



A Study on How Consumer Perception Affects Consumer Buying behaviour towards Millets Over the Years in India

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a notable shift in consumer preferences towards healthier and sustainable food choices. Millets, often referred to as "nutri-cereals," have gained considerable attention due to their nutritional value, climate-resilience, and potential to address food security challenges. This study basically emphasizes the intricate dynamics of consumer buying behavior concerning millet consumption after declaring 2023 as International Year of Millets (IYM 2023). A sudden discussion around Millets has been gaining a pinnacle of momentum in recent years nationally as well as globally. As a result, it thrives production by creating sustainable and innovative market opportunities for many countries around the world to benefit farmers and consumers globally.

The research adopts a multi-faceted approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It delves into the factors influencing consumers' choices when it comes to purchasing millet-based products, exploring aspects such as health consciousness, environmental concerns, cultural significance, and economic factors. Additionally, the study aims to encourage people to gain awareness about the benefits of millets and initiatives to widespread growth of millets. Stepping into 75th year of Independence, Azaadi ka Amrit Mahotsav commemorates India as a global hub of millets by organizing several campaigns and events to raise mass awareness around millets among people of all age groups. During India's

G-20 presidency, the government is undertaking special efforts to increase distribution of millets under the Public Distribution System (PDS). The government has set Agriculture Research Target for this FY23 increased to 20 lakh crores. In all G20 Summits, India will showcase Millets Based Foodwork. Guidelines are being made to incorporate millets as nutritional options in the food menu. Support will be given for post-harvest value addition, enhancing domestic consumption and branding millets nationally as well as internationally. Government aims at mitigating malnutrition and climate change with the introduction of millets. The parliament has already added millets to their canteen menus to promote its consumption and to honour the year of millets.

The findings of this study showcase the impact of millet awareness on consumer buying behavior and consumption pattern by making a comparison on certain parameters such as actual production, yield, output and exports over the past few years with the current year. Impact of promoting awareness on millets can also be identified easily at global level, a substantial increase in demand for millets has given a push to exports by 45.8% between 2020-21.

Projections can be made that prices of millets will increase in future due to its increasing demand as the market size of millets (Sree Anna) is now increasing gradually. Ultimately, understanding consumer buying behavior towards millets can play a crucial role in promoting healthier, more sustainable food choices and fostering a sustainable agricultural future.

Keywords: Millets, Sustainable, Consumption, Consumer Behavior, Awareness, Health

INTRODUCTION

A sudden increase in the demand for Millets (Sree Anna) is likely to happen over the next few upcoming years. The term 'Millet' originated from the Latin word 'Milum' which means grain. Millet is a group of cereals that belong to the Poaceae family commonly known as the grass family. Basically, millets are a group of small-seeded cereal food crops which are highly nutritious and are grown with less care, inputs, fertility, water etc. These crops largely contribute to food and national security of India specially post COVID-19.

The story of Millets (Sree Anna) can be traced back during the first half of the second Millennium BC in the form of proso millet in Gujarat. Similarly, foxtail was recovered from the earliest strata of Rojdi (Saurashtra) in pre-harappan sites about 2600 BC and are also mentioned in Vedas. Based on area grown and its grain size the millets are classified as major millet and minor millets. The major millets include sorghum (jowar) and pearl millet (bajra). The finger millet (ragi/mandua), foxtail millet (kangni/Italian millet), little millet (kutki), kodo millet, barnyard millet (sawan/jhangora), proso millet

(cheena/common millet), and brown top millet (korale) are categorized under minor millets. Millets were the oldest foods known to humans but their importance and cultivation was reduced due to large scale cultivation of rice and wheat because of urbanization and industrialization.

