

Budget Series #6

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS: INDIA LEADING THE WAY

Significant rise in MSP over last five years helps raise production of Millets; boost farmers' income in the country

(Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare)

February 24, 2022

“India is at the forefront of popularising Millets, whose consumption furthers nutrition, food security and welfare of farmers.”

-Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Introduction: International Year of Millets

Millets (*Ragi, Jowar, Bajra etc*) are one of the oldest foods known to humans. Recognizing the importance of millets, Government of India observed 2018 as a Year of Millets to encourage and promote the production of millets. To create domestic and global demand and to provide nutritional food to the people, Government of India spearheaded the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution for declaring 2023 as International Year of Millets.¹ The proposal of India was supported by 72 countries and UNGA declared 2023 as International Year of Millets in March, 2021.²

In view of this declaration and carrying forward the Government of India's initiative further, the **Union Budget 2022-23** highlighted that **support would be provided for post-harvest value addition, enhancing domestic consumption,**



¹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1783716>

² <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1796559>

and for branding millet products nationally and internationally.³

In a webinar, held on February 24, 2022, dealing with the positive impact of Union Budget 2022-23 on the agriculture sector, Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted that year 2023 has been recognized as International Year of Millets and **called upon the corporate world to come forward in branding and promoting Indian millets**. He also asked major Indian missions abroad to organize seminars and other promotional activities to popularize the quality and benefits of Indian millets.⁴

Addressing a webinar on ‘Smart Agriculture: Bringing Back Glory of Millets; Moving Towards Aatmanirbharta in Edible Oil’ on February 24, 2022, Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Textiles and Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal gave four Mantras to make India a leading exporter of Millets:⁵

1. States can duplicate the success of Karnataka’s Fruits Model for crop diversification with a focus on millets,
2. Collaboration with Agri Startups to provide the latest tech to ensure quality & aid in bio fortification of millets,
3. Launch Campaigns to create awareness regarding Health and Nutrition benefits of millets in families and
4. International Outreach to promote Brand India Millets.

What are Millets?

Millet is a common term to categorize small-seeded grasses that are often termed nutri-cereals or dryland-cereals, and includes sorghum, pearl millet, ragi, small millet, foxtail millet, proso millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet and other millets. An important staple cereal crop for millions of small holder dryland farmers across sub-saharan Africa and Asia, millets offer nutrition, resilience, income and livelihood for farmers even in difficult times. They have multiple untapped uses such as food, feed, fodder, biofuels and brewing. Therefore, millets are **Smart Food** as they are Good for consumers, Good for the Farmer and Good for the Planet.⁶

Millets as Super-Foods: Significance and Benefits

- **Nutritionally superior to wheat and rice** owing to their higher levels of protein with more balanced amino acid profile, crude fiber and minerals such as Iron, Zinc, and Phosphorous, millets can provide nutritional security and act as a shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among children and women. The anaemia (iron deficiency), B-complex vitamin deficiency, pellagra (niacin deficiency) can be effectively tackled with intake of less expensive but nutritionally rich food grains like millets. Millets can also help tackle health challenges such as obesity, diabetes and lifestyle problems as they are gluten free, have a low glycemic index and are high in dietary fibre and antioxidants.

³ https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/doc/budget_speech.pdf

