



# The Milleteer

## The Monthly Newsletter of the Millet Network of India

Volume 1, Issue 11; Nov—Dec 2014

*Eastern Regional Consultation* — “Reviving Millets” in collaboration with Andhra University (AU) at AU, Visakhapatnam jointly with MINI Partners of A.P and Odisha.

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*Biodiversity Festival in Noklak, Nagaland*—when we talk of agricultural biodiversity, we need to talk of the conservation of seeds and the soil as they are inter-related.”

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*Updates from MINI partners - Ahinsa Club & Lokshakti, Odisha*

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Compliments of the Season to all Milleteers!

Happy New Year 2015! We hope that you're enjoying this season and looking forward to the start of yet another wonderful year.

*Millet Magic* — Millets make you fit, Beat life style diseases, Control weight therefore you will “Look Smart”.

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*Millet Awareness and Breakfast on World Diabetes Day (14th November 2014)* — Jointly organised by the Deccan Development Society / MINI and Jana Vignana Vedika of Zaheerabad

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*Millet Mission* —An immediate necessity for the State of Telangana: *Chairman, Task Force on Basic Plants Biology based Agriculture of the GOI* said in a recent press release

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*Millet Names called in various Indian local languages*— Barnyard, Proso, Kodo, Little, Sorghum, Pearl, Finger and Foxtail millets

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### About 'MINI'

Millet Network of India is convened by Deccan Development Society, which over the last 25 years, has been working with rural communities of Medak District and assisted them in their quest for food sovereignty. The Network has about 120 members across the length and breadth of the country, and is currently involved in a range of interventions in about 8 states including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland.

### An Appeal

All the members of Millet Network of India who receive this newsletter are requested to make their contributions to it, so that it can be enriched and stories from different corners of the country where not only MINI works but from across the borders can be presented. Photo-features, stories, analytical articles, policy analyses and so on are all welcome.

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### Reviving Millets in collaboration with Andhra University Visakhapatnam jointly with MINI & Partners of A.P and Odisha -2014"

INDIA is being riddled with 50% of children malnourished and 75% of women chronically anaemic, a concerted focus on nutritional security is critical, even while tackling the distributional issues in securing a 'comprehensive and decentralised food system' for India. Adding to the intensity of the problem, is the crisis in farming sector where lacking support to food producer, distortions in the market place, unprecedented drought and looming climate change crisis. Several short sighted 'technological fixes' might have enhanced grain yield output per unit of land, but they have constantly undermined sustainability of food production, and are in fact eroding the very productive capacity of the resource base.

Millet Network of India [MINI] has been working towards discussing and developing the possibilities of a visionary position, one that will allow us to go beyond temporary and knee jerk reactions to address the current food and farming crisis address the root causes that has today brought us to this brink. As part of Millet Network of India's struggle to identify, conserve and develop one of India's rich bio-diversity corridors, the Eastern Ghats food richness has been widely recognised. The Eastern Ghats consists of different eco-regions along its range along the East Coast of India. This important eco-region consists of a wealth of ecological diversity and heritage of community experience in millet based bio diverse farming. People from different walks of life, as academicians, farmers, journalists, government officials, anganwadi caretakers, lawyers, media professionals, intellectuals, and doctoral have a high stake in this matter, as everyone strives and wishes for good health and prosperity for themselves and the for future generations in the region. At this decisive juncture, when we are stepping towards re-defining what the "New ANDHRA PRADESH" IS TO BECOME, efforts to build a healthy sustainable and prosperous Andhra, is what we can choose and together work towards it. In order to discuss the strategy and possible action to achieve this, the two day consultation was organised in partnership with Andhra University [AU], Sarada Valley Development Society [SVDS], SABALA Vijayanagaram and MINI, at Seminar Hall, Dept. Of Economics, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam.

This regional consultation on 13th and 14th December 2014 attempted to explore and focus on reviving millet cultivation and consumption and in order to contribute food and nutritional security of the Eastern Ghats Region. The outcomes of the discussions and the recommendations are being widely disseminated in enabling a public policy that encourage the use of millets in regular diet and rebuild health standards of our country.

Visakhapatnam is the largest city and a commercial hub of Andhra Pradesh. Most importantly, it is located on the sea shore of Bay of Bengal in the East, bordering on the North with the State of Odisha and Vizianagaram District and East Godavari District to the South making one of the most important eco regions of the Eastern Ghats thus, making Visakhapatnam an ideal venue for the Regional Consultation on "Reviving Millets". MINI along with its partners, Sarada Valley Development Samithi (SVDS) and Sabala of Visakapatnam and Vizianagaram respectively have extensively worked in association with Andhra University (Economics Department) staff and other stakeholders in the city made this event remarkable.

