

International Year of Millets – 2023,

proposal from India – Application to UN adoption

S K Malhotra*

THE United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) steers international efforts to achieve food security for all and ensures that people have regular access to enough high-quality food. The Committee on Agriculture (COAG) is one of FAO's governing bodies providing overall policy and regulatory guidance on agricultural issues. It also provides advice and recommendations to the FAO conference on global agricultural policy and regulatory matters, and to the FAO council on matters relating to the organization's priorities, programmes and budgets. The COAG was established in 1971 and has over 130 member Nations, generally meets every two years to review specific matters related to agriculture, food and nutrition referred to the committee.

It was July 2018, when India received invitation for participation in 26th session of FAO Committee of Agriculture meeting scheduled from 1-5 October, 2018 at FAO, Rome, Italy. The Government of India approved the delegation, consisting of Dr S K Malhotra, the then Agriculture Commissioner as Head of delegation and Dr S K Chaudhari, the then ADG (Soil and Water Management) now DDG (NRM) with ICAR. The Head of delegation took the initiatives after consultation in the Ministry for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare to take forward the International Year of Millets agenda from India. The matter was taken up through Dr Alka Bhargava, JS (International Cooperation) and Ms Reenat Sandhu, Ambassador EoI, Rome with Dr Robert G Guei, Secretary of the Committee on Agriculture of FAO for inclusion in the agenda. But the FAO wanted a request from Agriculture Minister, Government of India for this purpose. Accordingly, in the office of Agriculture Commissioner, Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, the request letter from Hon'ble Agriculture Minister dated 14th August, 2018 addressed to Mr Jose Graziano da Silva, DG, FAO was initiated. In reply to this letter, after thorough examination by FAO concerned division, the agenda was accepted at later stage for inclusion in the already circulated agenda additionally and was communicated back by a letter from DG, FAO to Sh. Radha Mohan Singh, the then Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India.

After having an approval for inclusion of proposal from India for consideration of discussion in COAG, the detailed proposal on background, nutrition, multiple uses, resilience to climate change, sustainable production systems, harvest and post-harvest operations with broad objectives set for International Year of Millets were developed by Dr S K Malhotra and accordingly submitted to Secretary COAG- FAO. The proposal from India was examined by the team of Dr Hans Dreyer, Director, Plant Production and Protection Division of FAO Rome (<https://www.fao.org/3/mx753en/mx753en.pdf>). The proposal was fine-tuned and fitted into the FAO proposal template with executive summary in the

COAG/2018/17/Rev1

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Annex



कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण विभाग
भारत सरकार
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
& FARMERS WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
F No 11-11/2017-TG
14th August, 2018

Dear Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva,

As you will be aware millets were a staple diet for the communities in Africa and Asia, but have lately been losing prominence from their plate. Hence the demand has declined and so also the area under cultivation across the globe. Along with the high nutrients and usefulness in various lifestyle diseases including obesity, diabetes, etc, millets have an important role in enhancing resilience and risk management in the face of climate change, especially for small farmers and family farmers. Hence it is highly desirable that global efforts are stepped up to bring these nutr-cereals back to the food baskets of a wide range of consumers, rural and urban as well as rich and poor, for boosting their production as well.

In this context, you would be pleased to know that India is celebrating 2018 as the National Year of Millets and is promoting cultivation by amending cropping patterns of areas which are especially susceptible to climate change. It is an important component of our efforts to achieve the national commitment of doubling farmers income by 2022.

To garner wider global attention and action, India has mooted a proposal to FAO for declaration of an upcoming year as International Year of Millets, a copy of which is enclosed for your ready reference. The matter has received support of the member countries when placed in the Bureau meeting of the Committee on Agriculture held on 5th July 2018. A short presentation on the multi dimensional benefits of millets is also enclosed for your perusal.

May I request you to kindly consider inclusion of this proposal into the agenda of the forthcoming 26th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) meeting, scheduled to be held during 1-5 October 2018 in Rome. Adoption of this proposal by FAO with the support of its Member Nations will enable it to be moved to the UNGA for declaration of upcoming year as International Year of Millets.

Encl: A/a

Yours sincerely,

Radha Mohan Singh
(RADHA MOHAN SINGH)

Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva,
Director-General,
United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization,
viale delle Terme di caracalla, 00153,
Rome, Italy.



