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3. Role of Policies in Promoting the Production and Consumption of Millets

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3.1 Introduction:

For thousands of years, millet has been the backbone of many traditional food cultures. Though small, these ancient grains sustained communities through times of scarcity with their versatility, hardy nature and wholesome nutrition.

However, today they grace fewer plates; many farming traditions that nourished these nutrient-rich crops have waned as dietary preferences skewed towards more refined options.

Yet, unaware of their illustrious past, millets' comeback has been brewing in pockets across kitchens and fields. As seekers of balance between health and sustainability mull over today's dietary dilemmas, this understated grain has been slowly winning over palates and plates.

Both the long-held merits and recently realized benefits have contributed to millets becoming the newest must-have trend for nutrition experts, eco-advocates, and culinary aficionados across the board.

These gluten-free grains uniquely pack energy, vitamins and minerals in their tiny frames, fulfilling diverse nutritional needs. Their resilience endears them to sustainable farming solutions by tolerating fickle weather and soils, blending agricultural stability with better nutrition.

Millets' versatility remains unmatched too - as cereal, snack or accompanying lavish meals; rhetorically bridging cultural divides while suiting modern lifestyles. Recognition of this timely potential compels us to reverse these grains' unfair exile from plates and policies.

Targeted advocacy bringing together nutritionists, growers and governments could restore millets into mainstream food systems as the celebrated crop they deserve to be.

3.2 Historical Context of Millet Production:

Millets have been among the most ancient grains cultivated and consumed as staple foods in the Indian subcontinent for thousands of years. Rich in nutritional value and resilient to agroclimatic stresses, three millets: sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet—accounted for nearly half of the total crop area under cultivation during the start of the 20th century.

However, the era of Green Revolution in the 1960s triggered a pivotal transition, as rice and wheat began receiving substantial policy attention and public investments for enhancing production via modern agricultural practices like irrigation, mechanization, improved varieties etc.

Consequently, the share of coarse grains including millets in harvested crop area started on a declining trajectory, even as national foodgrain output multiplied over the next few decades.

By the turn of the 21st century, millets found themselves relegated to marginal production by subsistence farmers on India's arid and semi-arid lands with minimal irrigation or fertilizer inputs. The crop gradually faded from diets and food systems as well.

However, in the face of climate change pressures on agricultural productivity and growing health consciousness among citizens, millets have started experiencing a revival with policymakers acknowledging their strategic value once again for furthering nutritional security and ecologically sustainable farming.

But significant gaps exist when it comes to stable demand incentives via utilization in major food schemes, crop research priorities and integrated agriculture development programs for semi-arid regions.

These factors are integral to enabling a resurgence in millet production amid the crop’s rediscovered global positioning as smart foods.

3.3 Policy Landscape:

3.3.1 International Year of Millets:

Millets have long been an invaluable crop for millions of small-scale farmers trying to survive in hot, dry regions around the world. These humble grains have quietly fed generations in semi-arid pockets of Asia and Africa where rice and wheat struggle to thrive. Yet they languished as underdogs on the global stage, often deemed unfit for trade flows and modern plates.

The 68th United Nations General Assembly unanimously declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYOM). It took an ambitious proposal from millet-loving India, endorsed by over 70 nations, for the UN to unanimously vote in favour and help this crop overcome its image crisis. It holds special significance as this is the first time a country has spearheaded global recognition for a crop.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged the global community to embrace a millets-based lifestyle, advocating for an integrated approach that leverages science, policy, and consumer engagement. In India, the IYOM 2023 is poised to propel ongoing programs aimed at boosting millet production, incorporating value addition into supply chains, improving public distribution programs, and disseminating awareness about the health benefits of millets.

Anticipated similar endeavours from governments, international organizations like FAO, civil society groups, and other stakeholders in major millet-producing countries across Africa are expected to contribute significantly to nutritional diversity.

The IYOM serves as a pivotal platform for positioning millets as 'smart foods' in international food baskets and trade, fostering a collective policy push towards this goal.

3.3.2 National Policies Promoting Millet Farming:

Millets have been an integral part of traditional diets in India for centuries, but their cultivation and consumption declined with the advent of high-yielding varieties of rice and

wheat. However, with increasing awareness about the nutritional value and ecological benefits of millets, there has been a renewed interest in promoting their cultivation and consumption. Government of India has taken initiative by implementing various schemes and policies to promote millets across the country.

