

Why Millets are superior to wheat and rice

Millets are the ancient grains that are gaining widespread popularity around the world as an excellent solution to preventing and controlling Type2 diabetes and many new food & lifestyle diseases. There is greater awareness both at the governmental and the public level on the health benefits of the millets. The year 2018 was designated as the year of the Millet grains of all varieties. The agricultural department of India is promoting millets on a “Mission Mode.” States such as Andhra, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu are already taking steps to promote millet cultivation. Orissa state invested 100 crores to Millet Mission in 2018.

The millet cultivation got ignored the past 50-60 years in favor of hybrid wheat and rice crop cultivation. The millet cultivation is now regaining attention and promotion in an attempt to enhance public health. Millets are versatile grain and available in several varieties, each with its unique richness on mineral contents. There are several health benefits of millet grains which makes these superior to wheat and rice:

- 1. High nutritional value** - Millet grains carry the right balance of complex low glycemic carbohydrates high in fiber, high-quality protein with a better amino acid profile than maize. Millets are rich in minerals such as Phosphates, Magnesium, Iron, and calcium. The millet variety ragi (finger millet) is the most abundant source of calcium amongst all the grains. Millet grains do not get subjected to chemical farming or the refining process, so all the natural vitamin B complex gets retained. The commercial wheat and rice products, on the other hand, end up losing B complex during the refining process.
- 2. High fiber content** - Compared to refined wheat flour and polished rice, which have a negligible amount of fiber of less than 1%, the fiber content of the millets is 8-12 %. The fiber in the diet is vital for health as it lowers the rate of absorption of glucose and fats from the digestive tract.
- 3. High antioxidant activity** - Antioxidants are the elements in food that cleanse the body cells of the accumulated waste materials and, therefore, is vital to health. Only the natural foods that grow under the energy of the sun and do not get refined in the factories retain the antioxidants. Therefore, the food products of animal origin or synthetic foods made in factories do not carry the antioxidants needed for a toxin-free healthy body. Compared to hybrid and refined wheat and rice, the natural organic millets have far more enormous antioxidant potential.
- 4. Eco friendly grains** - The millets are by far the most eco friendly grains. These are easy to cultivate, are high yield crop, require minimal amounts of water and zero chemicals to grow. It takes two months from the time of cultivation to harvest a millet crop. Millets can grow in dry soil and under harsh weather conditions. While it takes 5000-8000 liters of water to produce one kg of wheat and rice, it takes only 200 liters of water to grow one kg of millet.

5. **Millets are hardy grains** - Millet is the oldest grain, and its cultivation history dates back to 7000 years. Millets have withstood the test of time and are resilient grains resistant to the disease, and do not require pesticides and chemical fertilizers for growth.

The green revolution of the 60s went on to promote the cultivation of hybrid varieties of wheat and rice for bumper crops. These high yield crops dependent on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. These grains are not only low in nutritional value but also contaminated with the chemicals. Unfortunately, a generous availability of wheat and rice over the past 60 years has changed the dietary preference of the population for these grains and their refined factory-made products. Preferential cultivation of these two grains has markedly reduced the area of land left for millet cultivation. Growing epidemics of food and lifestyle diseases over the past 50 years has rekindled the interest in millets for their superior nutritional value. Globally, the millets have currently earned the status of the ancient miracle grain.