

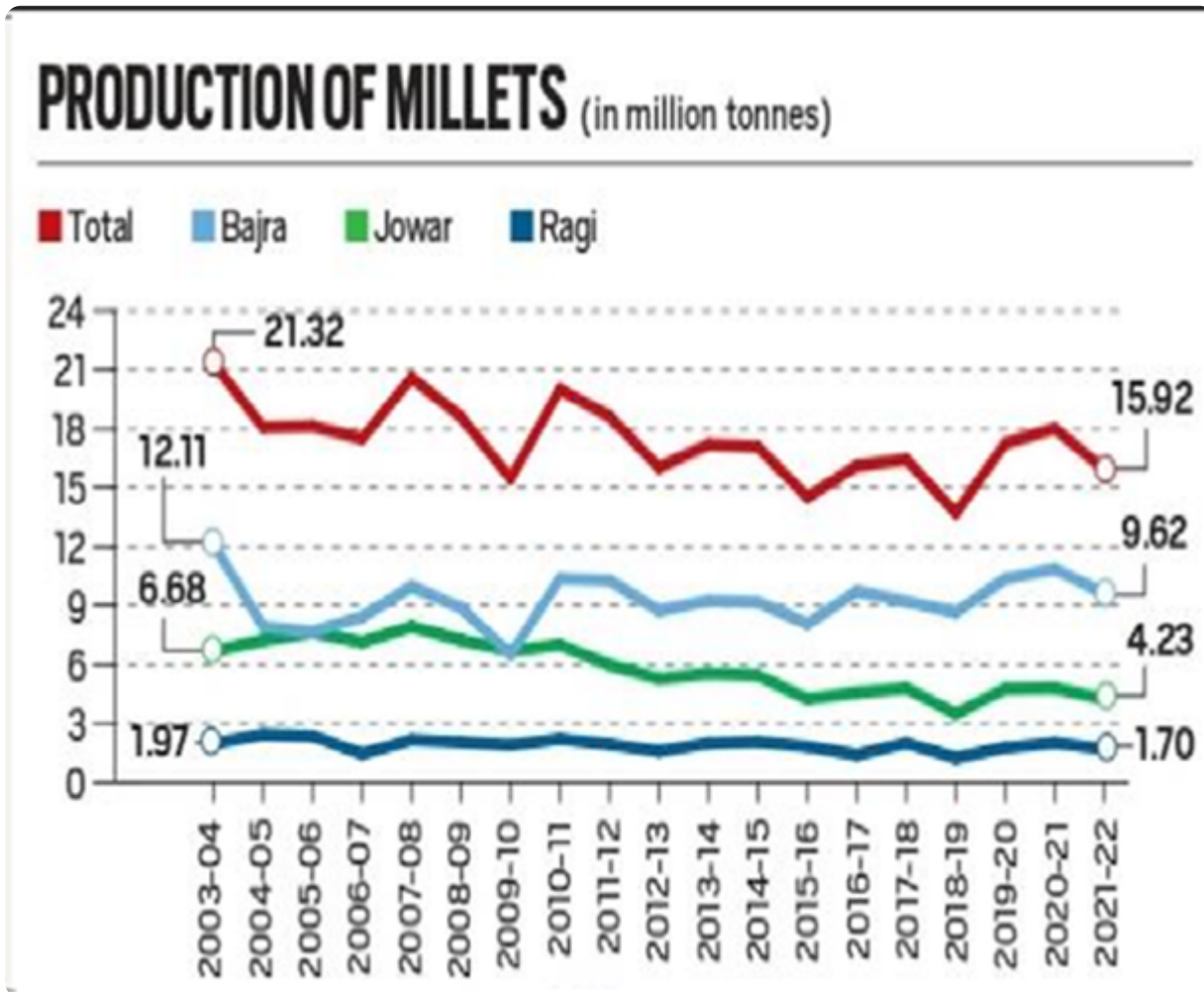


MIIRA, India's proposed global initiative to promote millets

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Why in News: Recently, India has introduced a draft to launch a global initiative to encourage the consumption and production of millets. The draft of the proposed initiative MIIRA was placed during the first Agriculture Deputies Meeting under the Agriculture Working Group (AWG), recent G20 meeting at Indore, Madhya Pradesh

A brief about millets



Millets are small-grained cereals such as sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra), foxtail millet (kangni/ Italian millet), little millet (kutki), kodo millet, finger millet (ragi/ mandua), proso millet (cheena/ common millet), barnyard millet (sawa/ sanwa/ jhangora), and brown top millet (korale).

These crops require much less water than rice and wheat, and are mainly grown in rainfed areas.

Now grown in more than 130 countries, millets are the traditional food for more than half a billion people in Asia and Africa. Globally, jowar is the most widely grown millet crop; its major producers are the US, China, Australia, India, Argentina, Nigeria, and Sudan.

Bajra, another major millet crop, is mainly grown in some African countries and India, where millets are mainly a kharif crop. During 2018-19, Agriculture Ministry data show, bajra (3.67%), jowar (2.13%), and ragi (0.48%) accounted for about seven per cent of the gross cropped area in the country.

The Agriculture Ministry declared millets such as jowar, bajra, ragi/ mandua, some minor millets such as kangani/ kakun, cheena, etc, and the two pseudo millets — buckwheat (kuttu) and amaranth (chaulai) — as ‘Nutri Cereals’ for their “high nutritive value”.

Finance Minister [Nirmala Sitharaman](#) has described millets as “Shree Anna”. In her Budget speech, while describing various types of millets as ‘Shree Anna’, Sitharaman said millets have been “an integral part of our food for centuries”

About MIIRA and its aim

The acronym MIIRA stands for ‘Millet International Initiative for Research and Awareness’.

According to Agriculture Ministry sources, the MIIRA will be aimed at coordinating millet research programmes at the international level.

It is in line with the UN declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets, the proposal for which was moved by India and supported by 72 countries.

The International Year will see several events and activities such as conferences, issuing of stamps and coins etc. to raise awareness about millets, improve their production and quality, and attract investments. The Centre also plans to make India a global hub for millets.

According to the sources, MIIRA will aim to connect millet research organisations across the world while also supporting research on these crops.

This is significant as issues like food security and nutrition are among the key priority areas in the agriculture sector during India’s G20 Presidency. India assumed the G20 Presidency on December 1, 2022.

Besides setting up a web platform to connect researchers and holding international research conferences, the plan is also to raise awareness for promoting the consumption of millet.

Funding of MIIRA initiative

For MIIRA to take off, India will contribute the “seed money”, while each G20 member will later have to contribute to its budget in the form of a membership fee.

The MIIRA secretariat will be in Delhi adding that with India being a major producer of millets, this will ensure a flow of investment from the country’s industry and research bodies.