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Food and Agriculture
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United Nations

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Продовольственная и
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Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

مجلس
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للأمم المتحدة

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Twenty-sixth Session

Rome, 1 - 5 October 2018

Proposal for an International Year of Millets

Executive Summary

Millets are often called "Nutri-Cereals" due to their high nutritional content compared to the more commonly grown cereals; wheat, rice or corn. When millets are included in diets, human and animal health is significantly improved, including that of mothers and their young. Here Millets may encompass a diverse group of cereals that include pearl, proso, foxtail, barnyard, little, kodo, browntop, finger and Guinea millets plus fonio, sorghum (or great millet) and teff. Millets were among the first plants that were domesticated and have served as a traditional staple crop for millions of farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Millets can grow on poor soils with little or no inputs, are resistant or tolerant to many crop diseases and pests and can survive adverse climatic conditions. The genetic diversity of millets offers opportunities for economic development through income generating activities in the food sector or on niche markets for specific professional applications (therapeutics, pharmaceuticals, specialty chemistry).

To respond to the challenges posed today by increasing populations and associated food insecurity and changes in climate, the Government of India is seeking FAO support to the next agenda of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), to adopt the proposal for an International Year of Millets (Annex). The Government of India recently increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of millets by 50 percent of cost of production to achieve the national commitment of doubling farmers' income by 2022. The Union Government has also declared 2018 as National Year of Millets in the country and millets have featured in recent initiatives such as the Adaptation of African Agriculture (AAA) and programmes such as the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) funded by the African Development Bank.

While millet cultivation has been historically widespread, there is a current need to promote the nutritional and ecological benefit of millets to consumers, producers and decision makers and to improve food sector linkages to better reward growers. FAO's support to India's proposal will cement trusted partnerships and prioritize policies that advocate for inclusive value chain development for millets.

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Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

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India has identified three main objectives for the International Year of Millets:

- Elevate awareness of the contribution of nutri-cereals (millets) for food security and nutrition.
- Inspire all stakeholders, including national governments to work towards improving production, productivity and quality of millets.
- Draw focus for enhanced investment in R&D and extension services to achieve (i) & (ii) above.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- Review the proposal by the Government of India to establish observance of the **International Year of Millets** in 2026 and provide guidance as deemed appropriate;
- Review and amend, as needed the Draft Conference Resolution presented in Appendix A, and submit it for the consideration of the 160th session of the Council (3-7 December 2018) for adoption by the 41st Session of the Conference (22-29 June 2019).

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

Hans Dreyer
Director
Plant Production and Protection Division
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agenda format along with the suggested action by the Committee on Agriculture.

Secretariat of COAG conveyed the approved agenda proposal to Government of India through embassy of India with remarks for preparation of proposal in power point mode for presentation and introduction of proposal of IYOM item by the responsible officer from India. Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, identified Dr S K Malhotra, Agriculture Commissioner as Head of delegation for presenting the proposal in FAO, COAG meeting and this item was scheduled for presentation on 4th October 2018 vide Agenda Item 4.6. The excerpts from the embassy

report submitted by Sh. R Ramesh, Attache (Agriculture) Embassy of India, Rome to Ministry of External Affairs is reproduced as such.



The FAO COAG (1-5 October 2018) reviewed the proposal presented by the Govt. of India to establish observance of the International Year of Millets 2023 and decided to submit draft conference resolutions for considerations and endorsement by the 160th session of FAO council (3-7, December 2018) for further adoption by the 41st session of the FAO conference (22-29, June 2019).



Presentation of IYOM proposal in FAO, COAG (04 October, 2022)



Question-answer session after presentation



4.6 Proposal for International Year of Millets



Dr. Suresh K. Malhotra
Agriculture Commissioner

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
Government of India, New Delhi-110001, INDIA

(Presented in FAO, 26th Committee on Agriculture meeting held at Rome on 4 October 2018)

Millets: Crops for the future

Major millets



Pearl millet
(*Pennisetum americanum*)



Great millet / sorghum
(*Sorghum bicolor*)



Finger millet
(*Eleusine coracana*)

Millets are collective group of small seeded annual grasses that are grown as grain crops, in dry areas of temperate, sub tropical and tropical regions.

Origin:

- Wild African grasses in the Nile valley and the Sahel zone.
- Subsequently taken to China, India, Americas and Europe

Small millets



Little millet
(*Panicum sumatrense*)



Kodo millet
(*Paspalum scrobiculatum*)



Proso millet
(*Panicum miliaceum*)



Barnyard millet
(*Echinochloa frumentacea*)



Foxtail millet
(*Setaria italica*)

Millets : Traditional/ancient grain of Arid, Semi-arid ecosystem

1. Millets as Staple food

- Millets were amongst first plants domesticated
- Traditional staple crop for million of farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa & Asia



International Crop Research Institute Semi Arid Tropics

- More than 90 million people in Africa & Asia depend on millets for food.
- 500 million people in >30 countries depend on sorghum as staple food
- Millets including sorghum are grown in 131 countries and are important for food and nutrition.



