

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AND DIFFICULTIES OF MILLET ENTREPRENEURS IN TAMILNADU

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The dietary habits of consumers are changing quickly, and people are becoming more interested in eating sustainable and healthful foods. Nowadays people started having millets-based value-added food products to protect themselves from nutrient deficiencies and as well as many diseases. Profiting from the trend, food entrepreneurs are expanding their current product lines to include healthier options made with alternative components like millets. Millets are ancient crops. They can be utilized to create a range of value-added goods and have a high nutritional value. In addition to these advantages, millets have the added benefit of being easy to cultivate; they don't need artificial fertilizers, can cohabit with pests and weeds, and can withstand rainy circumstances. So, there are vast business opportunities for millet-based food products. Many startups have been established recently especially to grab the opportunities in millet food products. The present study examines the business opportunities and difficulties by millet entrepreneurs. The data was collected from the 50 millet entrepreneurs by using a questionnaire. The convenience sampling method is used to collect the data. The study reveals that increased knowledge of millets, people returning to their customs, and educational food labelling are important opportunities. On the other hand, there were also significant challenges, such as a lack of familiarity, preparation difficulties, sensory qualities, lack of affordability, a poor reputation, mistrust from customers, and the longer gestational cycle of millets, problems in storing and packaging.*

**Keywords:** *Millets, food products, Entrepreneurs, Environmental change.*

## INTRODUCTION

Mobility, growth in urbanization and globalization, and environmental degradation have all had detrimental effects on people's health (Celik, 2020). People started looking for healthy nutrient food supplements. Millets are highly nutritious rich ancient grains that probably help to address environmental changes and challenges as well as global food security. The millet-based food products serve the nutritious needs of the people perfectly.

There are different types of millets are growing in India. And it is classified based on the size of the millet grain. They are divided into major and minor millets. Together, the three major millets – Sorgham, pearl millet, and finger millet – are 90-95% of the land used for cultivation. Little Millet, Foxtail Millet, Barnyard Millet, Kodo Millet, Proso Millet, and Browntop Millet are among the other millets that are classified as minor millets (Tapas Chandra Roy, Millet Advisor).

The year 2023 is being celebrated as the International Year of Millets (IYoM 2023) as declared by the United Nations General Assembly. To contribute to this vision, FSSAI, under the aegis of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, is also promoting the consumption of millets (Shree Anna) as part of its flagship Eat Right India initiative (*Millets 2023*, n.d.). The government has taken lots of initiative to create awareness about millet products by conducting awareness generation on millets and their benefits through workshops, Conferences and seminars. Inspiring the inclusion of millets in the menus of lodging facilities, dining establishments, college canteens, etc. Additionally, the government hosts events like Millet Mela, Monday millet, Walkathon, Marathan, Global Millet (Shree Anna) Conference, Round Table Conference on Millets and Eat right millet Challenge for campus (*Millets 2023*, n.d.). These kinds of initiatives and support from the government increases and induces the business opportunities for the millet food products.

There are some branded millet-based food products selling organizations available in Tamil Nadu like Millet India (South Indian Grains Corporation), Deepan Mills, Green Light Foods LLP, Vglobe Exports, Navadhane Agro Food Private Limited, Vamsar Exports, Mannvasanai, Blue Green exports, Slurrp farm, True Elements, Graminway etc.. These organizations focus more on millet-based food products, both fully processed as well as semi-processed millet-food products. There are many companies started focusing on millet food products to utilize the opportunities available in the market.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a) What strategies do millet entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu employ to effectively use the business opportunities available for millet-based food products while addressing the difficulties of the millet business?
- b) What are the potential opportunities for millet entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu?
- c) What are the key challenges faced by millet entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu?
- d) How millet entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu can control their business design thinking to overcome the challenges?

## OBJECTIVES

- To find business opportunities available in the market for millet-based food products in Tamil Nadu.
- To find the key challenges faced by the millet entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu.
- To find the strategies used by the millet entrepreneurs to overcome the challenges.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the changing food business, millet entrepreneurship offers both potential and problems. Key potential includes a return to traditional diets and heightened consumer awareness of the health advantages of millets (Shah et al., 2023).

Millet appeal to consumers who are concerned about their health and food security because of their nutritional profile and tolerance to drought (Ahmed S. M. Saleh et al., 2013).

Nonetheless, entrepreneurs encounter obstacles such as unfamiliarity, complexity in preparation, and sensory characteristics (P. Shah et al., 2023).

Government programs are anticipated to increase consumer demand and start-ups by 2030 in spite of these challenges (Singh et al., 2024).

