

## Value addition and nutrition profile of small millets – International year of millets (IYOM-2023)- A review

AMIT TOMAR, A.K. MISHRA, S.P. SINGH, H.H. KHAN, PRACHI PATEL AND R.P. SINGH  
ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Gajraula, Amroha, Directorate of Extension, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture & Technology, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India

Author for correspondence: [-tomarcsa@gmail.com](mailto:-tomarcsa@gmail.com),

### Abstract

*Small-grained cereal grasses are collectively called as 'Millets', being one of the oldest cultivated foods known to humans. There are two main groups of millets first group consist of major millets (sorghum and pearl millet) and second group has small millets this categorization is based on the grain size, this classification is also an indication of the area under cultivation of these crops, but both (major and small millets) have traditionally been the main components of the food basket of the poor people in India, especially in dryland farming system in India and elsewhere.*

**Key words:** Dryland, farming systems, Millets, pearl millet, small grains & sorghum

### Introduction

The group of small millets is represented by six different species, namely finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*), little millet (*Panicum sumatrance*), kodo millet (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), foxtail millet (*Setaria italic*), barnyard millet (*Echinochloa frumentacea*) and proso millet (*Panicum miliaceum*), representing the area grown in that order. Among small millets, finger millet is the most important crop grown in many states of Southern, Central, Eastern, Western and Northern India from sea level to 8000 feet altitude. The loss of area under finger millet has been less on account of improvement in productivity. On the contrary the area under other small millets has reduced by more than half with proportionate reduction in total production. The productivity remained low and stagnant around 450 kg/ha. Recent and accurate statistics regarding each of the small millets is still lacking by far it is clear that more than 60% of area under small millets is occupied by finger millet, distantly followed by little and kodo millets (just above 10%) and followed by barnyard, foxtail and proso millets. Though small millets are grown in almost every state of the India, the distribution of individual

millet is not uniform. The kodo, little and foxtail millets are grown widely in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In Madhya Pradesh, both kodo and little millet are predominant, while foxtail millet is important in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Barnyard millet and proso millet are grown largely in hills of Uttar Pradesh, North-Eastern region and plains of North Bihar and Western Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

### *Properties and nutritional profile*

The small millets are small seeded grains that resemble paddy or rough rice in the morphological features of kernel. The kernel consists of distinct husk, bran and endosperm tissues. Embryo is a distinct tissue, but its proportion in the kernel is around 2%. The husk is non-edible similar to the husk in rough rice or paddy whereas bran may be part of the edible component but is separated to prepare milled millets for food uses. Normally, husk accounts to 15 to 20% of the kernel whereas the bran amount to about 5% and the endosperm to about 75% of the kernel, respectively. These grains are round to oval shaped and their 1000-kernel weight and volume

Table 1: Vernacular names of small millets in different parts of the country

Language	Small millets					
English	Finger millet	Little millet	Kodo millet	Foxtail/Italian millet	Barnyard millet	Proso millet
Hindi	Mandua	Kutki	Kodon	Kangni, Kakum	Sanwa, Jhangon	Barre
Sanskrit	Nandimukhi, Madhuli	-	Kodara	Kanguni	Shyama	Chiná
Kannada	Ragi	Same	Harka	Navane	Oodalu	Baragu
Tamil	Kelvaragu	Samai	Varagu	Tenai	Kuthiravaali	Panivaragu
Telugu	Ragulu	Samalu	Arikelu, Arika	Korra, Korralu Varagalu	Udalu, Kodisama	Varigulu
Malayalam	Moothari	Chama	Varagu	Thina	-	Panivaragu
Marathi	Nachni	Sava	Kodra	Kang, Rala	Shamul	Vari
Gujarati	Nagli, Bavto	Gajro, Kuri	Kodra	Kang	Sama	Cheno
Bengali	Mandua	Kangani	Kodo	Kaon	Shamula	Cheena
Oriya	Mandia	Suan	Kodua	Kanghu, Kora	Khira	Chinna
Punjabi	Mandhuka, Mandhal	Swank	Kodra	Kangni	Swank	Cheena
Kashmiri	-	Ganuhaar		Shol	-	Pingu

Source: www.iimr.com.