The event had the presence of more than 135 participants from all walks of life including farmers, scientists, nutritionists, professors, media persons, govt. officials, civil society organisations, consumer groups, etc. It was rather a rich 'melting pot' regional consultation that gave an opportunity for each attendee to experience perspectives from diverse stakeholders from across the region.

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### The participants endorsed the following “Visakha Declaration”

The Government of Andhra Pradesh must immediately implement the supply of millets under Public Distribution System. This will enormously help women who take care of the nutritional well being of their families who are finding it increasingly difficult to access millets which are a storehouse of nutrition. The government must also reorient its programmes such as MNREGA and INSIMP to revive millet cultivation.

The Declaration also demanded government intervention to release millets from the clutches of predatory market forces. In order to do this, government must recognise the inexorable link between millets, biodiversity, water, nutrition and climate change and offer relevant incentives to millet farmers so that they are never in an economic distress to be lured by unjust markets.

National Days should be observed to honour Korra, Saama and such other millets so that they also get the same momentum such as the one enjoyed by the South American grain Quinoa on the international platform.

A scientific minimum support price (MSP) for millets must be immediately announced by the Government of AP in the same fashion as the neighbouring state of Karnataka. This will bring a lot of stability to millet cultivation by infusing confidence in millet farmers.

These were the major demands by a two day regional consultation on Reviving Millets in Andhra Pradesh held at the Economics Department Auditorium on December 13th and 14th. The demands are a part of the Visakha Declaration released by the Millet Network of India [MINI].

### THE DECLARATION

We the farmers cultivating and consuming millets in various parts of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa along with educationists, rural development experts, nutrition and agrarian scientists have met at the Economics Department auditorium in Andhra University at Visakhapatnam on December 13th & 14th to discuss on various strengths and problems of millet cultivation and consumption in this region.

The two days of the conference were divided into a number of Listening Sessions and Plenaries in which we heard from farmers, who vividly described the millet situation in their areas. We also heard presentations on millet academicians, scientists, consumers and media especially from in and around Visakhapatnam

After detailed discussions of the hopes and fears raised by the farmers and scientists and a careful analysis of the issues presented, we have drafted the “Visakha Declaration” to bring out the current concerns of the millet community for the consideration of policy makers, administrators, scientists, farmers and civil society groups towards reviving millets in Andhra Pradesh.

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*Sri P.V. Satheesh planked by other chief guests on the dais*



*Millet Lunch and drink for the participants*



*Prof G.S.N Raju (VC of AU) observing the millet exhibition*

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*'Millet walk' at the round-about near r.k. beach road, Vizag*



*Farmer felicitation at the convention by the chief-guests*



*Participants at the convention in Conference Hall, AU*

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1. We reiterate our fundamental belief that Millets are not a crop, but a concept of embedded cropping system grown at the same time and space symbolising coexistence and mutual support in the plant kingdom. We believe that any solution for millets must be rooted in rural communities and should not exclude them in favour of recently-health conscious urban population and their markets.
2. As an urgent first step towards this direction, the Government of Andhra Pradesh should locally procure and provide millets in PDS, ICDS, Schools and welfare hostels and fulfil its obligations under the National Food Security Act.
3. The amazing strength of millets can be understood by the fact that they not only offer food security but also, health, fodder, nutritional, water, ecological and livelihood security. This multiple nature of millet securities is an invaluable contribution millets make to human kind.
4. We see millets as an ecological form of production and not as any chemically grown or genetically modified crop. This aspect of millets must be popularised more and more through education and awareness campaigns. To strengthen this awareness government must support and reorient universities, scientists, schools and colleges in a way that bio diverse ecological farming of Millets is promoted as part of their education and research.
5. Historically, millets have been part of the local culture in Andhra Pradesh especially in the Adivasi areas, in the form of festivals and rituals. We have to continue these in order to link one generation to the next.
6. We call upon media to carry out its historical responsibility of standing by the underprivileged sections of society and articulating their concerns by regularly publishing stories on millets.
7. Women as household nutritional producers are facing increasing difficulty in accessing millets which are storehouses of nutrition. Therefore, there is an urgent need to increase millet cultivation.
8. In order to release millets from the clutches of predatory market forces, it is incumbent upon the government to recognize the contribution of millet farmers for the conservation of biodiversity, water, nutrition and climate to offer appropriate bonuses for each of these contributions. Such bonuses will make farmers independent from market pressures and engage in millet production. A Minimum support price (MSP) for millets is a must for its sustainable production and food security.
9. We urge the government and civil society organisations to promote national days on foxtail millet, little millet, etc to respect our own heritage and not to be blown away by the current Quinoa mania.
10. Reorienting government support such as NREGA and INSIMP programmes to help farmers revive millet cultivation in their lands is extremely necessary. Programmes such as INSIMP must be tailored to help farmers to grow millets of their choice in their own locations.
11. Millets being a part of the agro biodiversity landscape of this region must receive a rightful share of the biodiversity royalty received by the government.