Before the Green Revolution, millets production was about 40% of all cultivated grains contributing much more than wheat and rice. However, after the revolution, the production of rice doubled (2X) and wheat tripled (3X). Overtime, millets became less attractive to urban and young consumers, they ended up becoming the poor man's food. Today, millets are available as cookies, bars and snacks but packed food contains more refined flour and sugar. People need to gain awareness about the benefits of millets. These grains can survive harsh climate conditions (climate-resilient), can be harvested in dry seasons, require minimal inputs and maintenance cost, rich in proteins, nutrients, iron and fibre, gluten-free with a low-glycaemic index (GI) and promotes a healthy eco-friendly environment. Many people have also forgotten how to cook them. It can be used as a substitute for rice in almost any rice based dish. It can also be used to make porridge, roti, khichdi, upma, dosa and kheer out of millets.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declares 2023 as "International Year of Millets". Today, India is declared as the Global Hub for Millets (Sree Anna) in 2023. For this initiative, ICAR-Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad will be supported as a Centre of Excellence for sharing best practice research & technologies at International level. Hence, there is a dire need to change the consumer perception and behaviour regarding millets. Guidelines must be made to incorporate millets as nutritional options in the food menu. Projections of increase in prices can be inferred as an increase in demand for millets in upcoming years.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Artificial synthesized fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals in food have resulted in an increase in various diseases and reduced immunity of the body. This enormous rise in the usage of chemicals, synthetic fertilizers and industrialization of agriculture has an enormously adverse effect on the environment. Moreover, we can find a significant gap between demand and supply of millets.

A research conducted by Laroche et al., 2001 states that one of the possible solutions to deal with this problem is practicing **organic farming** because it has the ability to tackle all these problems. With increasing worry of food safety and health issues, many consumers have opted for organic products. The main intention is on the factors that affect the behaviour and change the intention of the consumer to buy a particular product. The main research question addressed here are:

- Is attitude related to buying behaviour?
- Do negative perception of millet as a food for the poor people affect the mindset? ➤ Are there any significant changes towards buying behaviour of organic products after the huge pandemic COVID-19 occurred?
- Is this a perfect substitute for wheat and rice? If yes, what are the chances of getting a hike in price due to increase in demand in near future?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to **ICAR – Indian Institute of Millets Research Hyderabad, (2023)**, "The area, production and consumption of millets in India have come down in the recent decades both due to demand side and supply side factors. There lies a significant gap in both the demand and the supply side. On the demand side, the consumption of millets have come down due to increased consumption of other fine cereals, negative perceptions of millets as a food for the poor and policy neglect when compared to other crops. On the supply side, limited productivity of crops and their growing situations and lack of their processing centres in the vicinity which prevents the farmers from realizing additional yield benefits from the improved package of practices and additional income generation".

According to **M Muthamilarasan, A Dhaka, R Yadav, M Prasad - Plant Science, (2016)**, "Protein-energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies contribute to high mortality among a considerable proportion of the current 7.2 billion global populations, especially children. Although poverty and diets poor in nutrition are prime reasons for prevalence of malnutrition, nutritionally dense crops offer an inexpensive and sustainable solution to the problem of malnutrition. Remarkably, millets are nutritionally superior to major non-millet cereals. They especially are rich in dietary fibers, antioxidants, phytochemicals and polyphenols, which contribute broad-spectrum positive impacts to human health."

According to **Ashfaq Ahmed Sabuz et. al, (2023)**, "Daily consumption of the millet diet significantly reduced BP, BMI, BF(%), and fat mass without affecting usual dietary habits. FM might enable the collective effects of dietary fiber, protein, minerals, and micronutrients, reducing fat and cholesterol intake, which eventually reduces BP. This finding might be a methodical benchmark for directing daily consumption of it to reduce BP".

According to **Saleh et al., (2013)**, "Compared to other carbohydrate sources, pearl millet offers agronomic and nutrient availability advantages because it is resistant to adverse environmental conditions, such as low rainfall and intense heat. It is also suitable for growing in soils with low fertility. In addition, its short growing season and ability to resist pests and disease allow pearl millet to be a staple crop in low-income populations.

According to **Abdalla et al., (1998)**, "Millet grains have an average starch content ranging between (53%–70%), fibre (2.6%–4.0%), protein (8%–15%), lipid (2.7%–7.1%) and ash (1.6%–2.4%).

According to **Journal of Business Research, Volume 155, Part B, (January, 2023)**, "Millet based recipes are also gaining popularity among Indians. The rise in lifestyle diseases and increased appreciation for everything traditional has resulted in millets being extensively used in cakes, cookies,

muffins, and crackers (Ganguly, 2018). Millets, once known as the poor man's staple, are now slowly changing their image into something that is "trendy" and "cool." In India's metro cities, it is common to find pizzas, noodles, and mixes for pancakes, cookies, cakes, and many more products based on millets. While quinoa is popular as an alternative healthy ingredient in Western countries (Nosi et al., 2020), millets are often preferred over this and other healthy grains because millets are cheaper to cultivate, gluten-free, and suited to the Indian soil and climate conditions (Sebastian, 2015).