The policies have become crucial in shaping the cultivation, promotion, and consumption of millets.

In this diverse landscape of India, millets contribute to environmental conservation including water-use efficiency, and adaptability to diverse agro-climatic conditions. Policies acts as catalysts for a change in agricultural sector by promoting millet cultivation, provide market support, and create awareness among farmers.

Policies encourages millet consumption align with public health objectives, promotes dietary diversification and combats the rising burden of non-communicable diseases. Policies not only address nutritional challenges but also contribute to sustainable agriculture, economic empowerment, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Initiatives taken by Government of India for promoting millet cultivation are as follows:

A. National Millet Mission (NMM):

A Centrally Sponsored Scheme, National Millet Mission comes under 'National Food Security Mission' (NFSM) launched in October 2007. It is a government initiative in India that focuses on promoting the cultivation, consumption, and utilisation of millets.

This mission was launched as part of the government's efforts to ensure sustainable agriculture and address the food security challenges. Millets (Nutri-cereals) were included in the existing NFSM-coarse cereals and thus, NFSM coarse-cereals is divided into two parts i.e. NFSM-Coarse cereals (Maize & Barley) and Sub-mission on Nutri-cereals to be implemented in 202 districts of 14 states.

The crops involved in the Nutri-cereals are maize, sorghum, barley, pearl millet, finger millet, micro millets (kodo, barnyard, foxtail, proso and little millet).

This mission was launched as part of the government's efforts to ensure sustainable agriculture and address food security challenges.

The National Millet Mission aims to increase the area under millet cultivation and enhance the income of farmers engaged in millet farming. Moreover, time-constraint has catalysed the transition from traditional food option to convenient food choices in India.

Under NFSM–Nutri Cereals, the incentives are provided to the farmers, through the States/UTs, on crop production and protection technologies, cropping system based demonstrations, production & distribution of certified seeds of newly released varieties/hybrids, Integrated Nutrient and Pest Management techniques, improved farm implements/tools/resource conservation machineries, water saving devices, capacity building of farmers through trainings during cropping season, organizing events/workshops, distribution of seed minikits, publicity through print and electronic media etc.

The interventions such as formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) for Shree Anna, setting up Centres of Excellence (CoE) and seed hubs for Shree Anna have also been supported under NFSM.

To make India a global hub for Nutri-cereals, the Indian Institute of Millets Research, Hyderabad has been declared as the Centre of Excellence for sharing best practices, research and technologies at the national and international level.

In line with these objectives, the National Millet Mission focuses on several key areas:

- Promoting awareness and knowledge about the nutritional value and health benefits of millets among farmers, consumers, and policymakers.
- Encouraging farmers to adopt millet cultivation by providing them with technical guidance, training, and financial support.
- Developing and promoting improved varieties of millets that are resilient to climate change, pests, and diseases.
- Implementing measures to ensure the availability of quality millet seeds, promote efficient farming practices, and improve post-harvest management and value addition.

B. Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millets Promotion (INSIMP):

The Government of India initiated the Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) in 2007 as an umbrella scheme for ensuring holistic development of the agriculture sector. Subsequently, in 2018, the Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive

Millets Promotion (INSIMP) was launched as a sub-scheme under RKVY to boost India's millet sector. Millets, including nutri-cereals like sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra) and finger millet (ragi), are traditional hardy, drought-resistant crops grown in semi-arid regions of the country. Though highly nutritious, millet cultivation has been declining over the decades due to policy neglect and a lack of market support. As a result, consumption of millets has also reduced compared to rice and wheat.

The key objectives of INSIMP are to increase millet production, boost supply chains and market demand, and raise consumer awareness regarding the health benefits of millets.

The components of the Scheme are production, seed production, post-harvest and value addition, research activities, and awareness campaign. Strategies include supporting millet farmers through input subsidies, establishing millet-based processed food manufacturing units, integrating millets into government nutrition programs, and conducting promotional campaigns to highlight the gluten-free, diabetic-friendly properties of millets.