Table 2: Nutrient composition of millets compared to fine cereals (per 100 g)

Food gain	Carbo-hydrates (g)	Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Energy (KCal)	Crude fibre (g)	Mineral matter (g)	Ca (mg)	P (mg)	Fe (mg)
Finger millet	72.0	7.3	1.3	328	3.6	2.7	344	283	3.9
Kodo millet	65.9	8.3	1.4	309	9.0	2.6	27	188	0.5
Proso millet	70.4	12.5	1.1	341	2.2	1.9	14	206	0.8
Foxtail millet	60.9	12.3	4.3	331	8.0	3.3	31	290	2.8
Little millet	67.0	7.7	4.7	341	7.6	1.5	17	220	9.3
Barnyard millet	65.5	6.2	2.2	307	9.8	4.4	20	280	5.0
Sorghum	72.6	10.4	1.9	349	1.6	1.6	25	222	4.1
Bajra	67.5	11.6	5.0	361	1.2	2.3	42	296	8.0
Wheat (whole)	71.2	11.8	1.5	346	1.2	1.5	41	306	5.3
Rice (raw, milled)	78.2	6.8	0.5	345	0.2	0.6	10	160	0.7

(Source: Nutritive value of Indian foods, NIN, 2007).

range from 1.9 - 5.5 g and 1.3 - 3.8 ml, respectively. The seed coat and husk of foxtail, little and proso millet are generally of single entity with glossy appearance whereas kodo and barnyard millet contain multiple layered seed coat. Normally the seed coat of kodo millet is of brown colour, foxtail millet is yellowish whereas the other millets are greyish coloured. The husk is non-edible and unusually hard to digest similar to the husk in paddy, whereas the bran is edible. To prepare edible items out of millets,

the husk is separated by milling and along with that generally, the bran is also separated similar to milled rice. Hulling does not affect the nutrient value as the germ stays intact through this process.

Small millets are more nutritious compared to fine cereals. Finger millet is the richest source of calcium (300-350 mg/100 g) and other small millets are good source of phosphorous and iron. The protein content ranges from 7 to 12% and fat content from 1 to 5.0% (Table 2). Comparable to rice and wheat

Table 3: Micronutrient Profile of Millets (mg/100g)

Millets	Mg	Na	K	Cu	Mn	Mb	Zn	Cr	Su	Cl
Foxtail	81	4.6	250	1.40	0.60	0.070	2.4	0.030	171	37
Proso	153	8.2	113	1.60	0.60	-	1.4	0.020	157	19
Finger	137	11.0	408	0.47	5.49	0.102	2.3	0.028	160	44
Little	133	8.1	129	1.00	0.68	0.016	3.7	0.180	149	13
Barnyard	82	-	-	0.60	0.96	-	3	0.090	-	-
Kodo	147	4.6	144	1.60	1.10	-	0.7	0.020	136	11
Sorghum	171	7.3	131	0.46	0.78	0.039	1.6	0.008	54	44
Bajra	137	10.9	307	1.06	1.15	0.069	3.1	0.023	147	39
Rice	90	-	-	0.14	0.59	0.058	1.4	0.004	-	-
Wheat	138	17.1	284	0.68	2.29	0.051	2.7	0.012	128	47

(Source: Nutritive value of Indian foods, NIN, 2007; *MILLET in your Meals*, <http://www.sahajasamrudha.org/>).

or even rich in some of the minerals (Table 3). Similar findings were also observed by Nirmala *et al.* (2000), Lakshmi and Sumathi (2002), Majumdar *et al.* (2006), Malleshi (2007), Pawar and Dhanvijay (2007), Singh *et al.* (2012), Sashi *et al.* (2007).

