Millets are among the first plants to be domesticated and are considered “nutri-cereals” due to their high nutritional content. They have served as a traditional staple for hundreds of millions of people in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia for 7 000 years and are now cultivated across the world. However, their cultivation is declining in many countries, and their potential to address climate change and food security is not being realized in full. This is despite the fact that millets can grow on relatively poor soils and under adverse and arid conditions, with comparatively fewer inputs than other cereals.

The need to promote the diversity and nutritional and ecological benefit of millets to consumers, producers, value chain actors, and decision makers is timely, and can improve food sector linkages.

As such, a proposal for an International Year of Millets (2023) was brought forward by the Government of India and endorsed by Members of FAO Governing Bodies, as well as by the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly.

**The International Year will:**

1. Elevate awareness of the contribution of millets for food security and nutrition
2. Inspire stakeholders on improving sustainable production and quality of millets; and
3. Draw focus for enhanced investment in research and development and extension services to achieve the other two aims.

**United Nations**

ICRISAT supported this outcome by organizing a series of meetings with the FAO to write the first case highlighting how millets are ‘good for you, the planet and the farmer’. Further, ICRISAT worked with governments in its host countries in Africa to gather support letters, while the CGIAR worked with countries in Europe and northern Africa.
ICRISAT and IYM 2023

ICRISAT is a member of the National Committee IYM 2023, India. This International Steering Committee is chaired by Dr. Neena Malhotra, Ambassador of India to the Republic of Italy, San Marino & UN Organizations in Rome and by Vice Chair, Director General, ICRISAT Dr Jacqueline d’Arros Hughes.

ICRISAT has actively participated in stakeholder meetings towards the planning of the International Year of Millets, including preparing advocacy tools such as the logo and tagline as well as planning the launch and pre-launch events.

The focus crops for this special year are the dryland small grains: Sorghum, Pearl millet, Finger millet, Foxtail millet, Little millet, Kodo millet, Proso millet, Barnyard millet, Browntop millet, Guinea millet, Black fonio, White fonio, Raishan and Job’s tears. Inclusion of teff is still under consideration.

While sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet are ICRISAT’s focus crops, our gene bank is also one of the largest repositories for small millet germplasms.

Millet Germplasms

As of 2021, ICRISAT conserves a total of 78,975 millet germplasms originating from various countries and strives to support smallholder farmers with improved varieties of sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet.

Our biofortified, early-maturity, disease-resistant and high-yielding millet varieties are some of the world’s first varieties released to benefit dryland farmers and consumers.

42788 accessions of Sorghum
24,390 accessions of Pearl millet
7,519 accessions of Finger millet
1,542 accessions of Foxtail millet
849 accessions of Proso millet
473 accessions of Little millet
665 accessions of Kodo millet
749 accessions of Barnyard millet