Key interventions under INSIMP funded via RKVY grants to states include:

- Supporting millet farmers by distributing high-yielding variety seeds and micro-irrigation infrastructure
- Establishing small millet processing units at the village level to assist value-addition.
- Introducing millets in Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) schemes to expand dietary use.
- Setting up millet-based processed food manufacturing enterprises
- Conducting campaigns on the benefits of millets for diabetes, obesity and gluten intolerance

Over the past few years since its inception, INSIMP has made good progress in expanding India's millet sector. Total millet production increased over 10% from 2018 to 2020 due to factors like increased minimum support prices. Several Indian states have also implemented millet procurement programs to establish buffer stocks and stabilize market prices. However, experts say sustained policy support is vital for INSIMP to bring about a larger 'millet revolution' in the coming decade.

C. Rainfed Area Development Programme (RADP):

The Rainfed Area Development Programme (RADP) is a critical sub-scheme under the Government of India's umbrella program - Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). Launched in 2007, RKVY aims to incentivize states to draw up plans for their agriculture and allied sectors, providing them autonomy and flexibility in project design.

RADP, initiated in 2008-09, focuses exclusively on integrated farming systems for rainfed regions in the country.

Nearly 68% of India's cultivable lands fall under rainfed ecosystems prone to low productivity, soil degradation and poor yields due to overdependence on monsoons. RADP attempts to enhance resilience through appropriate land-water use for sustainable livelihoods.

Strategic interventions initiated under RADP-RKVY include:

- Developing community watersheds, enhancing moisture retention for multiple cropping
- Promoting efficient water application methods like drip and sprinkler irrigation
- Establishing agro-met forecasting systems for helping farmers plan ahead.
- Opting for crops aligned to rainfall patterns, including pulses, oilseeds, and millets.
- Investing in on-farm and off-farm micro-enterprises around horticulture, livestock rearing etc. to diversify incomes.

Over the last decade, RADP has made reasonable strides in expanding crop area under protective irrigation, construction of water harvesting structures and stabilizing farmers' incomes.

However, variable state-wise progress shows that RADP must continue leveraging RKVY's resources and flexibility to create climate-smart villages across the country's rainfed landscapes.

D. Integrated Cereals Development Programmes in Coarse -Cereals Based Cropping Systems Areas (ICDP-CC):

The Indian government launched the Macro Management of Agriculture (MMA) scheme in 2000-01 with the broad mandate to enhance productivity and production of various crops through area-based regionally differentiated interventions.

Within this, the Integrated Cereals Development Programmes in Coarse Cereals based Cropping Systems Areas (ICDP-CC) was initiated in 2018 as a sub-scheme of MMA. The program specifically targets increasing yield, acreage, marketing and processing support for coarse cereals namely - maize, barley, oats, millets (sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet) and buckwheat.

Strategic components funded under ICDP-CC include:

- Distribution of seeds & sowing equipment for high-yielding cereal varieties
- Expansion of irrigation via community bore wells, sprinklers etc.
- Organic and biofertilizer inputs to build soil health.
- Creation of custom hire centres for farm machinery
- Infrastructure and incentives for coarse cereal procurement
- Processing units for value-added coarse cereal products

In the initial years since implementation, ICDP-CC has focused especially on uplifting production and productivity for climate resilient crops like millets and maize.

States like Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha which are leading coarse cereal producers have gained substantially from ICDP interventions. The challenges of sustaining demand, establishing reliable processing channels, and promoting farmer collectives are often debated among experts.

To bring about a market-driven revolution in cereal production, similar to the Green Revolution of the 1970s which focused on rice and wheat, the convergence of MMA-ICDP-CC should prioritize the utilization of coarse grains for food, nutrition, and fodder security.

E. National Food Security Bill:

Millets in the PDS is not a new idea: According to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution website, coarse grains have already been made available under the PDS at 50% of economic cost for BPL families, 70% for above poverty line (APL) families and at Rs 200 per quintal for AAY families in certain states.

Even earlier singular state-level initiatives have been undertaken to include millets into welfare schemes.

The National Food Security (NFS) Act passed in 2013 entitles India's poor access to subsidized foodgrains through the Public Distribution System (PDS).