#### *Declining small millet cultivation*

Even though millets have extraordinary nutritional qualities of grains and capacities of millet farming systems, the acreage under millet production has been shrinking over the last five decades. The period between 1961 and 2009 witnessed significant decrease in cultivated area under millets, more so in case of small millets (80% for small millets other than finger millet, 46% for finger millet). The area under all small millets other than finger millet has declined drastically in all states and the total production of small millets has declined by 76% and the productivity has remained more or less stagnant in the last two decades.

#### *Small millets and nutritional security*

As it becomes clear from the data presented small millets are superior in one or more of the nutritional components compared to most widely consumed cereals, hence contribute towards balanced diet and can ensure nutritional security more easily through regular consumption along with keeping the environment safe as they are low input crops mostly adapted to marginal lands. Declining small millets cultivation has resulted in reduced availability of these nutritious grains to needy

population and also the traditional consumers have gradually switched over to more easily available fine cereals due to government policies. This trend is disturbing which needs focus by the agricultural experts and policy makers. Immediate action on policy-guidelines, market support, value addition and promotional activity are necessary for checking the further decline in cultivation and also in consumption, improving productivity and enhancing demand should be the twin approaches that are to be followed simultaneously, which will ultimately help in promoting the production and consumption of millets. Developing health foods with their proper commercialization needs special focus to promote the millets among the urban elite, which would lead to reduction in life-style related disorders.

These findings were also similar to Edem *et al.* (2001), Begum (2007), Cade *et al.* (2007), Joshi *et al.* (2008), Kang *et al.* (2008), Chaturvedi and Srivastava (2008), Desai *et al.* (2010).

#### *Value added products from small millets*

Millets are one of the oldest food grains known to mankind and possibly the first cereal grain used for domestic purposes. For centuries, millets have been a prized crop in India and are staple diet for nearly 1/3rd of the world's population. They can adapt themselves to marginal soils and varied environmental conditions. Small millets are more than just finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*) and include kodo millet (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), little millet (*Panicum sumatrense*), foxtail millet (*Setaria*

*italic*), proso millet (*Panicum miliaceum*) and barnyard millet (*Echinochloa frumentaceae*). Millets are most commonly available in the form of pearled and hulled kind. Millets are tasty grains that have a mildly sweet, nut-like flavour. Millets are rich sources of protein, dietary fiber, energy and minerals when compared to rice. These millets have diversified high food value but the consumption of these millets has declined for want of standardized processing techniques to compete with fine cereals. Hence an effort was made to increase the utilization of small millets in popular foods which would find ready acceptability with the tag of 'HEALTH FOODS'. Small millet based value added products including traditional recipes, bakery products, pasta products, flaked and popped products instant food mixes were developed and standardized. The products which are commonly prepared by the farmers using cereals were replaced with small millets to increase their utilization.

### Conclusion

Small millets consist of a about a dozen distinct species of small-seeded grasses that are grown for grain, each with their own unique traits and value. The most economically significant of these at present is finger millet, but the other small millets are each in their own way important to the farmers who grow them, and are also potentially important to breeders of other cereals as sources of traits that can improve the resilience and nutritional value of those more widely grown crops. Small millets provide staple food grain for millions of poor smallholders and households in the developing world's harshest, most food insecure regions, such as the Sahel in Africa and in South Asia's semi-arid zone, with feed grain and fodder for the livestock. By default small millets are extraordinarily tolerant to drought and other abiotic stresses, which makes them "climate smart" and a good source for genetic traits that can strengthen the resilience of other crops in the face of climate change. As climate progresses to get hotter and drier, small millets and other dryland cereals will become increasingly well suited for production in areas where other crops are now grown comfortably. Millets in general provide many

essential vitamins and micronutrients that can bolster nutrition for those living in dry-land areas, particularly women and children, where small millets are especially rich in iron, zinc and calcium, and have other dietary qualities that can help stave off anaemia, celiac disease, and diabetes. The millets with exceptionally high nutritional value – coupled with the impressive hardiness against climate change makes them an important food security crops, for humans as well as for livestock.

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