are gluten-free and boasts high protein, fiber, and antioxidant contents.
- This crop is also divided into two categories - large and small millets, with major millets being the commonly cultivated varieties.

| **Large millets** | **Small millets** |
|---|---|
| Pearl millet<br>Foxtail millet<br>Proso millet<br>Finger millet (or ragi) | Kodo millet<br>Barnyard millet<br>Little millet<br>Guinea millet<br>Browntop millet<br>Fonio millet<br>Adlay millet (or Job's tears) |

## How has the Indian government taken a lead in spearheading this?

- In 2018, the government had rebranded millets as "Nutri Cereals".
- The government declared 2018 as the National Year of Millets with the objective of generating more production and demand.
- In December 2022, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organised the opening ceremony for the IYM 2023 in Rome.
- The Prime Minister of India aims to make IYM 2023 a 'People's Movement' and also to position India as the 'Global Hub for Millets'.

## What is the government's plan of action?

- The Union Ministries like Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, etc have planned some activities to promote millet production and usage.
- Other than these, some states would carry out specific activities for promotion of IYM

and conduct millet-centric activities.
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will organise Eat Right Melas in Punjab, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) will be participating in a trade show in Belgium where it will showcase the diversity of Indian millets.
- Indian embassies across more than 140 countries will be participating in celebration of IYM during 2023.

## Why is increasing the consumption and production of millets important to India?

- Millets production has great potential to generate livelihoods, increase farmers' income and ensure food and nutritional security, not only in India but also in other parts of the world.
- Unless consumption is increased, the demand will not be generated to motivate farmers for shifting to millets.
- Increasing consumption in India will help improve people's health since millets contain many nutrients and minerals crucial for the human body.
- Production of millets is crucial to promote its consumption and meeting future demand.

## Can the government policies increase millet production in India?

- The Minimum Support Price (MSP) of millets (ragi, bajra and jowar) has been raised by 80-125% between 2013-14 and 2021-22.
- However, their combined production has dropped by 7% to 15.6 million tonnes during the last eight years.
- While Bajra output has been stagnant, both jowar and ragi production has declined.
- This points to the **requirement of policy-level intervention** so that farmers get remunerative prices for millets and their returns become higher than that of crops such as paddy.

## Is there a viable export market for Indian millets?

- The $470-million (in 2021) global millets market is projected to register a CAGR of 4.5% during the 2021-2026 period.
- APEDA has set a target of $ 100 million millet exports by 2023-24 from $64.28 million in 2021-22.

### Reference


1. The Hindu Business Line | How the International Year of Millets will boost Indian millets
2. Healthline | What Is Millet?



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