



New varieties of millet released for dry land

NEW DELHI (UNI): Four new varieties of pearl millet, commonly known as bajra, have been identified for release, which would help in providing food and fodder security for people of drought prone areas.

Considered as bread and butter of the rural people, particularly in dry land regions, Pearl Millet is an important crop in the country.

Pearl millet registered highest production (11.79 mt) and highest yield (1134 kg/ha) during 2003-04 in the country.

The new varieties were released at an Annual Group Meeting of All India Coordinated Pearl Millet Improvement Project, held last week at Junagadh.

MH 1234 hybrid, has been developed by Junagadh Agricultural University, Jamnagar, has been recommended for growing in rainfall scanty areas (less

than 400 mm) of north-western parts of Rajasthan, parts of Haryana and Gujarat. With average mean yield of 2448 kg/ha, the proposed variety has shown high level of downy mildew resistance and high level of drought resistance.

It has a synchronous tillering, bold grain size and attractive seed colour which would help farmers in getting better market price. It also has bristled earhead, which will be helpful in reducing bird damage.

Another hybrid MH 1236 also shows similar characteristics with average mean yield of 2406 kg/ha.

MH 1192 hybrid has been identified for growing in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Developed by Zuari Seeds Ltd. Bangalore, this variety has shown average mean yield of 3920 kg/ha. The hybrid has exhibited

high degree of resistance to downy mildew and moderate levels of rust resistance.

Broad leaves, wavy leaf margins and smooth surface constitutes new hybrid MSH 155, developed by Pioneer Overseas Corporation, Hyderabad. Identified for growing in summer season under irrigated condition in pearl millet growing areas, it has average mean yield of 4602 kg/ha.

Rajasthan constitutes about 49 per cent area and 39 per cent of production of pearl millet in the country, followed by Maharashtra with 17 per cent area and 15 per cent production and Gujarat with 10 per cent area and 14 per cent production. The dual purpose nature of pearl millet offers both food and fodder security in semi-arid tropical regions of the country.

Cost of cultivation of pearl millet is the lowest as

compared to other commercial crops and fine cereals because of low labour requirement, negligible cost of fertilizers and nutrient management.

Among many grasses, which man has succeeded in domesticating, pearl millet is one of the most tolerant to drought conditions. As a cereal for human food, it is considered to be highly palatable and is among the most nutritional of grain crops.

The protein content is not only high but it is also of good quality.

It has protein (11.31-19.62 per cent), starch (35.69 per cent), total sugar (2.0-2.7 per cent), fat (3.0-4.60 per cent) and also has good amount of phosphorous and iron.

Owing to its shorter duration (90 days) as compared to cereals like rice, sorghum and maize,