⁴ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1800717>

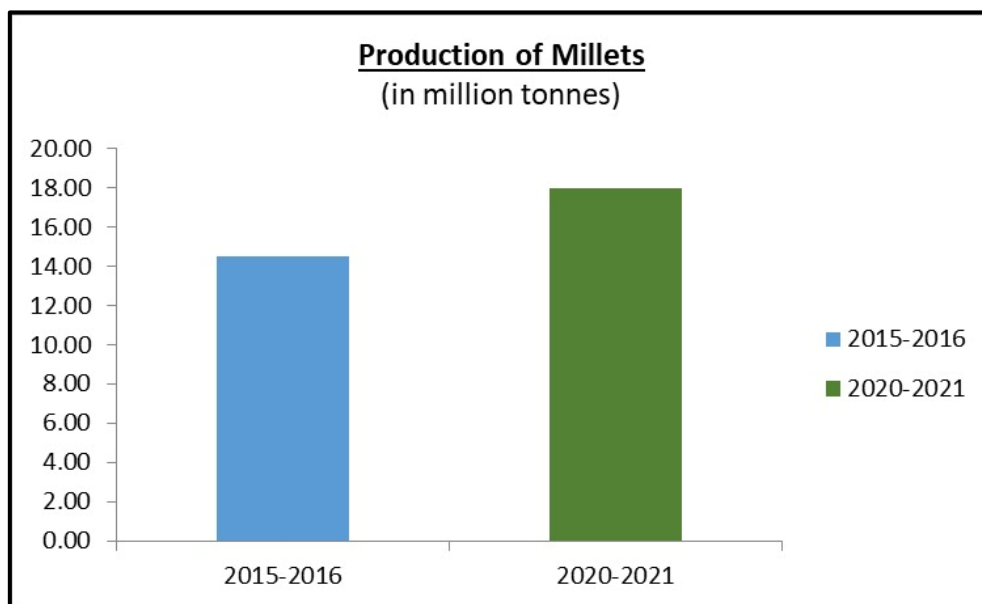
⁵ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1800780>

⁶ <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/erecontent.aspx?relid=106818>

- Millets are the **backbone for dry land agriculture**. They are hardy, resilient crops that have a low carbon and water footprint, can withstand high temperatures, grow on poor soils with little or no external inputs and thus termed as the '*miracle grains*' or '*crops of the future*'. In times of climate change, they are often the last crop standing and, thus, are a good risk management strategy for resource-poor marginal farmers.
- Millet production is **not dependent on the use of chemical fertilizers**. These crops do not attract pests; and majority of the millets are not affected by storage pests; thus, the use of pesticides is not mandated.

India as a Major Producer and Exporter of Millets ⁷

- India had a share of **around 41 per cent of total world production of millets in 2020**.
- Through the efforts made by the Government, the production of millets has increased from 14.52 million tonnes in 2015-16 to 17.96 million tonnes in 2020-21.⁸