Senegalese women revive appetite for traditional grains

- **MILLETS:** Africa (Western, Eastern, Northern Africa) and Asia (Southern & Eastern Asia) leads in production (95%) in arid and semi-arid agro-ecosystem
- **SORGHUM:** Africa (Western, Eastern, Northern Africa), Americas (North, Central and South) and Asia (Southern & Eastern Asia) leads in production (95%) in arid and semi-arid, tropical subtropical and temperate agro-ecosystem

Why International Year of Millets?

1. Millets are highly climate resilient crops

- Climate change is affecting the crop yield and quality of many crops.
- But millets possess several morpho, physiological & biological characters- thus are adaptable to dry regions.
- Early maturity (65-85 days); high drought (150- 500 mm rainfall) and salinity tolerance; high heat tolerance (>42° C of air temperature)
- Adapted to adverse, marginal & changing environments
- Supports increased resilience to climate change



Why International Year of Millets?

2. Millets have high nutritional value

- Targeting some of the biggest nutrition and health needs globally.
- High in **Iron, Zinc, Folate**
- High in **calcium**
- Low **GI** (good for avoiding and managing diabetes)
- High in **protein, dietary fiber, antioxidants**.
- **Gluten free**.



Millets fit many of the major global health food trends



Nutrient contents of Millets & Cereals



Why International Year of Millets?

3. Millets are: Good for the planet (Take less to give more)

- Millets provide a viable option for the marginal farmers & Sustainable production system
- Grows with minimal fertilizers and pesticides
- Survive with less water
- Grows faster putting less stress on the environment.
- Multiple uses as food, feed/ fodder, biofuels, brewing
- Eaten in many forms



Why International Year of Millets?

4. Attention is needed that millets is a global priority for achieving food and nutrition security, particularly in:

- Contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2,3,12,13
- **SDG 2** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- **SDG 3** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- **SDG 12** Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns
- **SDG 13** "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts"



Millets align with some of the big initiatives: EG Adaptation of African Agriculture, AfDB TAAT (Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation)

Backdrop:

Millet cultivation: historically widespread.

Current need:

- To promote the nutritional and ecological benefit of millets to consumers, producers, decision makers.
- To improve food sector linkages for better reward to growers.
- To prioritize policies that advocate for inclusive value chain development for millets.

International Year for Millets

Objectives proposed:

- Elevate awareness of the contribution of nutri-cereals (millets) for food security and nutrition.
- Inspire all stakeholders, including national governments to work towards improving production, productivity and quality of millets.
- Draw focus for enhanced investment in R&D and extension services to achieve (i) & (ii) above.

The Committee is invited to:

- Review the proposal by the Government of India to establish observance of the **International Year of Millets** in 2026 now 2023 and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.
- Review and amend, as needed the Draft Conference Resolution presented in Appendix A, and submit it for the consideration of the 160th session of the Council for adoption by the 41st Session of the Conference.



Reply to IYOM queries in side meetings at FAO Rome



Appraising about IYOM in side meetings at FAO Rome

UNGA adopted India's resolution for IYOM-2023

On the recommendations of FAO COAG, FAO council and FAO Conference the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted by consensus a resolution sponsored by India and supported by 70 nations declaring 2023 as International Year of Millets (IYOM-2023) on 3rd March 2021. India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations T S Tirumurti thanked all co-sponsors especially Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Russia and Senegal and all Member States of UN for their strong support. The resolution considers the urgent need to raise awareness of the climate-resilient and nutritional benefits of millets and to advocate for diversified, balanced and healthy diets through the increased sustainable production and consumption of millets. It also recognizes the vast genetic diversity of millets and their adaptive capacities to a range of production environments. The U.N. member states lauded India for the initiative and its leadership in facilitating negotiations on the resolution. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi expressed gratitude (through twitter message) to all the nations who initiated and co-sponsored the resolution on International Year of Millets at the United Nations through a message. In his remarks he said, India is honoured to be at the forefront of popularizing Millets, whose consumption furthers nutrition, food security and welfare of farmers. He said, it also offers research and innovation opportunities for agriculture scientists and start-up communities.



