

Embracing Millets Back to Life – National Millet Conference 2016

21st May 2016 @ Hotel Jehan Numa Palace, Bhopal

Background Note

Bioversity International in collaboration with Action for Social Advancement (ASA), L'Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER, Mali), the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (UVG, Guatemala) and the Indigenous Partnership for Agro biodiversity and Food Sovereignty are organizing a National Summit cum Millet Gala to share their learning experience with various Stake holders through the three years project entitled 'Linking agro biodiversity value chains, climate adaptation and nutrition: Empowering the poor to manage risk'. The initiative which is supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the European Union (EU), and CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), is being implemented in 30 villages of Mandla and Dindori Districts of Madhya Pradesh.

Agricultural biodiversity is an essential asset for rural households worldwide, especially for the poor and the marginalized. Diversity options allow farmers to respond to different situations and contexts and, when responses are accompanied with enhanced capacities to cope with risk along the value chain, these options can be more effective in building resilience within livelihood systems and can improve food and nutrition security. Communities' resilience relies on the use of crops adapted to new weather patterns and the way that these resources are used effectively to generate income in the market and realize household food security. Several neglected and underutilized species (e.g. Andean grains, Fonio, Bambara groundnut, minor millets) known to be stress-tolerant hold great potential to contribute to the resilience, nutrition and food security communities need if their cultivation could be supported and integrated into value chains.

Climate change adaptation and value-chain development need to be fostered in an integrated approach. If they are not, communities risk developing value chains with crops that fail because they are not adapted to new weather patterns, or developing cropping systems with crops which are difficult to market. Some farmers are already doing this successfully, but the potential impact is greatly limited by social, market and policy barriers. Until now, effective linkages between efforts to develop crops more adapted to climate change and interventions targeting agro biodiversity value chains have been very limited. Furthermore, linkages between genetic diversity and its use for resilient production systems, value chains and nutrition are also very poor. Local communities, including indigenous peoples, hold knowledge which is important for sustainably managing resources and responding to ever-evolving opportunities and threats that may affect their nutritious crops. To be fully beneficial, this knowledge needs to be supported by innovative methods and approaches developed by other communities and by researchers. This Programme will thus work on these linkages —filling the knowledge gaps and finding affordable solutions for and with resource-poor indigenous communities.

Until Now, linkages between efforts to develop crops more adapted to climate change and interventions targeting agro biodiversity value chains have been very limited. Furthermore, efforts to conserve plant genetic diversity have not been well liked to its use in fostering more

resilient production systems, value chains and nutrition. Diversification strategies that address multiple goals.

Local communities, including indigenous peoples, hold knowledge which is important for sustainable managing resources and responding to ever-evolving opportunities and threats that may affect their nutritious crops. To be fully beneficial, this knowledge needs to be supported by innovative methods and approaches developed by other farmers, communities, and researchers. Designing holistically beneficial diversification strategies requires women and farmers to be able to draw on a wide range of knowledge sources which supplement their own extensive knowledge, allowing them to set goals and mobilize their resources effectively..

The National Conference will address the themes of agro biodiversity, value chains, proposed policy amendment and conservation and their roles in nutrition and climate change resilience.

The National Conference & Millet Gala

This National Summit & Millet Gala is being organized in the framework of International UN project financed by IFAD, the EU and CCAFS entitled 'Linking agro biodiversity value chains, climate adaptation and nutrition: Empowering the poor to manage risk'. The 3-year project will have a primary focus in India ,Guatemala and Mali and will be implemented from 2015 to 2017.

Main Goals

1. Share lessons Learnt during first year of operation of the project for empowering communities towards more resilient livelihoods through agro biodiversity-based solutions.
2. Share the initiatives taken so far on value chain and constraint faced of the IFAD-EU-CCAFS Project
3. Share Malnutrition status of women and children of the project areas in specific and MP rural areas in general. And Nutritional importance of millets.
4. Policy advocacy with the decision makers
5. Sensitizing community with millet products and Millet dishes

Specific Objectives

- ✓ The event looks at sensitization of key stakeholders about the millet crops with regard to its nutrition, climate change mitigation value, and importance for agro-biodiversity.
- ✓ The key stakeholders are those who contribute directly towards the value chain for millets
 - Government: by promotion agricultural extensions, public research, and price value setting (by inclusion in PDS and MSP)
 - Industry: for value-chain development
 - NGO: by working with producers through producers' organizations
 - Producers: who have to be committed to mainstreaming millet and maintaining agro-biodiversity, while increasing self-consumption
- ✓ Special focus to be laid upon the nutritional benefits for the urban and rural consumer

Relevance

1. The **National Conference & Millet Gala** will cover the strategic theme of resilience using a holistic livelihood approach, trying to connect its various dimensions (agricultural production, markets, nutrition) through the common denominator of crop diversity and how its use enhancement and proper conservation can reduce people's vulnerability and strengthen their capacity to manage risks.
2. The proceedings will be published as soon as possible in order to share findings across the Policy makers, Nutritionists wider international community of practitioners for more resilient production and food systems around the world.

Expected Products

The products of the **National Conference & Millet Gala** will include: published proceedings, a refined project framework, fact sheets, and policy recommendations. Abstracts from speakers will be submitted in advance to allow their sharing at the event. Papers that capture the message of each presentation will be shared in the proceedings.

Language: Hindi/English