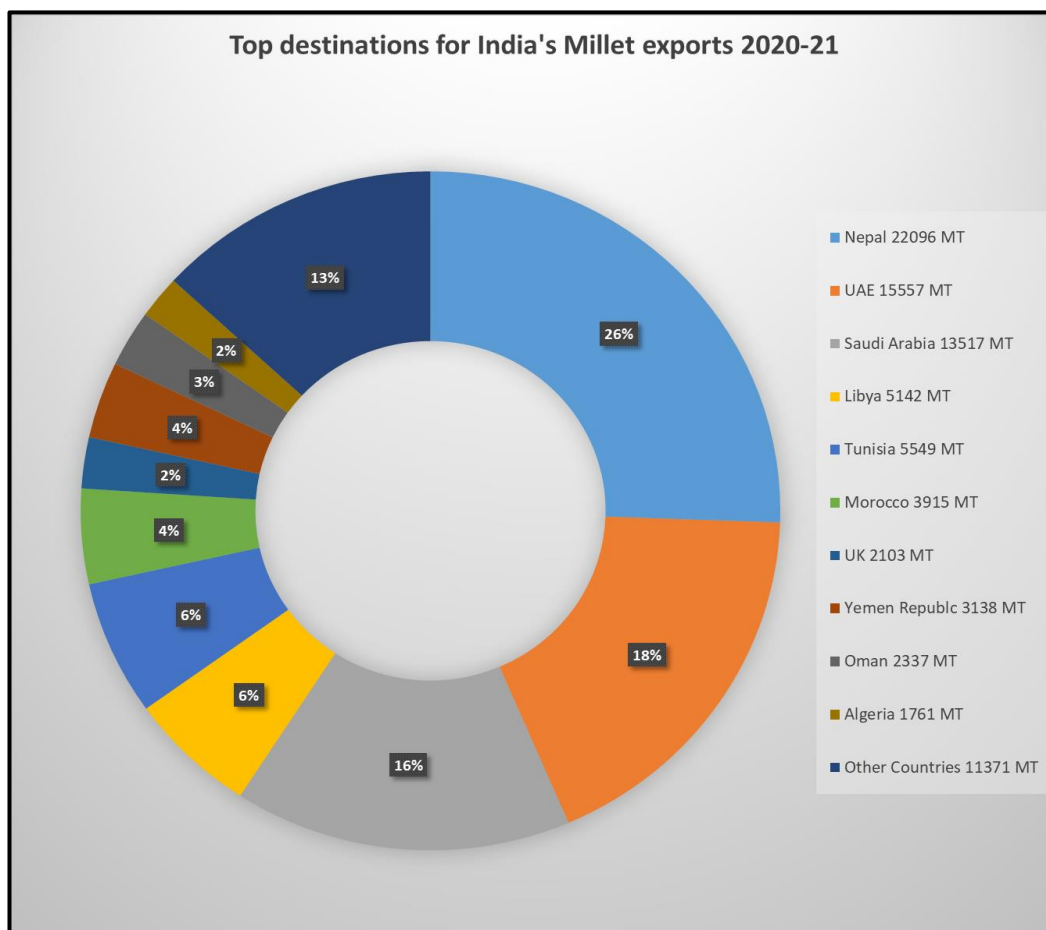


- The various kinds of millets include sorghum (Jowar), pearl millet (Bajra), finger millet (Ragi), little millet (Kutki), small millet (Samai), foxtail millet (Kangni), proso millet (Barri), barnyard millet (Jhangora), kodo millet (Kodra), two pseudo millets (buckwheat and kuttu), Amaranthus (Chulai) and other millets.
- According to 2020 data, India's millets exports have continuously increased at around 3 per cent CAGR in the last five years ending with 2020.
- **In 2020-21, India exported millets worth USD 26.97 million** against USD 28.5 million in 2019-20. The top three importers of millets from India in 2020-21 were Nepal (USD 6.09 million), UAE (USD 4.84 million) and Saudi Arabia (USD 3.84 million).

⁷ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1796514>

⁸ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1796559>

- Altogether, the top ten countries imported millets worth USD 22.03 million from India. Other countries accounted for millets imports worth of USD 5.13 million from India, taking the grand total of imports from India in 2020-21 to USD 27.43 million.



Top ten destinations of India's millets exports for the year 2020-2021⁹

Major Initiatives by the Government to Promote Millets

- In view of the nutritional value of the millets, the Government has notified **millets as nutri-cereals** in April, 2018.¹⁰
- The Government, under the Sub Mission on **National Food Security Mission (NFSM)-Nutri Cereals** is creating awareness among farmers for Nutri Cereals (Millets) such as ragi, sorghum, bajra and small millets through demonstration and training.¹¹
- Under NFSM–Nutri Cereals, incentives are provided to the farmers, through the state governments, on crop production and protection technologies, cropping system-based demonstrations, production & distribution of seeds of newly released varieties/ hybrids, Integrated Nutrient and Pest Management techniques, improved farm implements/tools/ resource conservation machineries, water saving devices etc.

⁹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1796514>

¹⁰ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1796559>

¹¹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1741993#:~:text=The%20Government%2C%20under%20the%20Sub,millets%20through%20demonstration%20and%20training.>

Capacity building of farmers is also done through trainings during cropping season, organizing events / workshops, distribution of seed mini kits, publicity through print and electronic media etc. The interventions such as formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) for Nutri Cereals, setting up Centres of Excellence (CoE) and seed hubs for Nutri Cereals have also been supported under NFSM.¹²

