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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

**Millet consumption survey provides largest baseline for India**

**Hyderabad 13 August:** The results of the first ever large-scale survey on millet consumption in India has been published*,* offering government, central and states and the private sector valuable insights into consumer trends to help further mainstream these nutricereals.

The results of the 15,500 face-to face survey, coordinated by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), and reported in *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, showed that improving health and wellness, weight loss and taste were the top reasons for those consuming millets in urban areas.

The survey undertaken in seven cities, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai, was conducted in 2017 and data recently analysed in detail form an important baseline to track the changing consumer views about millets as more efforts are being made to promote millets.

Ms. Joanna Kane-Potaka, the study’s first author and Assistant Director General (External Relations) and Executive Director of the Smart Food initiative at ICRISAT said that health awareness alone would not be enough to influence the population to consume millets.

“The report emphasized these insights to show the need for tasty products and simple recipes made from millets as well as the need for changing the image of millets,” said Ms. Kane–Potaka.

In observing the study, Dr Suresh K Malhotra, Commissioner of Agriculture, Government of India said “the data provides good insights and is a baseline that will be useful across India and the world when we prepare for exciting initiatives in the run-up to the International Year of Millets in 2023”.

Prof. Prabhu Pingali, Chair, ICRISAT Governing Board added that the survey was an example of the Institute working closely with Government to provide scientific agricultural and related information to inform good public policy.

“Government can play a critical role in creating the enabling environment for more diversified and healthier diets, like millets, and to make them more accessible and affordable for all sections of society.

“Understanding consumers and their desires and perceptions is critical in designing these policies,” said Prof. Pingali.

In concluding, Dr. Jacqueline Hughes, Director General, ICRISAT said it is imperative for millet promoting initiatives to reach the whole population as these crops offer a multitude of benefits.

“They help farmers build climate-resilience, contribute to environmental sustainability and offer a range of nutritional benefits, including addressing micronutrient deficiencies and helping manage lifestyle disorders such as diabetes,” said Dr Hughes.

“IIMR has been widely promoting the health benefits of millets and developing nutritious products. This survey further emphasizes consumer interest and the need to keep reaching out to spread the good news about millets and exciting new ways to eat them,” Dr Vilas A Tonapi, Director, ICAR-Indian Institute of Millets Research, said about the survey.

“The data indicates that the early adopters of millets are consumers with a health problem and so they search for solutions. Second are the people who are health conscious and interested in healthy lifestyles. However, to make a big impact it will be important to reach the masses across markets,” commented Dr S Anitha, one of the study authors and Senior Scientist-Nutrition at ICRISAT.

“As this survey was undertaken in urban shopping centers, future studies should obtain similar consumer data in rural and peri-urban areas to compare various consumer segments and to develop better understanding of millet utilization. Moreover, repeated studies should be conducted to track these changes over time and their influences on changing consumer behavior,” said Dr S Nedumaran, Senior Scientist-Economist, ICRISAT, and a co-author of the study.

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NOTE: This study is part of a Frontiers journal [special research topic](https://www.smartfood.org/frontiers/) - Smart Food for Healthy, Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems.

**About ICRISAT**

The **International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)** is an international agriculture research organization working in the drylands across Asia and Africa to ensure food, nutrition and income security, and is headquartered in India. ICRISAT is a [**CGIAR**](https://www.cgiar.org/) research center. [www.icrisat.org](file:///C:\Users\Rohit\Desktop\www.icrisat.org)

**KEY SURVEY RESULTS**

* The survey showed that health and wellness were the **most common factors influencing consumption** of millets in urban areas, with 58% of the interviewees attributing this to consumption.
* The single **largest reason for eating millets** was due to a health problem with nearly 30% of the people stating this, and the next largest reasons being people wanting to lose weight and liking the taste (about 15% each).
* However, there was a significant gap between people who were very or reasonably health conscious (91%) and those who were sure millets were healthy (40%). This showed a **potential to increase consumption through awareness** of the health benefits of millets.
* The **major reason the respondents did not eat (more) millets** was that it was not eaten at home. This was expressed by 40% of the respondents, indicating the potential to have a multiplier effect of reaching many people if promotions can reach and influence the decision maker in the household. The other factors that deterred consumption include limited availability, high price and longer cooking time.
* The survey also revealed that the **most commonly eaten form of millets** was in ready-to-eat products followed by porridge, consumed by 46% and 38% of the respondents, respectively. This represents an interest in modern convenience products as well as in easy to prepare traditional foods, hinting at market opportunities for products that are both convenient and culturally sensitive.
* Interestingly, **taste** was observed to be another major reason why respondents both did and did not eat millets, indicating that health awareness alone will not be enough to influence the masses to consume millets. The report emphasized these insights to show the need for tasty products and simple recipes made from millets as well as the need for changing the image of millets.
* When asked about their **main source of health and food information**, about 85% of the people in the survey listed social media and friends/family. Social media was the single largest source, with half of all respondents listing this as a source of information. This shows social media is indispensable to the efforts to reach consumers.
* Although there was a considerable proportion of people **consuming millets frequently** (49.6% said they consumed one or more times per week), there was also a reasonable proportion of people who had never or almost never consumed millets (34.9% never consumed millets or consumed up to two times a year). Bengaluru led in terms of consumption frequency, reflecting its reputation for being a city with a liking for organic and health foods including millets and Karnataka was the first state to have a millet mission in India. Delhi had the lowest consumption frequency.