

Enhancing conservation and use of nutritious and underutilised millets in family farms

Kolli Hills Natural Foods

After 12 years, the cultivation, procurement, value addition, diversification and sale of millet products generated a gross income of Rs. 90,19,315 for Kolli Hills Agrobiodiversity Conservers Federation

Context ●●●

Landraces of millets are preferred by farm families since time immemorial not only for their high nutritional qualities, but also inherent capacities to withstand weather changes, and for pest and disease resistant traits. Although, these crops are part of the food culture in Kolli hills (Eastern Ghats of Tamil Nadu), over the last three decades farmers have moved to cultivating cash crops like cassava, coffee and pepper. This has resulted in declining agrobiodiversity on-farm.

●●● Intervention

Since the early 1990s, MSSRF partnered with marginal farmers to prevent the erosion of millet crop diversity in the region through participatory research and development. A number of innovative interventions have been adopted by Kolli Hills Agrobiodiversity Conservers Federation (KHABCoFED) to revitalise the millet cultivation:



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Since 1990s

- * MSSRF nurtured formation of ten SHGs in 1997, different farmer-groups were institutionalised into KHABCoFED in 2009 with 47 SHGs and 86 farmer clubs consisting of 1799 members.
- * Training on best practices viz. selection of adapted varieties and improved agronomic techniques
- * Traditional and modern practices were blended to develop improved methods
- * Promotion of mixed cropping, intercropping and crop rotation contributed to sustainable management of natural resources and increased access to nutritious food at the household level.





KHABCoFED



* The Federation, with technical backup from MSSRF, facilitated the establishment of hullers and pulverisers suitable for different millets.

* The Federation exposed women SHG members to training courses on value-add product development, quality standards, packaging, labelling and marketing. Training in value addition helped women enhance their skills to produce malt, rava, and ready-made mixes of millets for additional income.



Outcomes

- 18 Village Seeds Banks established since 2001.
- Seed production reaching over 550 farm families across 50 settlements.
- 18 Village Millets Resource Centres established, here members of the community are provided with access to quality seeds and relevant information.
- 21 diverse landraces of millets belonging to different species (finger millet, little millet, proso millet and kodo millet) is managed by KHABCoFED.
- Current membership of KHABCoFED stands at 47 SHGs and 86 Farmers' Clubs consisting of 1799 members.
- Productivity in millets has increased by 20 percent and increase of 25 percent net income due to improved agronomic practices.
- 'Kolli Hills Natural Food' as brand under KHABCoFED is currently marketing 15 types of products.
- Created community assets value of Rs.5.83 crores.

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