

NUTRITIONAL IMPORTANCE OF SMALL MILLETS

Small millets are very nutritious and even superior to rice and wheat in certain nutritional constituents. Finger millet is rich source of calcium (300-350 mg/100g of grain) and good source of phosphorous and iron. The protein ranges from 6-12 per cent and fat from 1.3 to 4.7 per cent .The millet protein has well balanced amino acid profile and good source of methionine, cystine and lycine. The millet grain contains about 65-72 per cent carbohydrate, a high proportion of which is in the form of non-starchy polysaccharides and dietary fibre which help in prevention of constipation, lowering of blood cholesterol and slow release of glucose to the blood stream during digestion. Millet grains are also rich in important vitamins viz., thiamine, riboflavin, folin and niacin. It is of interest to note that lower incidence of cardiovascular diseases, doudenal ulcer and hyperglycemia (diabetes) are reported among regular small millet consumers.

The comparative nutritional quality between small millets and other food grains (per 100 g/ sample)

Name	Protein	Fat	Minerals	Fibre	Carbo- hydrates	Cal- cium	Pho- phorous	Thiamine	Edible Matter	Ferous	Magnesium
Finger millet (Nagli)(Ragi)	7.3	1.3	2.7	3.6	72.0	344	283	420	100	17.4	191
Proso millet (Cheena)	12.5	3.1	1.9	7.2	70.4	14	206	400	59	11.5	73
Foxtail millet(Kang)	12.3	4.3	3.3	8.0	60.9	31	290	590	79	12.9	120
Little millet (Vari)	7.7	4.7	1.5	7.6	67.0	17	220	300	66	17.0	60
Kodo millet (Kodra)	8.3	1.4	2.6	9.0	65.0	27	188	330	58	30.1	112
Barnyard millet(Banti)	6.2	2.2	4.4	9.8	65.5	11	280	300	65	12.9	58
Rice	6.8	0.5	0.6	0.2	78.2	45	160	-	100	-	-
Wheat	11.8	1.5	1.5	1.2	71.2	41	306	-	100	4.9	138
Sorghum	9.9	2.1	-	-	72.8	25	222	370	-	5.1	140