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# Millet Network plans to form advocacy groups

## Our Bureau

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With a view to popularising millets in the country, Millet Network of India, a coalition of NGOs, scientists and farmers, has decided to form advocacy groups.

"We will start groups of Parliamentarians, scientists, media professionals to campaign for the promotion of millets," Mr P.V. Satheesh, Convenor of Millet Network, said.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, he said that millets were drought-resistant crops. "Hence they are climate-change-compliant. All these

crops are bio-diverse and help fix carbon into the soils. The Governments should encourage millet cultivation in a big way," he said.

As part of the advocacy, Millet Network representatives submitted memoranda to the Chief Minister, Dr Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, and the Agriculture Minister, Mr N. Raghuvendra Reddy, asking them to announce bonus for millet farmers.

## AREA DECREASING

Mr Satheesh regretted that the area under millets cultivation had decreased to 21.31 million hectares from 36.20 m ha 50 years ago.

During the same period, the area under paddy has gone up to 42.85 m ha from 33.14 m ha. The wheat area too has increased to 26.2 m ha from 12.84 m ha, threatening nutritional security of the country, Mr Satheesh said.

The millet area had come down despite the fact that the gross cropped area increased to 185.71 m ha from 150.51 m ha in 1956.

He said millets, rich in fibre and nutrients, required far lesser quantities of water, while rice, wheat and sugar cane were not ecologically friendly as they consumed huge quantities of water.