There is a need to restore the lost interest in millets that deserves recognition for its nutritional qualities and potential health benefits in management of diabetes mellitus, obesity and hyperlipidemia (Ranjita et al., 2016).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study examines the level of environmental and health awareness among the consumers and identifies the factors that motivate the consumers to turn towards Millets (Sri Anna) consumption. The aim of the study is to gain knowledge about consumers' perceptions, attitudes, purchase criteria and behavior towards millets. The broad research objectives of the study are listed below:

- To identify the factors influencing purchase intention of millets.
- Millets and Sustainability: To assess the relationship between environmental concern and attitude towards consuming fibre rich food products.
- To study the impact of COVID-19 that shifts the mindset of consumers toward the consumption of hygienic and eco-friendly products.
- Growth of Millets: India and the world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design refers to the general procedure that is chosen to combine the various components of the study in a consistent and logical way. It is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data, in a way that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. This study adopted a descriptive research design, and took a quantitative approach. A descriptive research design is described as a scientific method, which involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Descriptive research design was adopted for this study as the purpose of the research was to study the variables in their state without making any changes to them. Descriptive research is considered appropriate because participants are observed in their natural set up and this results in accurate and reliable information. This paper adopted an Explanatory as well as Descriptive Research design, and took a quantitative approach. An explanatory design is defined as a research method that explores why something occurs when limited information is available. It uses secondary research as a source of information, such as literature or published articles that are carefully chosen to have a broader and wider understanding of the research area whereas descriptive research focuses on current issues through data collection.

Type of Data

The research makes use of secondary data also known as desk research that involves compiling existing data sourced from a variety of channels to increase the overall effectiveness of research. Further, it is used to identify trends and patterns in a particular industry or field of study.

Sources of Data

- Government reports, Journals, Magazines, International reports, etc.

STORY OF MILLETS

The proso millet and foxtail millet, which were domesticated in China, travelled to India probably through trade routes. Archeological data of proso millet and other crops suggested that the Indian valley of Kashmir was integrated into a wider network of crop exchange in the mountainous regions of South and Central Asia during the 3000-2000 BC period.

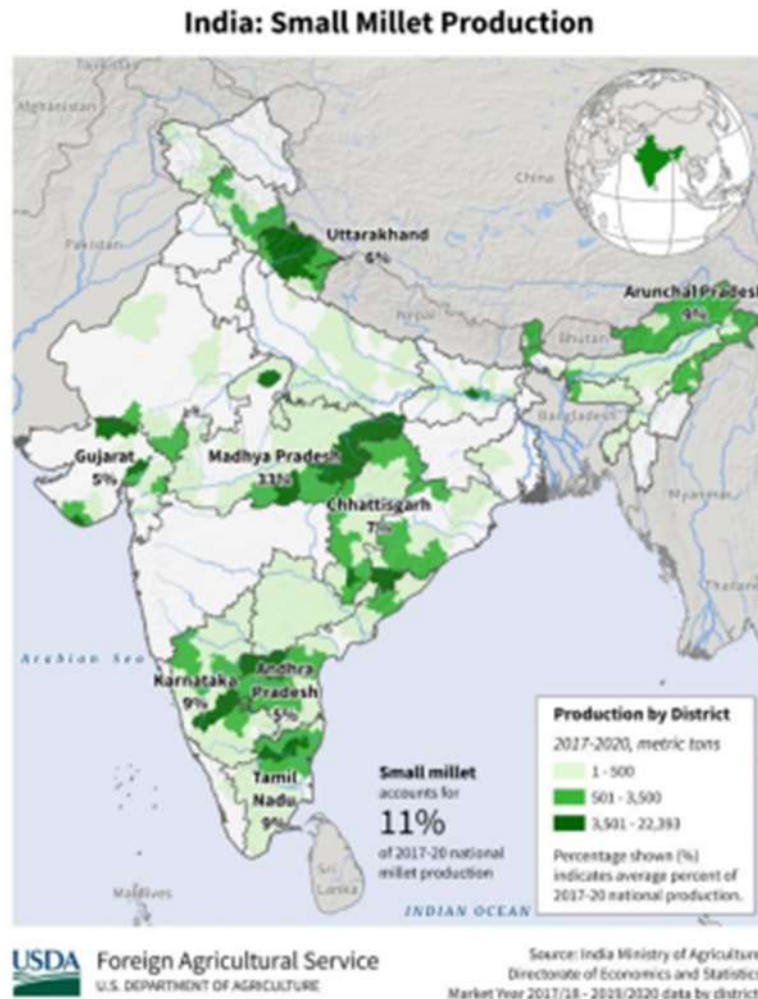
In India, millets have been an important part of the diet for thousands of years. The ancient Indian text, the Rigveda, mentions the cultivation of millets. Millets are grown in different parts of India, depending on the local climate and soil conditions. Some of the most commonly grown millets in India include finger millet (ragi), pearl millet (bajra), sorghum (jowar), and foxtail millet (kangni).