- The Government is popularizing nutri-cereals through Research & Development support. Support is also given to start-ups and entrepreneurs for developing recipes & value-added products that promotes consumption of millets. Eight bio-fortified varieties/hybrids of Bajra have been released for cultivation from 2018 to till date.¹³
- Under **All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP)** on small millets, Sorghum and Pearl millet, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) provides support to 45 collaborating Centres located in different State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and ICAR Institutes for development of new varieties / hybrids of millets.
- For increasing exports through quality production and processing, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (**APEDA**) **signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ICAR-Indian Institute of Millet Research (ICAR-IIMR)** which is expected to boost value addition and farmers' income. The key focus of the MoU would be to promote commercial cultivation of processable varieties developed by ICAR-IIMR for exports which is expected to promote value addition of millets, a cereal with high nutritive value. The MoU also envisages creation of market linkages with farmers as well as Farmer Producers Organizations.¹⁴
- 16 programmes are being planned by APEDA for promotion of millets and value-added products of millets in UAE, Indonesia, USA, Japan, UK, Germany, Australia, Republic of Korea, South Africa and Saudi Arabia. During the promotion programme, Buyer-Seller Meets, Road Shows and participation in major international events will be organized to promote millets and value-added products of millets.¹⁵
- **NITI Aayog signed a Statement of Intent (SoI) with United Nations World Food Program (WFP)** on 20 December 2021. The partnership focuses on mainstreaming of millets and supporting India in taking lead globally in knowledge exchange using the opportunity of 2023 as an International Year of Millets. Further, the partnership will aim at building resilient livelihoods for small-holder farmers and adaptation capacities to climate change and transforming food systems. The Sol focuses on strategic and technical collaboration between NITI Aayog and WFP, to strengthen the climate resilient agriculture for enhanced food and nutrition security in India.¹⁶
- The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare also **provides support to the States under a Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Support to State Extension Programme for Extension Reforms"** for different extension activities and agricultural technologies that can further promote millet cultivation. Further, the States can promote millets under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER).

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<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1741993#:~:text=The%20Government%2C%20under%20the%20Sub,millets%20through%20demonstration%20and%20training.>

¹³ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1796559>

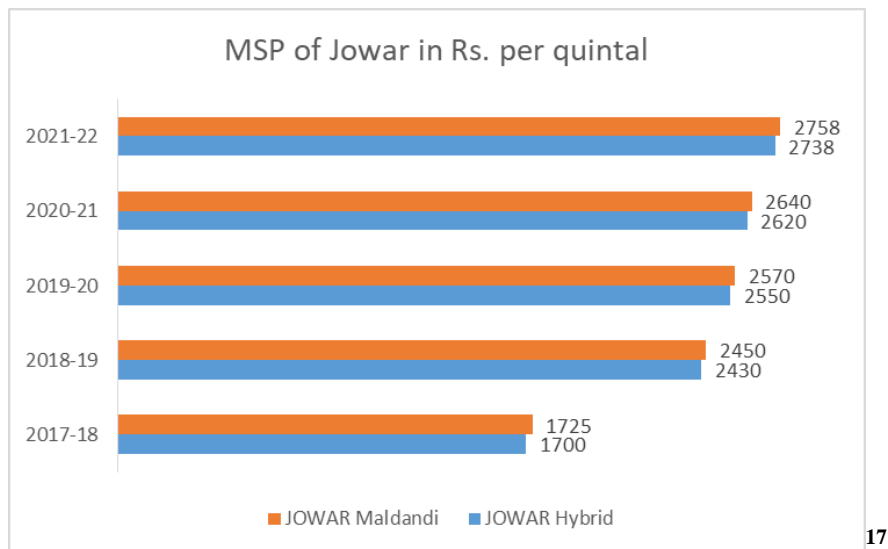
¹⁴ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1751773>

¹⁵ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1796514>

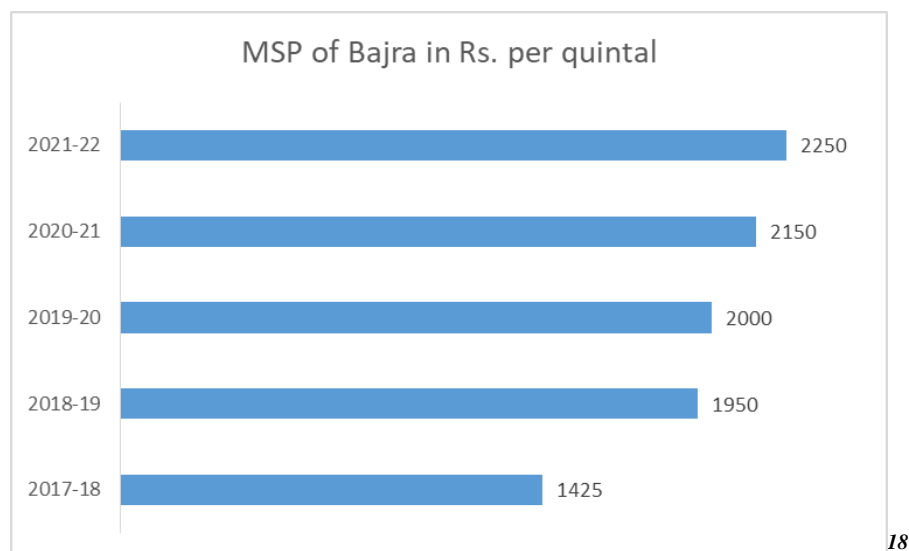
¹⁶ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1783716>

