

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 Foxtail millet Proso millet Finger millet (or ragi)	Kodo millet Barnyard millet Little millet Guinea millet Browntop millet Fonio millet 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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