Millet Walk Live Coverage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBptpQMto6Q>

**MINI Secretariat, Hyderabad**





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### Biodiversity Festival in Noklak, Nagaland

Tuensang, November 30 (MExN): "One millet meal can sustain you from dawn to dusk but not rice from the market. Millets can be stored for a long time but paddy cannot be stored for more than 3 years. Even when all other crop fails, millet never fails," shared an elderly farmer from Nokyang-B in Tuensang district at the Biodiversity Festival in Noklak, organised by North East Network (NEN) with Khamniung Baptist Church Association (KBCA) on November 28.

About 90 participants comprising of farmers and community leaders from five villages of Noklak area—Thang, Thangnukyan, Nokyan-B, Lengnyu, Tsuwao and Phek district's three villages – Chizami, Sakraba and Sumi, church leaders, and NGO representatives attended the one day festival, also commemorating the International Year of Family Farming.

Seno Tsuhah of NEN highlighted the objectives in organising the festival; one is to "acknowledge the farming community's contribution to food production and feeding the world," and the other to "connect people through food and farming, and to celebrate the diversity in food, knowledge systems and cultures." Seno reminded the participants that "we are sovereign when we control our own seeds and grow our own food. Growing our own food also has religious significance because we always offer the first and best fruit of our harvest to God."

Himpao Lam, Youth Secretary KBCA while welcoming the participants to the festival reiterated that the Biodiversity festival is a celebration of coming together, sharing and enjoying the diversity that God has given.

Martina Shitiri, subject specialist, KVK Tuensang in her presentation on 'Agricultural Biodiversity in Tuensang District' articulated "when we talk of agricultural biodiversity, we need to talk of the conservation of seeds and the soil as they are inter-related." She also encouraged the cultivation of finger millets as it is drought tolerant and the answer to climate crisis situation.

Emerging concerns in agriculture - changing land use patterns, emphasis on growing cash crops over food crops, feminization of agriculture, climate change, depletion of biodiversity, use of chemical pesticides/ herbicides etc. were highlighted by Wekowieh Tsuhah, NEN. She also presented recommendations that will lead towards a sustainable future of food and farming.

Other highlights of the festival included seed exchanges between the participating villages, agro-biodiversity display, folk music and traditional food pot luck.

#### The participants endorsed the following:

- To sustain millet based bio-diverse farming and promote the consumption of millets and other diverse local food;
- To make efforts to improve the jhum fields by integrating alder trees, that will also provide fuel food;
- To protect the land, water and soil by keeping away chemical fertilizers/ pesticides and herbicides.



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### Updates from MINI partners - Ahinsa Club & Lokshakti

Our partners in **Orissa** (Lokshakti & Ahinsa Club) are doing a good job with giving concrete statistics and accurate numbers in succeeding with the outcomes and indicators. Some phenomenal work is being carried out at their end such as cash crop farmers showing keen interest and willing to grow millets in their farms whilst also converting their agricultural lands into millet based mixed farming lands. A lot of campaigning work at a larger context with the state officials alongside of millet education in schools and general public is ongoing.

#### It is indeed great to see some concrete results by our partners in Odisha on millet promotion –

- ⇒ 701 nos of farmers have already harvested millets
- ⇒ 340 nos of new farmers expressed interest for millet cultivation
- ⇒ 235 nos of farmers have switched over from cotton cultivation to millet
- ⇒ 300 names of farmers included in the approved action plan for agricultural activities (Azalea plantation, Farm pond / Mo Pokhari, Vermin compost tank) under MGNREGA
- ⇒ 55 farmers linked with horticulture department for availing compost pit
- ⇒ awareness among the students on the health hazards of current food patterns and importance of millet diet inclusion into their lifestyle

#### Impact Orientation Analysis:

- ⇒ Millet Panchayat took a decision to totally **quit cotton cultivation**
- ⇒ New seed and pesticide outlet of **seed company at the door step of farmers** with credit facilities

