Nutri-cereals, especially millets including sorghum, have very little funding and attention compared to other major crops. The 'big 3' crops (wheat, rice and maize) receive most attention and support for development and are increasingly dominant in the minds of government, industry and consumers. We believe that nutri-cereals are under-recognized for their value and are important for diversification and complementing other foods. In particular they are critical for both farmers and consumers because of:

- high nutritional value
- resilience under extreme weather conditions – critical in future with climate change
- need for both diet and on-farm diversity
- multiple untapped uses
- large scope for further development
- appropriate for fighting poverty and food insecurity

MILLETs ARE HIGH IN ANTIOXIDANTS
Pearl millet has the highest folate acid content among cereals, which lowers heart disease and cancer risks, and is recommended to pregnant women.

Highest Folic acid 46 mcg/100g Millets are Highly Digestible Gluten-free Fight against Cancer, diabetes heart disease

NUTRIENT DENSE GRAINS
Millets are high in protein, vitamins and micronutrients
Finger millet
340mg/100g Calcium 3 times more than milk
Iron 75mg/kg Zinc 43mg/kg

"Mothers from Mali to Mumbai use finger millet as baby porridge due to its richness in calcium"

CRITICAL NEED FOR DIET DIVERSITY
Fewer crop species are feeding the world than 50 years ago, with a stark decline in millets and other traditional crops.

This globalized non-diversified diet of energy-dense crops fuels the rise in diabetes and heart disease. Millets are part of the answer to reverse this trend.

Average change in the calories consumed from key crops worldwide (1961-2000)

CRUCIAL STAPLE FOR MILLIONS IN THE DRYLANDS Family nutrition: Millets are well-known traditional crops for most of the 2.5 billion people living in the drylands, 80% is eaten by the farmers’ family

HEAT TOLERANT
Some pearl millets survive at temperatures up to 64°C

GROW FASTER
Some millets need 60-65 days to mature against 100-140 days for wheat

MILLETs can grow with no or little fertilizers and pesticides

A CROP TO BRING DIVERSITY ON FARM FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
Easier to grow for poor farmers with difficult access to inputs. Greater crop diversity on farm reduces pests, climate risks, improving farmers’ overall resilience

Smart Foods
Good for you
Good for the Planet
Crucial for fighting poverty and food insecurity

An Opportunity
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NEW SOLUTIONS NEEDED TO FEED 9 BILLION BY 2050
A third of rice, maize, and wheat growing areas have experienced yield plateau or decrease in yield gain in the last decade.

HUGE SCOPE FOR GROWTH IN MILLETS
Better seeds, better inputs and farm practices can boost millet production to significant levels, eg 65% in Niger, if using microcosing

MICRODOSING CAN BOOST MILLET PRODUCTION

Traditional crop for 5.5 billion people living in the drylands

CRUCIAL TO FIGHT POVERTY AND GROW FOOD SECURITY

SMART FOODs
Good for you
Good for the Planet
Crucial for fighting poverty and food insecurity

MULTI USES EXIST WITH UNTAPPED MARKETS
Fodder: Pearl millet straw, with up to 50% dry matter, is the main animal feed for dryland herders in the dry season

CONSUMER PRODUCT: Health foods, sanitisers and more are untapped markets

INTERNATIONAL CROPS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE SEMI-ARID TROPICS
Aim

We are working on building a stronger scientific case for more support to millets. We also would like to promote the issues and value that millets can add.

We also see a need to build a new image around what have been the traditional crops and foods in many areas. A globalized diet now exists and the trend in developing countries is that more nutritious foods like millets are not preferred as they are seen as ‘food for the poor’ and not as status foods or crops by consumers and farmers.

Join the Smart Foods campaign

The campaign is expected to include:

- Creation of an overall campaign branding, messaging, scientific backing and key creative material to highlight the messages.
- Consumer campaigns in India, selected African countries and Western countries to change the image and promote the advantages of millets.
- Involvement of food processing companies, local groups as well as multinationals, to develop modern millet-based products.
- Targeted promotion to development donors and organizations about the value and potential of millets.
- New innovative ways to grab attention of all target audiences.

References


About ICRISAT: www.icrisat.org
ICRISAT’s scientific information: http://EXPLORE.it.icrisat.org

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