

PRESS RELEASE

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Korra or Quinoa!

Quinoa, a South American grain grown by Quechua peasant farmers on the high altitudes of Andes Mountains sells at a whopping Rs.1600 per kg at Banjara Hills, Hyderabad. A famous Bollywood actor Ranbeer Kapoor proudly proclaims that he is eating Quinoa regularly. With an equal pride, a farmer in Vishakapatnam in coastal AP and Ananthapur in semi desert Rayalaseema advertise that they are also growing Quinoa. ICAR, the Indian Council of Agriculture Research instructs its scientists to research the agronomy and nutrition of Quinoa in their institutions. And the world celebrates the International Year of Quinoa.

India goes Gaga over it. Why this insane craze for Quinoa? Anything that comes from foreign shores gets a crazy following among the Indian middle class. Why does any hype built around a product meets with an unquestioned acceptance by them?

This is the question uppermost in the minds of the food activists since the Quinoa craze began in India. First it was Maize, then Oats, then Soya. Then the parade of grains from abroad trampling over our own goes on abated. Take Quinoa for example and compare it with India's own millets such as Bajra (Pearl Millet), Korra (Foxtail Millet), Sama (Little Millet) and Variga (Proso Millet), each of them compete nutrient to nutrient with Quinoa as the following table illustrates.

Quinoa Vs Foxtail Millet

Nutritional Parameters per 100g	Quinoa	Foxtail Millet	Variga (Proso Millet)	Kodo Millet
Energy	368 kcal	364 kcal	356 kcal	353 kcal
Fat	6 g	2.7 g	1.7 g	3.6 g
Fibre	7 g	3.5 g	1.7 g	6.0 g
Protein	14 g	10.5 g	10.6 g	9.8 g
Calcium	31.5 mg	14 mg	9 mg	35 mg
Iron	2.76 mg	4.8 mg	2.1 mg	1.7 mg
Carbohydrates	64 g	73.1 g	73 g	66 g

Quinoa is bandied about as a high proteinous grain. But Korra has almost same energy as Quinoa. Iron, whose deficiency is very high among Indian women, is

plenty in Korra by almost 2 times that of Quinoa. Korra is also a low fat grain and therefore answers the concerns of obese people. A mixed millet diet can compensate for all the nutritional and vitamin deficiencies that our poor population suffers from. And similar is the case with minerals. But Korra grown on the local soils sells at Rs.80 (1/20th of the price of Quinoa). One of the principles of Ayurveda says that the healthiest food is the one that is locally produced.

We are not even sure how Quinoa will perform on our soils agronomically. As a matter of fact Korra and other millets have the amazing capacity to grow on very poor soils of dry land India with little or low irrigation support. It is also the crop growing by millions of poor farmers. Therefore instead of supporting them by creating a millet environment among the Indian consumers, we should not be falling prey to a hyped up Quinoa craze emanating from the USA.

Health Benefits of Eating Millet

Nutritionists endorse that “In addition to the matrix of nutrients in their dietary fibers, millets have a wide variety of additional nutrients and phytonutrients that reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Eating whole grains, such as millet, has been linked to protection against atherosclerosis, ischemic stroke, diabetes, insulin resistance, obesity, and premature death. Eating a serving of whole grains, such as millet, at least 6 times each week is an especially good idea for postmenopausal women with high cholesterol, high blood pressure or other signs of cardiovascular diseases (CVD). Compounds in whole grains that have cholesterol-lowering effects include polyunsaturated fatty acids, oligosaccharides, plant sterols and stanols, and saponins”.

“In recent years, consumer awareness has led to revitalized interests for health promoting components that can be consumed as a part of daily diet. These products have a special significance in a country like India, where malnutrition and infectious diseases remain a silent emergency. A significant proportion of the population of India is vulnerable to hidden hunger. In addition, very high rates of mortality occur due to coronary heart-diseases (CHDs), cancer and diabetes - all related to diet. Nutritional security is a key issue in agriculture at the global level. Health concerns are attributed to poor nutrition in low income segments of the population, whereas the affluent strata of the society need to address health issues that emerge from changing lifestyles and food habits”. Say nutrition scientists and experts.

In View of the above facts the Millet Network of India demands:

1. *An active state support for millets through a nutrition based price for them.*

2. *Provision to millet farmers of **bonus for nutrition, biodiversity and environmental benefits** that they provide by growing millets on their farms.*
3. *In view of the acute water crisis that stares Indian agriculture in the face Government should **declare water bonus for millet farmers** who use no irrigated water at all to grow their crops.*
4. *Millet farmers also help save enormous amounts of power. As frequently pointed out, agriculture is one of the biggest drains on power and by not using power, millet farmers save the nation a huge amount of power. **Therefore they must get a power bonus.***
5. *In the decades of climate change, malnutrition will be one of the biggest problems India will face. By promoting millets which offer affordable nutrition for millions of poor Indians, **millet farmers must be offered a nutritional bonus.***
6. *Taking cue from the Government of Karnataka, millet farmers must get a bonus of Rs.5000/- per acre for every acre of millets that they cultivate.*

It is time that our Government wakes up to the new age crisis of climate change and treats millets as a new age solution to this crisis.

In short instead of climbing onto the band wagon of the International Year of Quinoa, India might demand and celebrate an International Year of Millets.

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Comparative table on Millet vs Quinoa

Millets Benefits	Quinoa Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Millets have low glycemic index 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quinoa has low glycemic index
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps in increasing your heart health as these are rich in magnesium. • Protects against diabetics due to higher levels of magnesium content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High in minerals such as magnesium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is gluten free hence helpful for gluten intolerance people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is very high in proteins and essential amino acids such as lysine content.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detoxifies the body with the presence of antioxidants like quercetin, curcumin, ellagic acid and various other beneficial catechins helps to rid the body system of any foreign agents and toxins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has high amounts of antioxidants that neutralize free radicals and are believed to help fight ageing and many diseases.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps in promoting the effects of good cholesterol HDL and eliminating bad cholesterol LDL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High in fibre content which helps in reduce blood sugar levels, lower cholesterol, increase fullness and helps in weight loss
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves digestive health and reduces the chances of serious gastrointestinal problems like ulcers, kidney problems, liver and optimize immune system as these are closely related to body's metabolic activities. • Reduces the risk of cancer in women upto 50% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains potent bioactive substances called quercetin and kaempferol these molecules have anti inflammatory, anti viral, anti cancer and anti depressant effects.