Millets were also widely cultivated in Africa, particularly in the Sahel region, which stretches from Senegal to Sudan. Millets were an important food source for many African cultures, including the Fulani, Tuareg, and Hausa people.

In the 20th century, millets lost their popularity as a food source as people began to adopt more modern, Western style diets. However, in recent years, there has been a renewed interest in millets due to their health benefits and environmental sustainability. Millets are gluten-free, rich in nutrients such as protein, fiber, and minerals, and require less water and fertilizer to grow than many other crops.

Today, millets are being cultivated and consumed in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries where they are an important food source for millions of people. On the other hand, there is evidence of a negative association between taste and health (Raghunathan et al., 2006). For decades, taste

has been prioritized over health attributes when it comes to food choices (Turnwald & Crum, 2019), and thus health-focused labeling and satisfying taste preferences are thought to be contradictory goals. Another perception is that healthy food is not tasty or appealing (Raghunathan et al., 2006), is less filling (Crum et al., 2011), and delivers less rewarding neural responses (Grabenhorst et al., 2013). Thus, we also see that marketing foods emphasizing only their nutritional qualities and health attributes is not the best strategy. In order to overcome the challenge, millet entrepreneurs in India use taste-focused and sustainability-focused labeling and marketing. When healthy foods are promoted on the basis of taste and satisfaction, this can improve the expected taste (Liem et al., 2012) and even the experienced taste (Raghunathan et al., 2006) of healthy foods, thereby increasing the frequency of their consumption.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS: 2023 (IYM)

The International Year of Millets (IYM) was designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 2020, and it was celebrated in 2023. India is declared as the Global **Hub for Millets (Sri-Anna)**. India's Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned Millets (Sri-Anna) in the Financial Year (FY) Budget 2023 as "India is the largest producer and second largest exporter of Shree-Anna in the world". The huge service done by small farmers contributes to the health of fellow citizens. Now, to make India a Global Hub for Sri Anna, the **Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad** will be supported as a Centre of Excellence for sharing best practice research & technologies at International level. The government has set Agriculture Research Target for this FY23 increased to 20 lakh crores. In all G20 Summits, India will showcase Millets Based Foodwork. Guidelines are being made to incorporate millets as nutritional options in the food menu. Support will be given for post-harvest value addition, enhancing domestic consumption and branding millets nationally as well as internationally. Government aims at mitigating malnutrition and climate change with the introduction of millets. The parliament has already added millets to their canteen menus to promote its consumption and to honour the year of millets. Millets are now discussed by a person every 15 minutes as stated by a news-reporter, which is now creating awareness and demand among customers and increase in demand will surely increase its price in near future.

The International Year of Millets (IYM) also highlighted the ecological benefits of millets. Millets are drought-tolerant and can grow in poor soil conditions, making them a sustainable crop for small farmers in developing countries. Additionally, millets require less water and fertilizer than many other crops, making them a more environmentally friendly option.

During the International Year of Millets (IYM), various events and activities were organized around the world to promote the consumption and cultivation of millets. These included food festivals, cooking demonstrations, awareness campaigns, and workshops for farmers. Also, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates the Global Millets (Sri-Anna) Conference in Pusa, New Delhi.

