

Decline in Traditional Millet farming in Tribal Trace Areas of Mahad Tehsil a Hazard to Ecosystem

Bhosale R. S. & Inamdar V. G.

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ABSTRACT: : Millets is well known nutritional food. It is a nutritional and healthy meal useful for every group of peoples and some animals. Millet farming is one of the oldest cultivated crops in tribal regions of Mahad. Many villages in this region use to prefer millet farming due to its no cost production in today's era farming has turned out to be a money earning business which introduces many modern techniques as well as promotes vast use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides. This trend has resulted in tremendous decline in millet farming and have created hazard to ecosystem. Present research was conducted for studying decline in traditional millet farming in Mahad Tehsil as well as reasons for decline was analyzed.

Key Words: millet, decline, ecosystem.

Introduction

Mahad is a tehsil in Raigad district of Maharashtra, India. It is a biodiversity rich geographical region as it intermediates Sahyadri ranges and Arabian Sea. It also has an historic importance as it is situated in the foots of famous fort Raigad an monumental place ruled and constructed by *Shri. Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj* and Chavdar tale rebel by *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*. Roots of Mahad lies back in ancient era and so do it human civilization. Very close to nature maximum village in Mahad are tribal. Traditional millet farming was most preferred source of lively hood. For economic benefits along with millets, crops like rice and some beans are preferred due its high nutritional content. Millets are nutritionally superior to the widely promoted rice and beans. (Millet Network of India Deccan Development Society - FIAN, India). Millets cultivated in these villages are Finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*) Foxtail millet, *Setaria italic*, Little Millet, *Panicum sumatrense* and Great millet. *Sorghum spp.* Finger millet, Foxtail millet, Little Millet was most preferred by these villages as they depend on natural source of water.

Material and methods

The local villages cultivating millet were surveyed for last two years. data of millet cultivation by tribes were obtained from farmers, NGO's, Grampanchayats, school teachers and headmasters. Authentic data to calculate decline in millet farming was availed by department of Agriculture, Mahad through SDM office. Farmers were interviewed for analyzing reasons leading for decline in traditional millet farming. Methodology employed was as given by Bhosale,(2013).

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Status of millet (Finger millet, Foxtail millet and Little Millet) cultivation in tribal villages of Mahad tehsil.

Sr.no.	Village	Percent decline in Millets cultivation area		
		Finger millet <i>Nachni</i>	Foxtail millet <i>Rala</i>	Little Millet <i>Vari</i>
1	Birwadi	95.1 %	100%	98.9%
2	Khare-t- Birwadi	80.3%	100%	100%
3	Kamble-t-Briwadi	92.63%	100%	100%
4	Amshet	98%	100%	100%
5	Kalij	100%	100%	100%
Average		93.21%	100%	99.78%

Most known millets by tribal communities of Mahad under study were Finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*) Nachni, Foxtail millet (*Setaria italic*) Rala or Kang and Little Millet (*Panicum sumatrense*) (Vari). It was observed that there is drastic decline in millet cultivation in all village studied. Out of three millets Foxtail millet is totally out of cultivation with 0% land under cultivation. Land available for Little Millet cultivation will soon be or have nearly been abolished. As compared to other millets Finger millet shows less but

notable decline. Finger Millet was found to be more preferred millet for cultivation due to regular consumption.

The noticeable reason for decline in millet cultivation was non sustainable economic benefits, low economic value, decreasing knowledge about traditional food, farming and processing, retarded area of land under cultivation and availability of stable market. Similar observations were made by Bhosale (2013); Kanade and Bhosale (2013). We can also observe increasing trend toward conventional farming of specific crops like maize, rice and beans which are more reliable but are intruders in millet cultivation zone. Research and development of these crops have made its cultivation technology more familiar to farmers which are causing fast and irreversible effect on millet farming zones. This threat was also observed by researchers like Joseph *et al.*, (2013) due to unnatural promotion of Maize. Most of the tribal villages of Mahad are residing on hills and slopes. These villages face geographical disturbance now and then which makes farming less efficient. Supportive observation is mentioned by Satyal (2010). Other reasons for decline are wild fauna like Monkeys and Peacock who feed on young grains of these millets in open fields, unnatural rainfall and availability of improved varieties and cultivation technique. Further changing life style have forced decline in cultivation simultaneously led to decline in consumption. Sood *et al.*, (2015).

Conclusion

The way and speed in which millet cultivation is on decline within in no time we might lose our natural traditional crop millets forever. Tribal communities use to practice millet farming because of its adaptability to this environment. Therefore millet farming needs promotion in these regions. Improved practices of millet cultivation will lead to nutrition and food security for tribal communities. Now a day natural and organic food is in demand and most preferred by higher classes. They purchase many products which are named as fiber rich with millet or multigrain are usually falsely promoted by substitutes. This craze for natural food may help in the cause to increasing millet production. Making millets famous will save millets and tribal food as well as our natural and traditional way to conserve wild crop plants. In conclusion I would propose conservation of millets under title “Making millets famous”. Need for millet conservation and cultivation is immensely under requirement as nontraditional and conventional food crops are in high demand. Cultivation techniques of these crops require large amount of synthetic chemicals as fertilizer and pesticides which, as we know are hazardous to nature and life on earth.

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