The existing NFSA coverage provision accounts for cereals such as wheat, rice and 'coarse grains' - the latter encompassing kodo millet (kodon), cheena (chinna), kutki, kangni (fox tail millet), kodra (kodo koira), and other millets.

However, prominent nutri-cereal varieties like sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra) and finger millet (ragi) are presently excluded from the NFSA food basket eligible for highly subsidized distribution.

F. National Nutrition Mission: (Poshan Abhiyan):

The National Nutrition Mission, more commonly known as POSHAN (PM’s Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) Abhiyan, was launched by the Indian government in 2018 to improve nutritional outcomes among children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

A key intervention under Poshan Abhiyaan is the Supplementary Nutrition Programme delivered via Anganwadi centres targeting children under 6 years of age.

A key government strategy to achieve this has been the promotion of millets across production, processing and consumption channels, given that millets like jowar, bajra and ragi are rich sources of protein, minerals, vitamins, fibre and antioxidants.

Recognizing this, POSHAN Abhiyan guidelines encouraged the integration of regionally available millets into hot cooked meals, Take Home Rations (THR) provided at Anganwadi centres and schemes covering adolescent girls. Several state governments like Karnataka, Odisha, Chhattisgarh have already initiated pilots to test feasibility.

For staff capacity building, training manuals are being updated to include recipes and protocols for ensuring safe handling and preparation of millet-based foods under ICDS. Quality control teams are also being trained to include millet items in monitoring checklists during field inspections.

However, for seamless integration into child feeding programs, supply chain aspects regarding assured timely procurement from farmers, adequate centralized storage, quality testing infrastructure and robust distribution to all operational ICDS centres require streamlining.

G. Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry for Millet-based products (PLISMBP):

Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has implemented the Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry for Millet-based products (PLISMBP) during 2022-23 to 2026-27 with an outlay of Rs. 800 crores.

The Indian government recently approved an outlay for the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the food processing sector, aiming to boost manufacturing, enhance exports and facilitate wider adoption of processed food products domestically.

A specific provision has been introduced under this PLI scheme for encouraging market expansion of processed and value-added products made from millets and millet composites with other grains. This component carries an incentive allocation of Rs 124 crore spread over five years for eligible businesses engaged in millet product manufacturing.

Companies meeting the minimum sales threshold through newly developed millet products like snacks, breakfast cereals, bakery items, infant formulas containing millets would be entitled for the fiscal incentives aimed to offset higher domestic production costs.

It complements ongoing efforts to promote millets consumption under the International Year of Millets which includes increasing supply via higher public distribution and integration into government nutrition programs like mid-day meals or Anganwadi services targeting women and children.

Industry bodies have welcomed the move to boost private sector participation, innovation and investment in the high potential but currently under-tapped millet-based food segment.

H. Nutri-Plus Knowledge Program of Agribusiness Innovation Platform:

The Nutri-Plus Knowledge (NPK) Program of Agribusiness Innovation Platform (AIP), ICRISAT, promotes growth in the agri-food sector, through value addition and post-harvest management through innovative processing and product development techniques, thereby enabling the achievement of ICRISAT's vision of a prosperous, food-secure and resilient dryland tropics.

The NPK program of AIP has undertaken product development activities based on understanding of nutritional and functional traits of the crops.

Following are the categories of millet-based food products technologies developed at NPK laboratory:

- Millet based Ready-to-Cook breakfast mixes: Jowar meal, multigrain meal, multigrain sweet meal, millet porridge mixes etc.
- Breakfast cereal: Smart breakfast with millet flakes
- Ready-to-eat products: millet energy bar, extruded snacks such as jowar bytes and finger millet crispies.
- Cookies: Sorghum cookies, finger millet cookies, multigrain cookies
- Energy-Dense foods

