



# **Lessons from Odisha Millets Mission**

## **A Case for Mainstreaming Millets**

**December 2021**



## Message from Director of Agriculture and Food Production

Millets-based crop systems are highly resilient to climate variability and produce highly nutritious food grains. Millets' share in crop area and household consumption is drastically reduced over years. Low productivity with the current methods of cultivation, lack of local processing units, and lack of awareness on nutrition are identified as the prime reasons. However, increasing urban demand, improvement in processing machinery, availability of improved cultivars, better agronomic practices, and the possibility of accessing support irrigation have increased the potential of realizing higher productivity and profitability in millets, thereby, nutrition security, resilience, and economic security of tribal households.



The special program for millets in tribal areas of Odisha has evolved after multiple consultations at the state level to secure nutrition and mitigate drought in southern Odisha organized by the Planning and Convergence Department, Govt. of Odisha. The comprehensive project includes a campaign for the revival of millets in household consumption, improving the productivity of millet crop systems, promoting local processing enterprises, and developing markets. The programme was budgeted for in the State Agriculture Budget of 2017-18 and is in implementation since then.

During implementation of Odisha Millets Mission, Odisha became the first state in the country to declare direct incentive to farmers for three years through Direct Benefit Transfers, complete benchmarking of prices of little millet and foxtail millet, develop standard specifications for the minor millet machinery through a recognized panel of experts from different scientific institutions, and include Ragi laddu in ICDS through the support of District Mineral Foundation. It also became the third state to distribute millets in PDS in the country.

The Odisha Millets Mission has received recognition from many quarters. The Government of India has asked all states to adopt the Odisha Millets Mission model for the promotion of millets, pulses, and oilseeds. The State Planning Commission of Chhattisgarh has asked the Government of Chhattisgarh to start a millet mission on the lines of "Odisha Millets Mission". The Government of India has set up a task force to understand the framework of the Odisha Millets Mission and to revise the National submission on millets based on the learnings of the OMM. Cambridge University partnered with Odisha Millets Mission to explore the possibility of the design of OMM as an alternative to the Green Revolution framework. The Governor of Maharashtra has asked the Government of Maharashtra to explore initiating a project on millets considering the Odisha Millets Mission. UN-IFAD and UN-FAO have supported the framework of Odisha Millets Mission as suitable for taking up agroecological initiatives. Odisha received the award for best government initiative on millet promotion by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MOFPI) - Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IIFPT).

Based on OMM's success in motivating farmers and building their confidence, the Govt. of Odisha has approved the expansion of OMM to a further 60-65 blocks, beyond the current 84 blocks. I wholeheartedly welcome the joint documentation exercise undertaken in partnership with the WFP that is considered as a learning exercise so that mid-term correction of the program can be undertaken and appreciate the study team also have to identify the gaps in program design and implementation. The findings are learning-oriented with a focus on areas of improvement for the program.

I sincerely thank Principal Secretary, Agriculture & Farmers Empowerment, and the members of the High-Power Committee on Millets for their continuous and generous support. I also thank District, Block, and Panchayat level staff of the department and our Civil Society and Community partners for their perseverance and hard work to take the programme to the last mile. I assure you that the churning of ideas for the revival of millets in farms and on plates shall continue. I hope that the report and compendium of good practices will inspire all co-travelers within India and globally in the journey to follow this dream.



**Dr. M Muthukumar IAS,**

Director of Agriculture and Food Production,  
Government of Odisha

## Message from the Country Director WFP in India

The adverse consequences of climate change present a real and present risk to nutrition and food insecurity, impacting vulnerable communities and livelihoods dependent on agriculture due to rising temperatures, floods, droughts, and other extreme weather phenomena.

Adaptation through income diversification, resilient varieties, and less water-intensive crops is needed among other strategies to secure the food and nutrition security of millions of vulnerable populations, especially smallholder farmers. It's in this context, millets are being championed as the crops of the future and a 'climate-smart crop', contributing to sustainable food systems, advancing food and nutrition security, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 2.

The Government of India has been championing the role of millets in the nutritional security in the country and globally as was evident in its advocacy at the United Nations General Assembly for declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets. Integration of Nutri-cereals in National Food Security Act (2013) for potential distribution through Targeted Public Distribution System, incorporation in National food Security Mission-coarse cereals, and observing 2018 as millet year demonstrates India's commitment at the highest level.

The Government of Odisha initiated the Odisha Millet Mission (OMM), a special programme for the promotion of millets in tribal areas, in 2017. The flagship led by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, the Government of Odisha, has emerged as the first of its kind initiative to revive millets from farms to plate, introducing millets in the Public Distribution System (PDS) and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).

For these innovative interlinkages, OMM has been recognised by NITI Aayog as one of the progressive models for the promotion of millets that could offer learning to other Indian states. Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra are in different stages of introducing a project/ mission on the similar line.

WFP has undertaken this documentation of Good Practices and Lessons Learned of OMM to take stock of the achievements and provide an overview of the operational model followed to inform its replication by others.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of Mr. Suresh Kumar Vashishth, Commissioner-cum-Secretary to Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, and Dr. M Muthukumar, Director, Agriculture & Food Production, Government of Odisha, and incessant and unbridled support of the entire OMM team in undertaking this project.

I am confident that this documentation along with the other products developed will be of immense value for learning from the Odisha experience and inspire other states in India, and other countries, that face similar challenges, and opportunities in the world to face climate uncertainties impacting food security.



**Bishow Parajuli**

Representative and Country Director,  
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# Acknowledgements

World today is looking at alternatives, to ensure sustainable food security for the world, that are climate resilient and nutritious. Millet is seen as one of the options. While the Government of India is spearheading the efforts of millet mainstreaming, it is important to understand the underlying challenges and document the experiences of how some of these challenges were addressed. The study precisely tried to look at these aspects and analyzed efforts of Odisha Millet Mission across millet value chain. The study team would like to acknowledge the opportunity and wholehearted support provided by the Government of Odisha, particularly the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Empowerment at the state level and their officials at district and block level. Their support was instrumental in facilitating access to the stakeholders for data collection as well as providing necessary data and background information on Odisha Millets Mission.

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Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the study team.

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