#### Learning:

- ⇒ Farmers' decision making process on selection of crop for cultivation need to be explored further
- ⇒ The role of champions (opinion leaders) is important in motivating the farmers in right direction
- ⇒ The project timeline need to be prepared in consultation with the farmers
- ⇒ Need to capacitate and make necessary arrangements to check distress sale of millets

*Courtesy: Ahinsa Club, Baragarh & Lokshakti, Balangir, State:Odisha*

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*Millet Magic – Millets make you fit, Beat life style diseases, Control weight therefore you “Look Smart”*



Street demonstration by the organisers on world diabetes day



Participants displaying placards at Café Ethnic on world diabetes day



have much **more fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals** than rice and wheat and are gluten-free too

have **lower glycemic index** and therefore make you full and energetic for longer hours

are **easy to cook** and offer a wide choice to pick and choose from

are **eco-friendly** as they need only one 10<sup>th</sup> of the water required to grow paddy rice and require **NO external synthetic fertilizer** inputs

provide **multiple securities such as food, fodder, health, nutrition, livelihood and ecological** unlike rice and wheat which do not provide as many

### **Millet Awareness Drive on World Diabetes Day (14th November 2014) – Jointly organised by the Deccan Development Society / MINI and Jana Vignana Vedika, Zaheerabad**

With rising incidences of diabetes in the country, especially in the urban pockets, an awareness and millet food promotion programme was jointly organised by DDS / MINI and Jana Vignana Vedika in Zaheerabad on the occasion of World Diabetes Day on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014. A demonstrative walk on the importance of regular exercise and healthy food habits such as consumption of millets in lieu of rice or wheat, more so in the case of those suffering from diabetes was conducted in the early hours of the day by the activists, enthusiasts and the organisers on the streets through placards, banners and slogans towards raising awareness on the disease. The walk concluded at Café Ethnic. A power point presentation was presented aimed at generating awareness about the benefits of millet consumption among people living with diabetes and also was the Free Millet Breakfast arranged thereafter at Café Ethnic. DDS / MINI took an active part in it. The event was organized at the behest of Mr. Vikram Simha Reddy, Municipal Commissioner of Zaheerabad, Mr. Sai Eswar Goud, Town CI, Zaheerabad, Mr. Suresh Kumar, Joint Director of DDS, Mr. Mogulaiah, Director of JVV. Various millet based products were put up for sale as well on this occasion.

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### **Millet Mission – An immediate necessity for the State of Telangana:** *Chairman, Task Force on Basic Plants Biology based Agriculture of the Govt. of India*

On 23 December 2014, The Deccan Development Society and Millet Network of India have demanded Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao that Telangana be declared a Millet State in the backdrop of the advice given by Prof. Ramachandra Reddy, Chairman Task Force on Basic Plants Biology based Agriculture of the Government of India on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014 in a leading news paper that Telangana should cultivate millet crop without irrigation which emphasises the need to rethink the state's agricultural policies becomes very urgent.

Telangana is starved of water as well as funds to construct new irrigation projects. The answer to both of these problems lies in concentrating on millet crops which can grow very well without irrigation even on poor soils. Raising a hectare of rice is equivalent to spending all the water needed by a village for drinking, cooking, washing, cleaning, etc. these amount to a severe wastage of water. Besides, rice does not even provide adequate nutrition to people. Millets on the other hand, grow without irrigation and are store houses of nutrition.

The fact that last decade was declared a Decade of Drought sends out danger signals to farmers all over Telangana. In the coming decades of the climate change this crisis will worsen. Therefore, even when there is a small window of opportunity "we should convert Telangana into a Millet State", the press release said.



Millets Names called in various Indian local languages

English	Hindi	Telugu	Kannada	Tamil	Bengali	Marathi	Gujrathi	Oriya
Barnyard	Sanwa	Udhalu	Oodhalu	Kuthiraivally	Shyama	-	-	Khira
Proso	Chena	Variga	Baragu	Pani Varagu	Cheena	Vari	Cheno	Bachari Bagmu
Kodo	Kodon	Arikelu	Haarka	Varagu	Kodo	Kodra	Kodra	Kodua
Little	Kutki	Samalu	Same	Samai	Sama	Sava	Gajro	Suan
Sorghum	Jowari	Jonna	Jola	Cholam	Jowar	Jawari	Jowari	Juara
Pearl	Bajra	Sajja	Sajje	Kanbu	Bajra	Bajri	Bajri	Bajra
Finger	Ragi	Ragi	Ragi	Keppai	Marwa	Nagli	Nagli	Mandia
Foxtail	Kakum	Korra	Navane	Tenai	Kaon	Kang	Kang	Kanghu

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