Indian delegation with Ambassador Ms. Reenat Sandhu at Rome Indian Embassy

Major observations given by different countries in FAO council meeting on 4th December, 2018

Mr Mohammad Hossein Emadi (Chairperson, Committee on Agriculture) There are a wide range of millets and the important role of the millet in most of the Asian and African countries and the importance, and the diversity, of the sort of millet is known by Member Countries. In terms of reasoning for an International Year of Millets, first of all, millet is highly nutritious, climate resilient in terms of resilience to temperature, resilience to water scarcity and of course salinity and that is one of the major points that was considered by the COAG. The Council is invited to consider the proposal and recommendation of COAG and to submit the proposal for consideration to the 41st session of the FAO Conference on 22–29 June 2019. He introduced the proposal from Indian delegation on the International Year of Millets and opened the floor for comments.

Mr Yubo Xu (China) China has the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of the Asia group on the International Year of Millets. More than 45 million people in Asia depend on millets. We are confident that the celebration of International Year of Millets will elevate awareness about climate resilience and nutritional benefits of millets and will promote for healthy diets through increased sustainable production and consumption of millets. Asia group takes this opportunity to strongly support and advocate the proposal of India for an International Year of Millets in 2023. I would also like to make a statement on behalf of China. We would like to support the proposal from India for International Year of Millets in 2023.

Ms Elsa Simoes (Cabo Verde) Cabo Verde is making this statement on behalf of the African Regional Group. We welcome the proposal from the Government of India to promote the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets. As we all know the challenges of climate change, the increase in both under and malnourishment and the growing demography imposes an urgent need to several of our countries in Africa, especially in the Sahelian region, to overcome the pressing lack of water, thus the promotion of production and consumption of millets could be one of the solutions. Therefore, an International Year of Millets, in 2023, on an exceptional basis, could well be the opening door to promote much

needed research that can enhance its production and boost its consumption.

Mr Guenter walkner (Austria) I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 28 Member States. We would like to comment on all items under agenda item 11, International Years and Days. We are aware of the important role millet play for global food security, not just in developing countries but also in developed countries and countries with economies in transition. The topic of food waste and food losses along the whole production and consumption chain is of particular importance for the European Union and its Member States. Therefore, the European Union and its Member States support the endorsement of the proposal from India.

Mr Mohammad Jawad ranjbar (Afghanistan) The world's production of millets which grows in semi-arid tropics of Asia and Africa is estimated to be close to 30 million metric tonnes a year. The share of developing countries is 97% of this level of production. Although India and Nigeria are the two major producers of millets, the crop is grown in many countries of Asia, China, Myanmar, Pakistan, West Africa, Burkina Faso, Niger and East Africa, Eritrea and Ethiopia and in Sudan. It is rich in nutrients and superior to other cereals. Afghanistan supports the request of the Government of India to establish the observance of an International Year of Millets for 2023.

Mr Ivan konstantinopolskiy (Russian Federation) We also support the Indian initiative for the proclamation 2023 of the International Year of Millets.

Ms Jacinta ngwiri (Kenya) I want to give Kenya's support to the statements by the various Africa Regional Group countries, with respect to the observance of the International Year on Millets. However, I want to make some more observations as Kenya with respect to millets. They are grown in drought-prone areas and largely among poor communities. This makes millets important for food security among these communities. In Africa however, the production of millets crop is fairly positive signalling the importance of the crop to many countries, particularly in Africa. In Kenya the area and production of millet has stagnated over time with occasional declines during periods of drought and erratic weather. We note that the need to elevate awareness of the contribution of nutritious cereals for food security and nutrition is key. Therefore there is need to inspire and mobilize stakeholders, including national governments to work towards improving production, productivity and quality of millets. Kenya endorses the proposal to establish observance of an International Year of Millets in 2023.

Mr Thanawat tiensin (Thailand) Thailand aligns itself with the joint statement made by China and also will be made by India on behalf of the Asia Group in supporting the proposal of the International Year of Millet and the International Tea Day. And we are expecting to celebrate those international years and days which will enhance smallholder farmers, sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Ms Sadia Elmubarak Ahmed daak (Sudan) Sudan agree with the importance of this India proposal for the International Year of Millets. We would like to say that millets are an important source of food and livelihood in many parts of Sudan, especially the rainfed areas. We rely on rain for the production of millets. However, in recent years the productivity has been low in view of the climate change. Different institutions in Sudan are working on devising new varieties of high quality and high production drought resistant crops. Therefore, Sudan supports the proposal of India for an International Year of Millets and we agree with the aims and objectives of this proposal, namely the investments and better research in that area.

Mr Haitham EL hady (Egypt) Egypt supports the proposals from India for International Year of Millets.