Rise in Millet production and their MSP

Through the efforts made by the Government, the production of millets has increased significantly in recent years. Several efforts have been made over the last few years to realign the Minimum Support Price (MSP) to encourage farmers shift to larger areas and adopt best technologies and farm practices, to correct demand — supply imbalance. There was a **significant rise in the MSP of Millets** which can be seen from the graphs below:



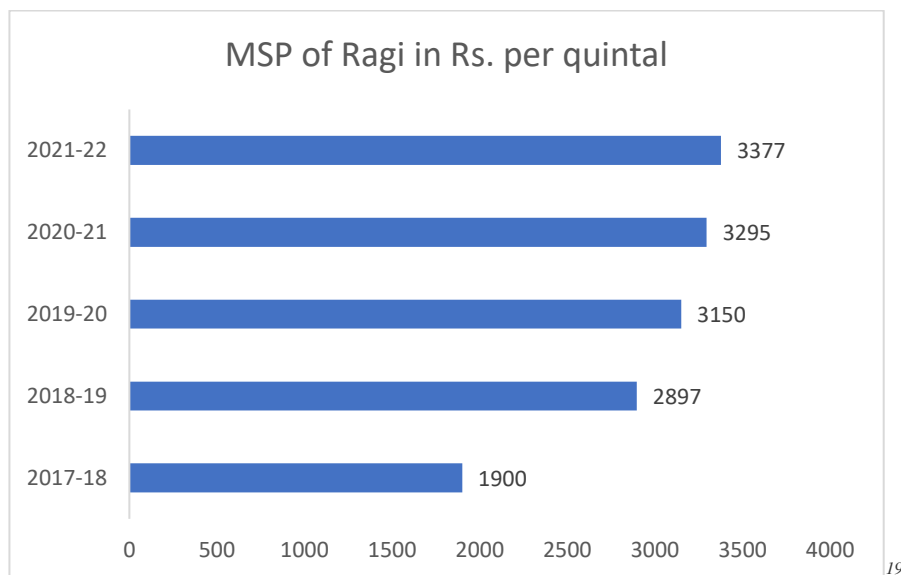
Rise in MSP of Jowar YoY



Rise in MSP of Bajra YoY

¹⁷ <https://eands.dacnet.nic.in/PDF/English%20MSP%202021.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://eands.dacnet.nic.in/PDF/English%20MSP%202021.pdf>



Rise in MSP of Ragi YoY

Government has approved the increase in MSP for mandated Rabi Crops of Fair Average Quality for Rabi Marketing Season 2022-23. The decision fulfils the commitment to farmers to provide at least 50 per cent return over cost of production.

Conclusion

The Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always been very sensitive to the issues faced by the farmers and has taken various proactive initiatives to address each problem faced by them. India is now focusing on enhancing productivity, making post-harvest management robust and giving farmers and buyers a unified national market for optimizing benefits to both. For addressing nutritional challenges and also to bring diversity in the country's agri-food systems, the Government is supporting diversification from predominantly food grain-based systems to other high-value crops like fruits and vegetables.²⁰

By declaring 2023 as 'The International Year of Millets,' the UN General Assembly has set the tone for increasing the area of cultivation of millet across the world. India, which is the world's largest producer of millets is taking wide-ranging steps to implement the benefits of this opportunity.

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¹⁹ <https://eands.dacnet.nic.in/PDF/English%20MSP%202021.pdf>

²⁰ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseFramePage.aspx?PRID=1739509>

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