

## National Conference on “Millets-The Superfood”– A Sustainable Path Towards Food and Nutritional Security: A Report

The Dept of Food & Nutritional Sciences, Anantapur Campus, SSSIHL organised a two-day national conference on *“Millets-The Superfood”– A Sustainable Path Towards Food and Nutritional Security, on 24-25 March 2023 at their campus.*

### Highlights:

The **Day-1** of the Two-day National Conference commenced with the inaugural session. The welcome address was delivered by Dr. M. Meera, Conference Convenor followed by the introductory remarks given by the Head of the Department, Dr. M Srijaya. The Director of SSSIHL, Anantapur Campus, Prof. M Praphulla, and Prof. N Srividya, Former Head, DFNS delivered the inaugural address.

The talks threw light on the importance of the International Year of Millets 2023, the history and significance of millets in the ancient Vedic texts and Puranas, and the utilisation of millets to lower the glycaemic index, emphasised by the revered founder chancellor, Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba. The celebration of the Millet Year as emphasized by the Government of India for Food and Nutrition Security was shown in the video presentation.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. C.V. Ratnavathi, Principal Scientist, ICAR-IIMR, Hyderabad. Madam introduced the vast research achievements carried out by ICAR-IIMR in the field of millets. Various topics such as cross-pollination of millets, hybridization, technological constraints, fortification of millets, their health benefits, and utilisation were emphasised. Madam enthusiastically addressed the participants with the queries raised regarding the replacement of cereals with millets, consumption of millets, food, and nutritional security using millets and their use in the biofuels sector and other sectors.

This was followed by the inauguration of the exhibition. The exhibition showcased innovative nutritious millet-based products formulated by the UG and PG students of DFNS. A very informative and scientific section of the poster display was done by the III-year UG and PG students of DFNS. The session ended with Mangala Aarthi.

**Session II of Day 1** had a panel discussion titled “Entrepreneurship and startup for millets” moderated by Prof. N. Srividya, with panel members from government and private sectors. During the session, Dr. Anupama highlighted the various programs and initiatives taken by the government, elaborated on the systematic approach for millet cultivation at the rural level, post-harvest management of the millets, and awareness regarding the utilisation of technology at the farm level to increase the consumption of millets. Madam also highlighted the marketing of millets and their applications in consumer-friendly products through social media.

Mrs. Sudha Rani from KVK spoke about the practical difficulties in the cultivation, utilisation, processing, and marketing of millets at the farm level. Madam illustrated the low returns and high revenue for the farmers and industries respectively. Madam highlighted the training and nutritional education given by KVK to the women farmers to improve the productivity and utilisation of the grains. KVK also operates with multi-disciplinary scientists from crop production to utilisation of millets and creates awareness among the farmers regarding the same.

The panel emphasised the importance of primary processing and consumption of millets to curb hunger and malnutrition among children.

What is the possibility of the millets being a focus for entrepreneurs was addressed. Dr. T. Usha had given a 3-thumb rule for start-ups i.e. make it convenient, keep viable prices, and make them consumer friendly and emphasised that either B2B model (Business to Business) or B2C model (Business to Consumer) can be adopted by the entrepreneurs and spoke about the highlights of the incubation centre and the availability of opportunities for start-ups.

The panel answered the queries raised by the faculty as well as the students.

## **Day II:**

### **Highlights:**

The **Day II** proceedings of the National Conference started with universal prayers and Vedam chanting. The welcome address was delivered by Dr. Jhinuk Gupta, Assistant Professor, DFNS.

The first speaker for the day -II proceedings was Dr. S Balasubramanian, Principal Scientist, and Head, Regional Centre of Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering located at Coimbatore. Sir, Spoke on the topic "Recent advances in the technology of millet processing." His talk highlighted the evolution of various types of machinery for the primary and tertiary processing of millet. He also emphasised the aspect of by-product utilisation of millets for entrepreneurial advantages and gave the bird's eye view of the vast empire of millet processing technology that can benefit the upcoming entrepreneurs and industrialists.

The second speaker for the session was Prof. Usha Ravindra from the University of Agricultural Sciences, GKVK, Bengaluru. Madam threw light upon various dimensions and aspects of the processing of millets & high-lightened the audience about real life and first-hand projects that she has worked on. She emphasized the local to global initiatives in millet processing and consumption & the need for grain quality testing laboratories and microbiological testing of grains during storage conditions and explained different entrepreneurship activities including the proper packaging and labeling concept.

The third speaker for the morning session was Mrs. Sudha ML, Principal Technical Officer CSIR-CFTRI Mysore. Madam briefed the trends of the food processing sector in India and emphasized the scenario of the baking industry explaining in detail the use of millets in various products such as bread, rusk, biscuits, cookies, cake, muffins, waffles, extruded products, and traditional foods, as well as their impact on the various quality attributes. Madam also touched upon the arena of gluten-free products with an interesting example of cookie cake & various other promotional activities including farmer-centric activities & outlined the production and planning process for start-ups and tips for successful business growth.

During the **afternoon session of Day II**, Prof. D. Vijayalakshmi, Emeritus Scientist, ICAR, University of Agriculture, GKVK, Bangalore, explained the viability of millets and the different dimensions of food and nutritional security. Madam also spoke about the initiatives of the government of India & detailed the findings of various case studies and tribal experiences. Madam emphasized practical aspects to be followed to ensure dietary diversification at the individual level.

The second speaker of the session was Dr. (Mrs.) T Jyothirmayi, Principal Scientist, CSIR-CFTRI, Hyderabad. Madam emphasized on nutritional benefits of millets and highlighted the constraints of millets in day-to-day consumption. Madam detailed the traditional and contemporary methods for millet processing. Madam featured different CFTRI technologies for processing and developing millet-based products and focused on the various pre-processing techniques for millet and convenient millet-based products that have a high potential for entrepreneurial advantages.

The session ended with a formal valedictory note by the conference Convenor and the Director. Prizes were distributed to the winners of various competitions that were held as a part of the International Year of Millets. The conference ended with Mangala Aarthi.

*The **key takeaway** from the 2-day National Conference on “Millets-The Superfood”– A Sustainable Path towards Food and Nutritional Security was:*

- 1. Awareness of importance of millets for Food and Nutritional Security*
- 2. Designing of convenient technologies for processing of millets*
- 3. Need for R & D to assess the quality of millet products*
- 4. Diversifying millets in daily diet*
- 5. Entrepreneurial ideas and government policies for projects and funding*

**Head, Dept of Food & Nutritional Sciences**  
**Anantapur Campus, SSSIHL.**