



General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 November 2023

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-third session

19 June–14 July 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by "ECO-FAWN" (Environment Conservation Organization - Foundation for Afforestation Wild Animals and Nature), a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Supplementing Poor Households with Millets Program in India

Millets have been an integral part of Indian diets. However, of late they have waned in public preference to the proliferation of rice and wheat. It is important to keep in mind that millets contain several necessary nutrients. Further, their environmental impact is much lower compared to other cereals as they consume lesser water and other resources for cultivation. Millets are considered as poor mans diet, to supplement poor households the government encouraged distribution of millets under Public Distribution System in few pockets in India. Consumption of millets is preferred by doctors and nutritionists in India which has low levels of calories and high in dietary fiber and has required micro and macro vitamins with minerals.

To revive the usage of millets the Government of India proposed that the year 2023 be commemorated as the year of millets. This was accepted by the UN General Assembly in its 75th session. Several activities are being conducted to popularize millets.

Several organizations have taken up the activity of popularization of millets in coordination with the government and in furtherance of the government plan. For example, the India Millets Initiative whose stated mission is as follows:

“India Millet Initiative is incorporated to save the interests of the farmers and bring efficiency to the backward and forward supply chain by removing the challenges of supply-side and demand-side factors. We are working with producers, processors, and buyers and are fully dedicated to the growth of the millet sector.

We focus on creating innovative pathways for high-quality seed varieties and making them accessible to millet farmers for high yields. We are closely associated with key industry players for creating a market linkage between their produced. We are also working with different agencies for the upgradation and adoption of new technologies by the millet processors. As an organization we strive to bring the issues to the notice of policymakers for adequate policy support for incentivizing millet production, procurement for government food security programs, and marketing support.”

Additional support for the cause of millets has come from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. They state:

“Millets are small-grained, annual, warm-weather cereals belonging to the grass family. Jowar (Sorghum), Bajra (Pearl Millet) and Ragi (Finger millet) are the important millets cultivated in India. Small Millets such as Proso (Cheena), Kodo (Kodra, Arikelu), Fox tail (Kangni/Korra), Barnyard (Varai, Sawa), Little millet (Kutki) are also grown in our country.

Millets are the staple crops of the semiarid tropics, as other food crops cannot be cultivated in that terrain due to low rainfall and poor soil fertility. They also have higher nutrient content compared to major cereal crops and ensure food and nutrition security. Further, millets are tolerant to drought and other extreme weather conditions and hence are endemic to such geographies.

With growing concerns of life style diseases coupled with ‘refined’ diet culture, the modern consumers are slowly, but increasingly looking at the nutrient rich millets as a suitable alternative to wheat and rice. With the COVID -19, momentum picked up and both the urban and rural consumers are choosing millets for improving their nutrition & strengthening their immunity.

In order to encourage production and consumption of millets, Government of India notified millets as Nutri-Cereals in April, 2018, which includes Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Ragi/Mandua) & Minor Millets namely; Foxtail Millet (Kangani/Kakun), Proso Millet (Cheena), Kodo Millet (Kodo), Barnyard Millet (Sawa/Sanwa/ Jhangora), Little Millet (Kutki) and two Pseudo -millets viz Buckwheat (Kuttu) and Amaranthus (Chaulai).

To create domestic and global demand and to provide nutritional food to the people, Government of India had proposed to the United Nations for declaring 2023 as International Year of Millets (IYoM-2023).”

This initiative of the Government of India will be in furtherance of several UN Goals including tackling malnutrition and also sustainable farming.

<https://www.mygov.in/campaigns/millets/>

<https://indiamilletinitiative.org/aboutMillette.php>

<https://www.nabard.org/international-year-of-millets-2023.aspx>