

Millet magic: Farmers, experts unite for sustainable agricultural practices

Over 580 farmers engaged with experts on millet cultivation, nutritional benefits
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Officials and farmers at the fair organised by the Agriculture Department in Sunder Nagar. Photo: Jai Kumar

The Department of Agriculture successfully organised the one-day Millet Fair 2025 at the Farmer Training Centre in Sundernagar, Mandi, highlighting the significance of millets in nutrition, sustainability, and agricultural resilience. Themed “Anaj Se Swasthya Tak - Millets ka Safar,” the event was attended by C Palrasu, Secretary of Agriculture, as the chief guest. Other notable attendees included Padmashri Nek Ram Sharma, Joint Director of Agriculture (Northern Region) Dharamsala, Dr Rahul Katoch (Sub-Divisional Officer, Civil), Amar Negi (state president of Kisan Union), and Sita Ram Verma, along with district and block-level officials from the Agriculture Department.

The fair attracted 584 progressive farmers from Mandi and surrounding districts, providing them with an opportunity to engage with experts on millet cultivation, nutritional benefits, and value addition. Dr Ram Chander Chaudhary, Deputy Director of Agriculture, Mandi, welcomed the dignitaries and participants, setting the stage for an insightful day. The event began with a millet pledge and a song composed by RAA Hyderabad, emphasising the journey of millets from farm to table.

Expert insights and farmer engagement

Dr Kavita Sharma, Scientist from KVK Sundernagar, and Dr Manju Lata Sisodiya, Assistant Professor from MLSM College, Sundernagar, delivered in-depth sessions on millet production technology, its nutritional advantages, and environmental resilience. Farmers had the chance to discuss their challenges and receive solutions from agricultural scientists. Several progressive farmers and self-help groups (SHGs) shared their experiences and innovations in millet farming.

One of the fair’s major attractions was the exhibition of millet-based products and modern agricultural technologies. Stalls by the Department of Agriculture, Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojna, JICA Project, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, HIMRAA, and self-help groups showcased millet products, cultivation techniques, and recipes. Visitors also got to sample various millet-based dishes, promoting their incorporation into daily diets.

Millet farming success stories and future prospects

Padmashri Nek Ram Sharma, a pioneer in natural farming, shared his expertise on millet cultivation, emphasising its health benefits and role in combating nutrient deficiencies and lifestyle diseases. Young entrepreneur Yashpal Chandel narrated his success story of starting a millet-based product business, which now operates in five districts of Himachal Pradesh and has expanded to e-commerce platforms like Amazon.

Sita Ram Verma, state president of HP Kisan Union, addressed challenges faced by farmers, while Dr Rahul Katoch, Joint Director of Agriculture (North Zone), Dharamsala, discussed the potential for value addition in millet farming.

Chief guest C Palrasu, in his concluding address, assured farmers of the government's commitment to promoting millet cultivation. He announced minimum support prices for naturally grown crops, setting wheat at Rs 60 per kg, maize at Rs 40 per kg, and turmeric at Rs 90 per kg. He also encouraged farmers to explore millet-based culinary innovations developed by self-help groups.

25 progressive farmers honoured

In recognition of their contributions to millet farming, 25 progressive farmers were honoured with mementoes for their dedication to sustainable agriculture. The event concluded with a vote of thanks from Dr Prachi, Principal of the Farmer Training Centre, Sundernagar.

The fair underscored the rising importance of millets in the region, both as a nutritional powerhouse and an environmentally resilient crop. With the government's continued support and growing farmer participation, the fair reflected Himachal Pradesh's commitment to sustainable agriculture, food security, and community well-being.

Source: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/himachal/millet-magic-farmers-experts-unite-for-sustainable-agricultural-practices/>