I. Incentives Taken by The Government of India to Promotes Shree Anna:

- The Ministry of Food and Public Distribution has updated the guidelines to boost the procurement of Shree Anna in the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and Mid-day Meal programs. The ministry has urged State Governments and Union Territories to enhance Shree Anna procurement.
- An Export Promotion Forum exclusively dedicated to advancing Shree Anna in the international market has been established, aiming to facilitate its promotion, marketing, and export development from India.
- As part of the Eat Right campaign, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is actively raising awareness to encourage the incorporation of Shree Anna into a healthy and diverse diet.
- The Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme, launched under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, is currently operational in 35 States and Union Territories (UTs).
- The Agri-Infrastructure Fund Scheme is being popularized by the Government to encourage farmers, FPOs, and entrepreneurs to avail interest subvention benefits on loans up to 2 crores for establishing primary processing units for Shree Anna.
- Startups focused on Shree Anna are being promoted by the government to boost the demand for Shree Anna.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is actively endorsing Shree Anna during India's G20 presidency.
- Shree Anna is prominently featured in various events such as the International Trade Fair, Surajkund Mela, etc.
- A significant event held in line with the International Year of Millets was the Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference on March 18th–19th, 2023, at IARI Pusa campus, New Delhi, inaugurated by the Prime Minister.
- Continuing efforts to mainstream Shree Anna, a 'Millets Experience Centre (MEC)' has been inaugurated at Dilli Haat, INA, New Delhi, aiming to raise awareness about Shree Anna and encourage its adoption among the general public.

- Government offices have been advised to include Shree Anna snacks in departmental trainings/meetings and Shree Anna-based food items in departmental canteens to promote consumption among government employees.
- The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) has installed vending machines for Shree Anna products through the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) in various Ministries/Departments. Shree Anna and its products have been identified as One District One Product (ODOP) in 19 districts of 10 States.

Besides these schemes, there are many state-level schemes on various aspects like crop insurance, supply of micro-nutrients, and seed production, which include millets as one crop category.

3.4 Components for the Millet Development Strategy:

With the increasing attention on millets, there's still a need of comprehensive, integrated development strategy that simultaneously addresses production, demand, and research on an extensive, though location-sensitive scale. The aims for development strategy should contain:

- Increasing demand for and consumption of all millets throughout the country
- Increasing the production and productivity of all millets in a sustainable way, starting by reversing the decline of area under millets and restoring them to year 2000 levels.
- Substantial focus should go out to small millets and their particular requirements.
- Productivity enhancement through methods which improve local agro-ecological conditions as rainfed farming tends to depend heavily on natural resource quality.
- Measures should be sensitive to the multiple uses of millets such as home consumption, livestock feed, and commercial crop.
- While addressing demand-side issues, it should differentiate between three types of consumption: welfare-scheme derived consumption, market-based consumption, and harvest-based consumption.
- Benefits should be extended to all farmers engaged in millet production regardless of the district.

- The strategy should be as decentralised as feasible to ensure maximum adaptation to local conditions.

A. Identifying Barriers in Millet Production:

- Millet cultivation faces challenges due to a lack of irrigation facilities, making it vulnerable to the volatility of monsoons.
- The decline in cultivation area and the presence of certain pests pose significant threats, leading to potential losses for farmers.
- Millet production encounters hurdles with limited crop research and yields remaining stagnant over decades.
- Small and marginal landholdings further constrain the scale of millet cultivation.
- Inadequate rural infrastructure adds to the challenges, particularly in storage, processing, and gaining access to markets.

B. Assessing Market Opportunities for Millets:

- The surge in health consciousness among consumers has driven domestic demand for millets, positioning them as "nutri cereals."
- Millets and their value-added products hold potential for export, tapping into global markets.
- Leveraging public procurement programs like Mid-Day Meals can play a crucial role in creating mass awareness about the nutritional benefits of millets.
- There is an opportunity to expand the reach of millets in urban areas through the introduction of processed convenience foods, catering to the preferences of urban consumers.

3.5 Policy Recommendations:

3.5.1 National Food Security Bill:

In light of India pushing the millet promotion agenda globally via the 'International Year of Millets', policy experts have suggested proactively including sorghum, pearl millet and

finger millet under NFSA coverage. These prominent millets offer abundant nutrition, have climate resilience properties, and can enhance farmer incomes. Their inclusion as PDS commodities under NFSA can further boost production incentives, affordability of consumption and lift incomes of millet smallholder farmers - thus enhancing food, nutrition and livelihood security in an integrated manner. Trade-offs regarding fiscal costs, supply chain logistics, targeting beneficiaries in key cultivation zones etc. remain which need resolution through inter-ministerial efforts.

