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CUO Organises International Conference on Millets as Future Food

To promote the importance of millet as a staple and nutritional food, a three-day International Conference on "Millets as Future Food for Sustainable Planet" was inaugurated at the Central University of Odisha on 10 January 2025 at its Sunabeda Campus, organised by the Department of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources. The Vice-Chancellor Prof. Chakradhar Tripathi formally inaugurated the international conference. Others presented on the dais were Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Former DG, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), as Chief Guest; Dr. Kuldeep Singh, Head, GeneBank, International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics, India as Keynote Speaker; Prof. Sharat Kumar Palita, Professor and Dean of the School of Biodiversity & Conservation of Natural Resources, CUO; Dr. Debabrata Panda, Asst. Professor & Convener of the Conference and Dr. Kakoli Banerjee, Asst. Professor and Co-convener.

While inaugurating the Conference, Prof. Tripathi stressed the need for promotion of millet as a staple food of India. Millet was an important food of India during 19th Century and before, but due to western influence, we followed the other farming and millet farming was on the back foot. It is time to revive the use of millets, and every Indian should get the message of millet use and its benefits, he said. Due to the impact of western culture, we ignored the importance of millet as a staple food. Now it's time we should focus on growth and development of millets, he said. Millet is not a grain, but a super grain which the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modiji named as 'Shree Anna'. We not only should improve millet farming but also should create awareness on the positive benefits of millet, he urged.

Dr. Mohapatra, in his speech, said that as a member of the Central team of millets, he is working on the popularity of millet for future food. After the year 2023 declared as International Year of Millets, the governments, both centre and state try to revive the production of millets as an important source of food. Millets are climate resilient and its nutritional value is very high. It's high time our mindset should be changed towards the use of millets in various forms of food, he said. Dr. Singh, as the Keynote speaker, said that only producing more millets will not solve the problem, but it should ensure changing food habits, cooking habits and innovating new forms of cooking and eating of millets. Diversification of food system is more important, he said. Prof. Palita explained the theme of the Conference. He said that in the present context of food scarcity all over the world, millet is the best solution for survival. Millet is important due to its adaptability and nutritional value. This Conference will be helpful in finding out the solutions for food problem in Odisha and particularly in Koraput District. Dr. Debabrata Panda, Convener of the Conference, delivered the Welcome address and Dr. Kakoli Banerjee, co-convener of the Conference proposed the Vote of thanks and coordinated the events. Other eminent dignitaries present on the occasion were Dr. K. Mudith Mewan, Wayamba University, Sri Lanka, Dr. Ajaya Biswal, University of Georgia (U.S.A), Dr. Ranjit K. Sahu, School of Medicine, University of Virginia and other delegates from other countries and India. The Vice Chancellor and the invited guests also inaugurated a millet exhibition on the occasion. Various organizations and NGOs presented their products related to millets. The three-day conference will witness presentations by various delegates in and outside India and the outcome is expected to be positive and result oriented.

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