

MINOR MILLETS

Minor millets are extensively cultivated in tribal and hilly areas but have not received adequate attention for their varietal improvement. These millets continue to be a part of subsistence agriculture. These have a common feature of being capable of growing in very marginal sloppy fields without any input and are invariably grown under rainfed conditions. In Himachal Pradesh, finger millet (*ragi*) is the most important minor millet. The other millets grown are Proso millets or common millet (*cheena*) and Italian millet or Foxtail millet (*kangni*). In kangni, HKC-8 and HKC-9 varieties may be grown.

RAGI

Soil

Ragi is cultivated on a variety of soils ranging from rich loam to poor shallow upland soils.

Preparation of land

Two to three ploughings are necessary for preparing a good seed bed. Well rotten farm yard manure @ 300 quintals per hectare should be added and mixed in the soil before sowing.

Sowing time

The appropriate time is first week of May. However, it can be sown up to the third week of May depending upon the weather conditions. In low altitude areas and in marginal lands, sowing can be done up to third week of June.

Method of sowing, spacing and seed rate

The appropriate method of sowing is by *kera* in lines at a distance of 25 cm from row to row. Thinning should be done after about three weeks of germination to maintain a distance of 10 cm from plant to plant. 18 kg seed per hectare is recommended to get optimum plant population.

Interculture and weeding

Two hoeings and weedings are sufficient to control the weeds. First hoeing is done at the time of thinning and the second during mid July.

Irrigation

In areas with a rainfall of 60 to 75 cm, it is cultivated as a rainfed crop. In areas where the rainfall is less, at least two irrigations are necessary, first immediately after thinning and second in the first week of September. Under irrigated conditions, yield up to 15 q/ha can be obtained.

Manuring

Application of 60 kg N per hectare is recommended. Half N should be applied at the time of sowing. The remaining N should be applied about 40-45 days after sowing.

Harvesting and threshing

The crop is ready for harvesting by the first week of October. The plants are cut close to the ground. Stocks are allowed to wither for a day or two in the field, then bundled and stocked for sometime depending upon the weather conditions before threshing. Dried ear heads are beaten with sticks to separate the grains or the sheaves are trodden over by bullocks. The separated grains are winnowed and cleaned.