Let the Indian thali become a nutrient thali, a traditional Indian meal served on a single platter or plate, can indeed consist of millets. Millets are an important part of Indian cuisine, especially in certain regions of the country. They have been a staple food for centuries and are known for their nutritional value and versatility in cooking. Some of the common millets used in Indian thalis include:

1. **Bajra (Pearl Millet):** Bajra is widely consumed in North India, especially in states like Rajasthan and Haryana. It is often used to make rotis (flatbreads) and is a key component of the thali in these regions.
2. **Jowar (Sorghum):** Jowar is another popular millet in India, commonly used to make bhakri (a type of unleavened bread) in states like Maharashtra and Karnataka. It can also be used as a grain in various dishes.
3. **Ragi (Finger Millet):** Ragi is a staple in South India, particularly in states like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It is used to make ragi mude (millet balls), dosas (pancakes), and other dishes.
4. **Foxtail Millet, Little Millet, and Proso Millet:** These millets are also used in various regional cuisines across India. They are often used in porridge, upma, and other preparations.

Including millets in the thali adds variety and nutrition to the meal. They are a good source of complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals. In addition to millets, an Indian thali typically includes a variety of vegetables, lentils or dal, rice or roti, pickles, chutneys, and yogurt. The specific components and flavors of the thali can vary greatly depending on the region of India and individual preferences.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & GST

The GST Council plays a pivotal role in shaping India's indirect tax structure, ensuring that it aligns with the nation's economic goals and eases the tax burden on citizens and businesses. The GST tax slab rate that applies to all millet-based products was estimated to be 18% under

the residual entry in the previous GST council meeting held in February, 2023. But recently, just a few days back, during the 52nd GST council meeting held in October, 2023 decided that there would be **no tax rate on millet flour containing 70% composition by weight** when sold loose without branding.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, providing major relief to farmers, decided to levy 5% minimal tax on pre-packaged and labelled, branded millet flour. The government's objective in lowering the GST rate on millet flour food preparations is to enhance public access to these nutritious food items. Acting upon India's proposal supported by 72 countries, the United Nations General Assembly declared the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYM 2023). The declaration positioned India at the forefront of the celebrations. The government has been working on 'mission mode' to champion millet as a crop good for farmers, the environment and consumers.

LOWER LEVY LIKELY ON MILLETS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Millet mix may see lower GST > Karnataka backs the move to ensure better deal for consumers, farmers > Council meet likely to discuss GST on corporate and bank guarantees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The body may prescribe levy on a certain percentage of guarantee to not unduly burden corporate sector > The meeting likely to provide a platform to assess implementation of tax on online gaming, casinos and horse racing
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MILLETS SCENARIO – INDIA AND THE WORLD

A. Impact of Millets in Indian Economy (National Level)

Area, Production and Yield of Millet in India

Millets are grown in about 12.45 million ha. with an annual production of 15.53 million tonnes and contribute 10% to the country’s food grain basket. Millets are nutritious, climate resilient, hardy and dryland crops hence tagged as Nutri-cereals, contribute substantially for food and nutritional security. Recently Millets have gained the attention of the masses due to its non gluten tendency. Nutrition wise, millets are rich in polyphenols, antioxidants, and fibres that are important for healthy body functioning.

India is the world’s leader in the production of millets with a share of around 40% of the world’s total production. India produces around 16 million MT of Millets annually. India is the 2nd largest exporter of Millets. Millets exports from India have continuously increased at 12% CAGR in the last 3 years. The millets market is set to grow from its current market value of more than \$9 billion to over \$12 billion by 2025.

(Area in '000 Ha, Production in '000 Tonnes and Yield in Kg/Ha)