3.5 2 Proposing New Initiatives:

Proposing new initiatives for a millet project involves a multi-faceted approach that can address the challenges and leverage the opportunities in the millet sector.

These initiatives aim to create a sustainable and profitable millet sector that contributes to food security, nutrition, and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. Here are some proposed initiatives:

- **Millet Innovation Centers:** Establish centers dedicated to millet research and development. These centers can focus on creating high-yielding and pest-resistant millet varieties, as well as developing new millet-based products.
- **Millet Promotion Campaigns**: Launch awareness campaigns to highlight the nutritional benefits of millets and encourage their inclusion in diets. This can be done through social media, workshops, and collaboration with nutritionists and chefs.
- **Farmer Training Programs:** Organize training programs for farmers on sustainable millet farming practices, including the use of biofertilizers, water-saving irrigation techniques, and crop rotation to enhance soil health.
- **Market Linkages**: Develop strong market linkages to connect millet producers with buyers, including retailers, food processing companies, and exporters. This will ensure a stable market for millet products and fair prices for farmers.
- **Policy Support:** Advocate for policy support that incentivizes millet production, such as subsidies for millet cultivation, minimum support prices, and inclusion of millets in public distribution systems.

- **Technology Adoption:** Promote the adoption of technology in millet processing and packaging to improve the shelf life and appeal of millet products. This can attract a wider consumer base and open up new markets.
- **International Collaboration:** Foster international collaborations to share best practices, research findings, and technologies related to millet production. This can help position India as a global hub for millets.
- **Nutritional Security Programs**: Integrate millets into nutritional security programs and school feeding schemes to combat malnutrition and promote the consumption of millets among children.

3.5.3 Collaborative Approaches for Holistic Impact:

Collaborative approaches are essential for creating a holistic impact on millet production. These approaches involve multiple stakeholders working together to address the various challenges faced by millet farmers and to capitalize on the opportunities that millets offer.

Some key aspects of collaborative approaches for holistic impact on millet production:

- Value Chain Development: Establishing a value chain approach is crucial for enhancing the production and consumption of millets. This includes activities from on-farm production to processing, packaging, marketing, and distribution.
- Innovative Interventions: Introducing innovative interventions such as retrofitting existing machinery for millet processing, developing value-added products, and branding millets as health products can create demand and increase consumption.
- Farmer Support: Collaborative efforts should focus on creating awareness among farmers about the benefits of millet cultivation. This can be supported by Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and other agricultural bodies.
- Policy Advocacy: Sensitizing policymakers to the health and nutritional benefits of millets can lead to supportive policies that promote millet production and consumption.
- Entrepreneurship Development: Training rural and urban entrepreneurs, women groups, and other stakeholders on processing technologies, product preparation, and marketing can foster entrepreneurship in the millet sector.

- Stakeholder Engagement: Linking farmers, consumers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders is vital for a successful value chain model. This ensures that the benefits of millet production reach all parties involved.

3.6 Conclusion:

Millets have sustained marginal farming communities in arid regions but shrinking demand and policy apathy threatened these climate-friendly grains. However, emerging awareness about millets' nutritional merits and Agri-resilience has renewed interest from various sustainability-focused circles.

Evidence affirms millets' suitability for modern food systems confronting climate change and dietary deficiencies. As nutritious grains adapted for adverse weather, millets integrate production stability and food security amid climate uncertainties. Well-targeted multi-stakeholder advocacy and policies centered on the International Year of Millets can potentially restore these grains as indispensable in international food plans.

Production levels can be boosted by increased access to inputs, technology and capacity-building that equips farmers to intensify millet cultivation profitably despite weather fluctuations.

Processing innovations to retain nutritional value in consumer products, paired with promotional programs integrating millets into government safety nets and nutrition schemes will buoy consumption. Standards and labelling's also assure product quality while positioning millets as smart climate foods global trade shows.

The International Year of Millets is the starting whistle for countries to act in favour of these resilient grains all set to enter prime time. Policy makers need to uphold millets is indispensable crops in the fight against climate change threats to agriculture and nutrition.

Sustained policy attention and coordinated action among nations are vital to truly demonstrate millets' readiness for international trade and food plans. It calls for gathering multi-sector momentum from production to processing, pivotal to spur a millet comeback across plates, fields and beyond.

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