



## **Minor Millets- A Support to Rural Economics in Tribal Area of Bastar Zone in Chhattisgarh**

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Small millets are the traditional crops, agronomically more adapted to impoverished soils. These crops are grown in diverse soils, varying rainfall regimes and in areas widely differing in thermo and photoperiods. The resilience exhibited by these crops is helpful in adjusting themselves to different kinds of ecological niches. All these have made them quite indispensable to rainfed, tribal and hill agriculture where crop substitution is difficult. That is why it is important to enhance production and productivity of these crops to ensure food and nutritional security not only to people living in harsh and difficult terrains, but also in other areas.



**Fig: Kodo**

### **Status of production and productivity of Minor millets in Chhattisgarh and bastar zone.**

Chhattisgarh has 5.88 million hectares of cultivable land. Rice is the principal crop of the region. In 2006, Chhattisgarh occupied 248.5 thousand hectares of land (which is 21.18 % of India's 1173.5 thousand ha) under small millets with total production of 52.1 thousand tons (which is only 10.22 % of total national production of 509.8 thousand tons) and yield of 210 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> against national productivity of 434 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> ([www.dacnet.nic.in](http://www.dacnet.nic.in)).

In Bastar Plateau Zone, the area under small millets was 28.41 thousand hectares, which was 39.73 per cent of Chhattisgarh State area of 71.50 thousand hectares. While, the total production was 7.95 thousand tons which was 37.06 per cent of Chhattisgarh State production of small millets of 21.45 thousand tons (Anonymous, 2009).



### **Importance of Minor millets to area of Bastar**

A state cannot progress further till our farmers and agricultural labour improve their living conditions. There is need to provide the benefits of advancements in agricultural sciences to the farmers. There is need to start agro-based village specific activities as the farming alone could not raise the living standard of farmers. Chhattisgarh is very aptly called the rice bowl.

However, paddy alone would not bring prosperity and food security. It is high time to promote and secure other crops, the most prominent ones being the small millets. In earlier times millets were grown on large areas especially in the tribal belts. But now they are very rapidly being replaced by other crops or being pushed to less remunerative soils, in lack of motivation and market support



**Fig: Woman of tribal area processing minor millets**

### **Medicinal use of minor millets**

Millets are nutritionally comparable or even superior to major cereals, especially with respect to protective nutrients. Carbohydrates comprises about 85 per cent of the edible portion of millets of which nearly 20 per cent are in the form of non starch polysaccharides, which are considered as dietary fibre components. The protein content of millets range from 6 to 10 per cent and the finger millet protein is a rich source of sulphur amino acids (4.2 g/16 g N). Among the cereal food grains, finger millet is the richest source of calcium (340 mg/100g). Millet is tasty, with a mildly sweet, nut-like flavour and contains a myriad of beneficial nutrients. It has nearly 15 per cent protein, contains high amounts of fibre, B-complex vitamins including niacin, thiamine, and riboflavin, the essential amino acid methionine, lecithin, and some vitamin E. It is particularly high in the minerals iron, magnesium, phosphorus and potassium. The seeds are also rich in phytochemicals, including phytic acid, which is believed to lower cholesterol and phytate, which is associated with reduced cancer risk.

Before consumption, millets in general are grind in to flour without decortications, which can produce some undesirable nutritional effects. Millets contain antinutritional factors such as polyphenols and phytates and these may interfere with the bio availability of major nutrients such as proteins or minerals. Processing such as dehulling, can eliminate these anti-nutritional factors and improve the availability of various nutrients present in these grains



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