Year	Finger Millet (Ragi)			Small Millets			Pearl Millet (Bajra)			Sorghum (Jowar)			Total		
	Area	Production	Yield	Area	Production	Yield	Area	Production	Yield	Area	Production	Yield	Area	Production	Yield
2010-11	128619	2193.45	1705.38	774.93	429.87	554.84	9,612.54	10,369.90	1,078.89	7,388.71	7,003.15	948.71	10,055.19	10,996.47	1049.4
2011-12	1175.78	1,929.24	1,640.81	798.78	481.53	595.28	8,776.70	10,276.00	1,170.83	6,245.08	6,006.47	961.29	16,996.34	18,663.24	1,098.07
2012-13	1311.00	1,574.40	1,192.04	754.09	435.65	577.72	7,297.42	8,741.98	1,187.96	6,214.36	5,281.48	849.88	15,396.87	16,033.51	1,043.35
2013-14	1193.80	1,982.90	1,661.28	882.3	429.91	630.09	7,810.72	9,250.09	1,184.28	5,793.44	5,541.81	958.57	15,480.06	17,204.71	1,114.4
2014-15	1208.10	2,060.90	1,705.80	589.59	385.87	654.47	7,317.95	9,184.22	1,255.03	6,381.39	5,445.30	883.78	15,277.03	17,076.29	1,117.78
2015-16	1188.20	1,821.90	1,500.89	648.8	390.84	601.48	7,128.61	8,066.63	1,131.89	6,077.03	4,258.02	697.38	14,951.64	16,517.39	1,118.257
2016-17	1076.30	1,383.30	1,283.35	619.11	441.94	713.84	7,458.50	9,779.84	1,304.53	5,624.42	4,987.90	812.15	14,781.13	16,124.78	1,095.57
2017-18	1194.29	1,985.24	1,662.27	546.27	438.99	803.6	7,480.60	9,208.85	1,231.03	5,004.45	4,803.38	956.00	14,245.81	16,436.46	1,153.79
2018-19	890.94	1,238.70	1,390.34	453.75	331	734	7,005.03	8,664.13	1,248.00	4,082.87	3,475.09	848.06	12,542.59	13,710.92	1,093.15
2019-20	1,004.46	1,755.06	1,747.27	458.35	370.81	818	7,542.68	10,362.68	1,374.00	4,821.78	4,772.31	989.29	13,829.25	17,260.65	1,248.13
2020-21	1034.40	1,998.36	1,723.62	444.05	346.95	781.32	7,652.10	10,863.17	1,419.63	4,577.874	4,812.07	1,099.18	13,833.42	16,020.55	1,217.9
CAGR (%)	-0.94	-0.84	0.10	-4.94	-1.97	3.16	-2.05	0.42	2.53	-4.84	-3.35	1.35	-1.00	-0.94	2.12

(Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture) In 2018, pearl held highest share in terms of product volume in millets market and is likely to expand at more than 3% CAGR by 2025.

Combined Millets Demand Break Up in MMT



(Source: ASSOCHAM Report on Millets, 2022)

Increase in MSP of Millets

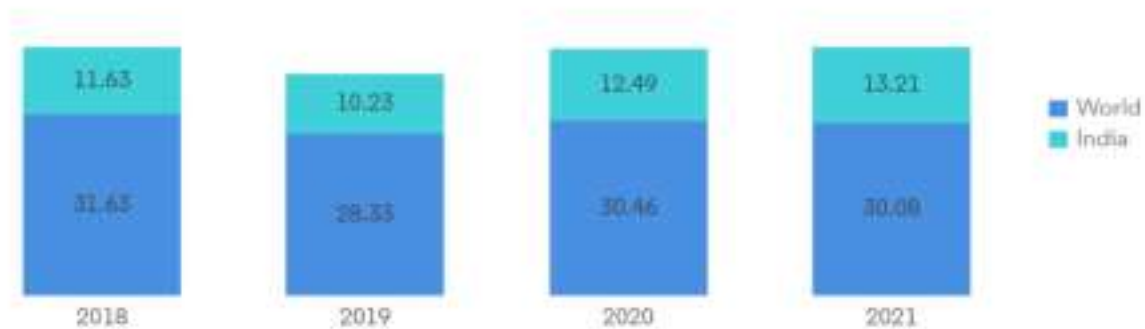
Year/Crops	Ragi	Bajra	Jowar (Hybrid)	Jowar (Maldandi)
2017-18	1900	1425	1700	1725
2018-19	2897	1950	2430	2450
2019-20	3150	2000	2550	2570
2020-21	3295	2150	2620	2640
2021-22	3377	2250	2738	2758

(Source: Minimum Support Prices. Available from: <https://farmer.gov.in/mspstatements.aspx>)

