Campaign to promote millets across India to commence on September 28

India, the largest producer of millets in the world, will launch an intensive campaign to promote these nutrient-rich cereals all across the country, on September 28, 2018. This was announced by Ashok Dalwai, chief executive officer, National Rainfed Area Authority at a meeting that took place at New Delhi’s Indian Institute of Millets Research to prepare the roadmap for the national millet mission. Radha Mohan Singh, agriculture minister, will formally flag off this campaign for the National Year of Millets, in Pune. It will be followed by a number of activities over the next few months.

Calling it a historic day, Dalwai said, “We need to place some things on a pedestal to gain support. The mission will include focus on resource-poor farmers and the nutrition status of the country.”

“Howver, we should ensure that the national campaign retains the advantages of millets as climate-smart and environment-friendly crops. Our decisions can lead to a new Green Revolution,” he added.

Announcing plans for seed hubs for all millets, with Dr B Rajender, joint secretary, National Food Security Mission, said “The state governments will be involved in a big way, both for nutrition security, not just income security. Also there will be communication plans rolled out at the district and the local levels to scale up this campaign.”

Sharing details of the roadmap for the national millet mission, Vilas A Tonapi, director, Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), shared data on how the productivity of millets has shown a good increase across the country, in spite of pressure on land.

The activities through the year would be spearheaded by IIMR in partnership with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the State Agricultural Universities (SAU), the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) and many other non-governmental, private and international organisations.

B Dayakar Rao, principal scientist, IIMR, presented details of the road map of activities for India’s Year of Millets.

Kiran K Sharma, deputy director general, research, ICRISAT, shared his concern about linking farmers and the markets. He added, “By simply grading, cleaning and packaging, farmers could get double the income for millets. Now, there is a high increase in the prices of millets in stores. However, is the farmer getting the benefit?”

A number of representatives including from government research institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), scientists, processors and private companies participated in this day-long consultation.

At the open session in the meeting all participants shared their ideas and inputs for the roadmap for implementation of the millet mission. Ideas range from requirement for high-tech machinery to addressing shelf life of millets to need for more research allocation to add to the campaign.

A book of recipes in Hindi for millet-based cuisine was released on the occasion. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that had been signed between Nourish Inc technology and IIMR on licensing of millet value-added products was also formally handed over at the programme. Read more..