

## International Year of Millets [UPSC Notes]

The United Nations has designated 2023 as the 'International Year of Millets'. This was suggested by the Indian Government. Millets are in the news these days because of their high nutritional value and other benefits. Due to their high nutritional value, millets are referred to as "**nutri-cereals**". Despite being a staple food source for hundreds of millions of people worldwide, its production is declining now.

In light of this, the Indian government suggested that 2023 be designated as the International Year of Millets. It was endorsed by Members of FAO Governing Bodies and at the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). More than 70 nations voted in favour of the resolution creating the International Year of Millets. Hence, this topic assumes great significance for the [UPSC exam](#).

### International Year of Millets

The objectives of declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets are as follows:

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

What are Millets?



*Image source: [www.exportersindia.com](http://www.exportersindia.com)*

- Millets are a group of cereal grains belonging to the Poaceae family, sometimes referred to as the grass family.
- Millets were among the earliest plants to be domesticated; they have been a traditional food source for hundreds of millions of people in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia for more than 7,000 years, and they are today grown all over the world.
- The most popular millet variety is pearl millet, an important crop in Africa and India.
  - Other significant crop species include finger millet, proso millet, and foxtail millet.
- They are considered ancient grains and are consumed as food for humans, animals, and birds.
- India is the world's leading producer of millets.

### Geographical Conditions for Millet Growth

- Millets are often cultivated in tropical and subtropical climates up to an altitude of 2,100 m.
- It is a heat-loving plant, and 8 to 10 °C is the minimum temperature needed for germination.
- For optimum growth and good crop production, a mean temperature range of 26–29°C is ideal.
- It is cultivated in areas with 500–900mm of annual rainfall.
- Kodo Millet has a high water requirement and thrives under conditions of 50–60 cm of rainfall.
- Soil: Millet can handle a certain level of alkalinity and adapts well to a variety of soils, from extremely poor to highly rich.
  - Alluvial, loamy, and sandy soils with adequate drainage are the best types of soil.
  - Kodo millet may be produced on rocky and gravelly soil, such as those found in hilly areas.

### Significance of Millets

- In comparison to other crops, they have a number of benefits, including drought and insect tolerance.
- Additionally, they can survive harsh conditions and infertile soils.
- They can also release oxygen while absorbing maximum carbon dioxide from the air.
  - So they are a superfood for everyone and grow abundantly while being environmentally resilient.
- They are a super cocktail of body-friendly nutrients:
  - When compared to rice and wheat flour, millets like jowar, bajra, and ragi have a substantially lower glycaemic index, which is a measurement of how much a diet raises your blood sugar levels.
  - They also include more fibre per serving than foods like rice, wheat, etc.
  - Millets are rich sources of high levels of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C (which aids in the absorption of iron), vitamin B complex, magnesium, calcium, and phosphorus.

**Conclusion:** The timely need to educate consumers, producers, actors throughout the value chain, and decision-makers on the variety, nutritional value, and ecological benefits of millets can strengthen

connections between the food, agriculture industries and conservation. Against this backdrop, the decision to declare 2023 the 'International Year of Millets' assumes great significance and is bound to have a positive impact on the awareness, production, and consumption of millets throughout the world.

UPSC Questions related to International Year of Millets

**Who declared the International Year of Millets?**

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets.

**Why 2023 is the Year of Millets?**

In response to a proposal from India, the UN has designated 2023 as the International Year of millets with the goal of raising awareness of millet's health advantages.

**Which year is the International Year of grain?**

The year 2023 will be celebrated as the International Year of Millets or Small Grains.

**Which country is the largest producer of millets?**

India is the world's leading producer of millets.

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