M. Baye Mayoro diop Senegal particularly wishes to support the proposal made by the Government of India for the celebration, in 2023, of an International Year of Millet. The qualities of millet are certainly not in doubt. It is a very important cereal plant, which has several advantages, in particular that of being already very widely cultivated in the world and that of being very nutritious. Hundreds of millions of people consume millet in Africa, especially in West Africa. In Senegal specifically, more than 80% of farmers use millet as food basic household. Also, I would like to emphasize, regarding the identification of the reasons for which there is a decline worrying about the cultivation of millet, the importance of the threat posed by drought, the locust pilgrim, the increase in temperatures and the shortage of water, these are in any case the challenges that we know in West Africa. The three main objectives defined by India, within the framework of its proposal, are therefore absolutely relevant and can serve as a basis for the preparation and implementation of the activities of the Year international millet. This is how Senegal approves the proposal of the Indian Government relating to the celebration of an International Year of Millet in 2023, and looks forward to any indications that the Advice would do on this.

Mme Halimatou Kone Traore (Mali) Mali welcomes the declaration of an international year of millet 2023. I would add that in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Mali, millet is a food crop of base, because of its high nutritional and energy value. In the countries of the Sahel, millet, a food crop, is important for food security and represents often more than 30% of total grain production. By celebrating it in 2023, it fits very logically into the decade of family farming. In addition, this cereal has received particular attention from African countries following the financing by the African Development Bank through a number of initiatives such as adaptation of African agriculture and the technologies for the transformation of agriculture in Africa. This celebration will be an excellent opportunity to foster connections throughout the supply chain. Production so as to make better use of the proteins and mineral salts derived from millet, to strengthen the millet production on a global scale and to get more out of it. My country supports

the celebration of an international year of millet. This proclamation will contribute to culmination of several SDGs.

Mr Suresh Kumar Malhotra (India) India is honored to deliver the support statement for the International Tea Day on behalf of the Asia Regional Group. India is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables. India produces 92 million tonnes of fruits and 178 million tons of vegetables. Considering the importance of fruits and vegetables in food, nutrition and livelihood security, India supports the proposal of celebration of the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables. Considering the one important statement on food loss and waste, food saved is food produced. India supports the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste. So my final comments on the International Year of Millets. India appreciates the Asia Regional Group, Africa Regional Group, European Union, Russian Federation and many of the other member countries for good remarks on the benefits of millets such as high climate resilience, high nutrition value, capacity of millets to take less and give more and the observance of the International Year of Millets will definitely augment production not only for the major millets: pearl millets, sorghum and finger millets, but also the minor millets: little millets, barnyard millets and foxtail millets which are in a real sense crops of adverse climate conditions. Observance for International Year of Millets will prove as a viable option for marginal farmers who contribute more for food and nutritional security. India is ready to champion and promote nutritional as well as ecological benefits of the millets.

Mr Bukar Tijani (Assistant Director-General, Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department) Thank you for the observation. There are two things I want to say to briefly conclude my own assessment. In fact, the food loss and waste is a major issue in most regions, and this is something that family farmers and

others have produced a lot that goes into waste. It is so important for us to see what we can do. Secondly, FAO is working not just on productivity increases but also on building resilience, especially in dry lands, marginal lands, and that is why it has become important for us to be looking at days of observances of the millet, the rye. And we want to see that we also build resilience of populations who are not exposed to technologies and are living in marginalized lands. With regards to millet, we have observed that the productivity yields are going down and we are working very hard with the intergovernmental group and others and will continue that to make sure that these yields come back again. There are a number of countries working on improvement of millet yields, not just in Africa but also in China, and in Asia in general. India itself is looking at those. I want to assure that we will definitely be focusing on what our Members have indicated we be looking at.

Chairperson I can now conclude on our discussions on this item. 1. The Council, recalling the criteria outlined in the FAO policy on the proclamation and Implementation of International Years, as adopted by the 144th Session of Council (June 2012), and the ECOSOC Resolution 1980/67 regarding International Years and Anniversaries, endorsed the following: a) the draft Conference resolution submitted by the 26th Session of COAG on the observance by the UN System of an International Year of Fruits and Vegetables in 2021; b) the proposal by the Government of Estonia, as endorsed by the 31st Regional Conference for Europe, to establish the observance by the UN System of an "International Year of Rye" in 2025; c) the proposal by the Government of India, as endorsed by the 26th Session of COAG, to establish the observance by the UN System of an "International Year of Millets", to be held on an exceptional basis in 2023.

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IYOM proposal from India in discussion at FAO