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The Significance of Millets in the Human Diet: Unveiling Nature's Nutritional Bounty

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Rinku Bhaskar[1], Rohit Kumar[1], Sarvesh Kumar[2]

[1]Ph.D. Research Scholar, Deptt. of Plant Pathology, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture & Technology, Meerut (U.P.)

[2]M.Sc. Scholar, Department of Plant Pathology, Acharya Narendra Deva University of Agriculture & Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya – 224229

Millets, or nutri-cereals, represent a pinnacle in nutritional excellence. As members of the esteemed Gramineae (Poaceae) family, they exemplify high-energy foods, brimming with essential nutrients and dietary fiber. With protein levels averaging between 7-12%, fat content ranging from 2-5%, and a substantial presence of carbohydrates and fiber, millets surpass conventional cereals in nutritional value. Renowned for their superior essential amino acid composition, millets have garnered international acclaim, with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) designating 2023 as the "International Year of Millets." Truly, these grains stand as veritable powerhouses of nutrients, embodying a testament to nature's bounty and nutritional excellence.

Types of Millets: There are two types of millets *viz* Major millets and minor millets. Pearl millet and Sorghum are major millets while other are minor millets.

1. **Pearl Millet:** Bajra is incredibly nutrient-rich. It contains minerals such as calcium and magnesium, protein, fibre, and iron and other micronutrients with regular consumption of pearl millet to fight against diabetes.
2. **Sorghum:** Also known as Jwar, sorghum is a rich source of protein, fiber, and essential vitamins like thiamine, riboflavin, and folic acid. It's packed with minerals such as potassium, phosphorus, calcium, and contains optimal levels of sodium, zinc, and iron.
3. **Foxtail Millet:** Foxtail millet, also known as Kakun or Kangni, is renowned for its ability to balance blood sugar levels with its healthy

carbohydrates and mineral content. Rich in iron and calcium, it contributes to bolstering the body's immune system. Additionally, foxtail millets aid in regulating blood cholesterol levels, promoting heart health while effectively managing cholesterol levels.

4. **Kodo Millet:** Simply known as kodua or kodra, this millet variety boasts an impressive nutritional profile. Abundant in riboflavin, thiamine, niacin, pyridoxin, and folic acid, it offers a comprehensive array of B vitamins essential for overall health. Additionally, it serves as a rich source of vital minerals including potassium, calcium, magnesium, zinc, boron, and iron, contributing to various physiological functions. Furthermore, its high lecithin content makes it a valuable ally in fortifying the nervous system. Truly, kodua/kodra emerges as a nutritional powerhouse, offering a multifaceted approach to wellness and vitality.
5. **Finger Millet:** Finger millet, commonly known as Mandua or Ragi, serves as a nutritious alternative to rice and wheat. This gluten-free grain is abundant in protein, making it an excellent choice for those seeking a healthy cereal option. Particularly beneficial for children, Ragi aids in brain development while providing essential nutrients for overall growth and well-being.
6. **Barn Yard Millet:** Also known as Savan, Barnyard Millet is a nutritional powerhouse. Rich in protein, crude fiber, and iron, it offers a wholesome dietary option. Moreover, its antioxidant properties aid in reducing blood lipid levels, promoting heart health and overall well-being.
7. **Proso Millet:** Locally referred to as Cheena, Proso Millet stands out with its remarkable nutritional composition. With the highest protein content among millets at 12.5%, it also boasts significant levels of carbohydrates, fat, and dietary fiber. Additionally, it serves as an excellent source of essential minerals such as calcium, magnesium, and manganese, contributing to overall health and vitality.
8. **Little Millet:** Little Millet, also known as Kutki, emerges as a superb choice for individuals seeking weight loss. Serving as a nutritious alternative to rice, it is high in fiber, making it satiating and aiding in weight management. Additionally, Little Millet is abundant in essential minerals like potassium, zinc, iron, and calcium, supporting overall health. Furthermore, it offers the benefits of vitamin B and acts as a potent antioxidant, contributing to the body's well-being and vitality.

Health Benefits of Different Types of Millets

1. **Immunity Booster:** Protein intake is necessary for building the body’s immunity. Millets provide a great source of protein and helps in developing and strengthening our immunity. Stronger immunity means lower chances of you catching diseases.
2. **Prevents Asthma:** The magnesium content in millets can reduce migraines. It can also bring down the severity of your asthma complaints. The reason is unlike wheat they do not contain the allergens that lead to asthma and wheezing.

3. **Keeps Blood Sugar Levels Low:** Millets have a lower glycemic index value than most of the cereals. Therefore, consume millets regularly to reduce your risk of developing diabetes.
4. **Reduces Cardiovascular Risks:** Millets contain essential fats which provide our bodies with good fats which prevent excess fat storage and lowers the risk of high cholesterol, strokes and other heart complaints. The potassium content in millets regulates blood pressure and maintain circulatory system.
5. **Helps in Digestion:** Millets are a rich source of fiber that benefits digestion by alleviating bloating, gas, cramping, and constipation. Due to good digestion keep problems away like gastric and kidney/liver complaints away.
6. **Aids Weight Loss:** The calorie value of millets is low and they are an excellent food product for weight loss. It not only lose weight but gives benefit to people who are conscious about their fitness too. It helps them maintain their energy level throughout the day without having to eat to extra themselves constantly.

Acts as an Antioxidant: Millets helps in detox our body because of their antioxidant properties; Quercetin, curcumin, and other valuable catechins flush out toxins from our body and neutralise the enzymatic actions of organs.

Nutritive Value of Millets In 100 gms

Name of Crops	Carbohydrates (g)		Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Crude fiber (g)	Energy (Kcal)
Pearl millet	67.5		11.5	5.0	1.20	360
Sorghum	72.5		10.4	1.9	1.2	349
Foxtail millet	61.0		12.3	4.3	8.0	331
Kodo millet	66.0		8.30	1.4	9.0	309
Finger millet	72.0		7.20	1.3	3.6	328
Barn yard millet	65.5		6.20	2.2	9.8	307
Proso millet	70.5		12.5	1.1	2.2	341
Little millet	67.0		7.70	4.7	2.53	341

Conclusion

Millets emerge as nutritional powerhouses, offering a diverse array of health benefits. Rich in protein, fiber, essential vitamins, and minerals, millets stand out as essential components of a balanced diet. Their low glycemic index makes them especially beneficial for managing blood sugar levels and reducing the risk of diabetes. Furthermore, the unique nutritional profiles of different types of millets cater to various health needs, whether it's strengthening immunity, aiding digestion, promoting weight loss, or reducing cardiovascular risks. With their antioxidant properties and ability to detoxify the body, millets offer a holistic approach to wellness. As we embrace the diversity and nutritional richness of millets, we pave the way for improved health and vitality for generations to come.

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