B. Global Impact Economy of Millets (International Level)

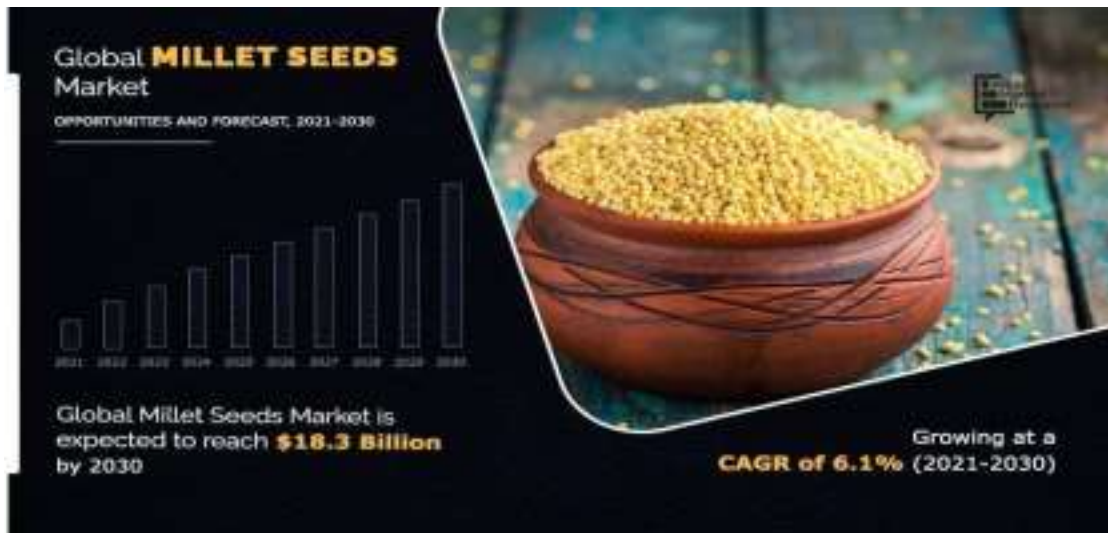
The Global Millets Market report provides a holistic evaluation of the market. The report offers a comprehensive analysis of key segments, trends, drivers, restraints, competitive landscape, and factors that are playing a substantial role in the market. The global millet market is projected to register a CAGR of 4.8% during the forecast period (2022-2027). COVID-19 in 2020 impacted the millet market positively and negatively. On the negative side, due to the imposition of repeated lockdowns, the market witnessed a disruption in the supply chain, labor shortage, shutting of small processing units, etc. Despite all these negative consequences, there was a significant increase in retail sales. Opting for healthy meals to boost immunity, people shifted from having junk foods to eating nutrient-rich superfoods like millets and their derivatives. Consumer demand for millets is expected to increase during the forecast period.

Millet Market: Millet Production, In Million Metric Ton, India Global, 2018-2021



(Source: FAO STATS, 2021)

With an annual global output of 25 million tons, millet has been one of the basic nutrients of humans for 4 thousand years in Africa and Asia and for Europe until the end of the Middle Age. The global millet consumption has declined at a rate of 0.9% and expected to witness positive movement during 2019-2024.



(Source: Allied Market Research Report)

According to FAO, the world production of millets is 89.17 million metric tonnes from an area of 74 million ha. India is the largest producer of millets in the world. India is the global leader in production of millets with a share of around 15% of the world total production. In India, millets are cultivated majorly in 21 states in an area of 12.53 million hectares, producing 15.53 million tonnes with a yield of 1237 kg/ha.

WHAT WOULD DRIVE MILLET TRADE IN FUTURE

Growing inclination of urban population towards healthy food in Asia Pacific	Millets contains calcium, iron and fibers which helps to fortify essential nutrients for the healthy growth in children. The usage of millets in infant food and nutrition products is increasing and many manufacturers are expanding their business	
Increasing unsustainable nature of rice and wheat production which are water intensive and are likely to be unsustainable, as freshwater resources are depleting around the globe. Millet grows easily in dry climate, have smaller harvesting period and require minimal water quantity.	In terms of nutritional property, they are superior to certain highly consumed cereals such as rice and wheat.	Growing number of diseases such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular problems such as heart attack, coronary artery disease, arrhythmias etc. Millets have high content of proteins and minerals such as calcium, iron etc. that can help in avoiding such diseases.
High product prices in comparison with largely consumed grains are acting as a hindrance for penetration in urban food market.		
Photo-insensitive & resilient to climate change, millets are hardy, resilient crops that have a low carbon and water footprint, can withstand high temperatures and grow on poor soils with little or no external inputs.		

Due to above factors, projections can be made that prices of millets will increase in future due to its increasing demand as the market size of millets (Sri-Anna) is now increasing gradually.

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