Although different millet products have historically been made by fermentation and malting, there is a trend toward the development of commercial, ready-to-eat alternatives (J. A. Adebiyi et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurs should concentrate on using contemporary processing technologies to provide a variety of enticing goods that satisfy customer preferences and handle issues with food security in order to fully realize millet's potential. Numerous aspects, such as sourcing

difficulties, customer involvement, regulatory compliance, operational effectiveness, and marketing, are closely related to the viability and scalability of millet-driven cloud kitchen enterprises. (Chaudhary, 2023).

As people's health consciousness has grown, millet-based goods have expanded business potential. Value-added goods made from millet were well received, improved the frequency of consumption, and raised farm women's incomes (Jahan et al., 2020).

Parboiling is a hydrothermal process that enhances milling properties and increases grain toughness. For safe storage, it is advised to package dehusked millets in polyethylene terephthalate or gunny bags lined with polyethylene. By doing this, millet product business potential would grow (Nidoni et al., 2021).

Conversion of millet grains into usable forms, such as Ragi Malt and Multi-grain Flour, has been attempted, and businesses with Self Help Groups have been established in rural areas. Along with increasing demand for finger millet, this has improved societal health by generating more jobs and revenue (Patel et al., 2014).

Increased technical development may lead to more finger millet production, product development, value addition, marketing, and consumption, which could improve food and nutrition security, according to recent studies conducted in South Asia and Africa (Opole, 2019).

Millet is vital for agriculture, reducing climate stress and supporting marginal farmers. Farmer Producers Companies integrate sustainability into operations, with factors like value addition, innovation, and financial stability influencing farmers' decisions (Pani et al., 2023).

Zambia's sorghum and millet crops, despite productivity improvements, remain stagnant due to limited access to advanced technologies, necessitating the development of improved seed varieties and market linkages (Hamukwala et al., 2010).

Millet, a drought-resistant crop, is gaining interest for its potential health benefits and food security. Replacing maize with pearl and finger millets can improve performance and climate change-compliant crops. It induces market opportunities for millets (Cheema et al., 2024). This article explores millet processing technologies, bioprocessing approaches, health benefits, R&D innovations, preservation constraints, and future challenges to increase commercial scale utilization of millet-based products (Dekka et al., 2023).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study about the business opportunities and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu is based on primary and secondary data. This study followed the descriptive research method as well as the convenience sampling technique and worked based on the data collected through a questionnaire from 50 millet entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu. The data was analysed by percentage analysis method, Correlation, and Regression method.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

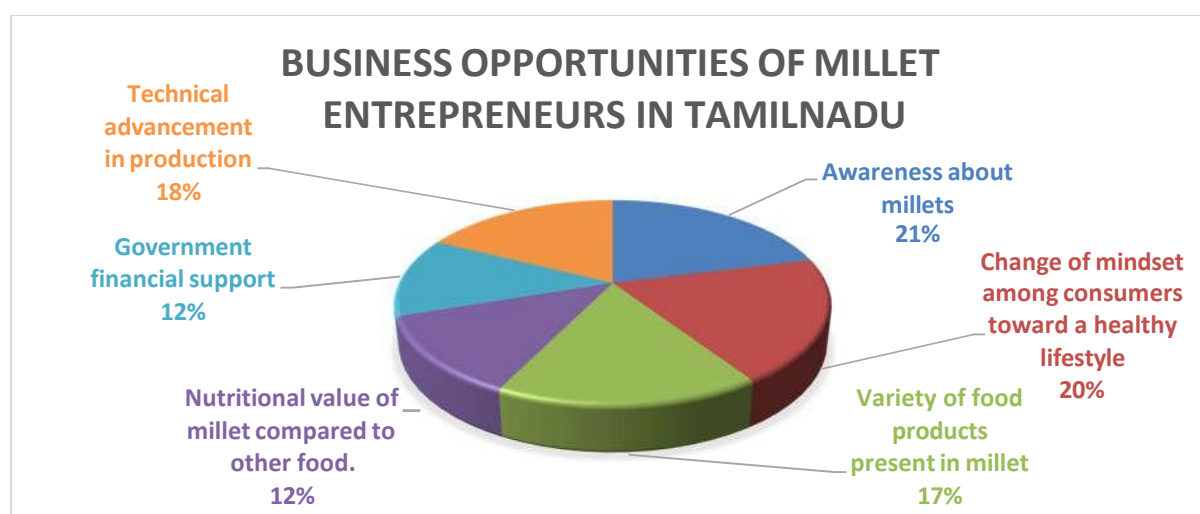
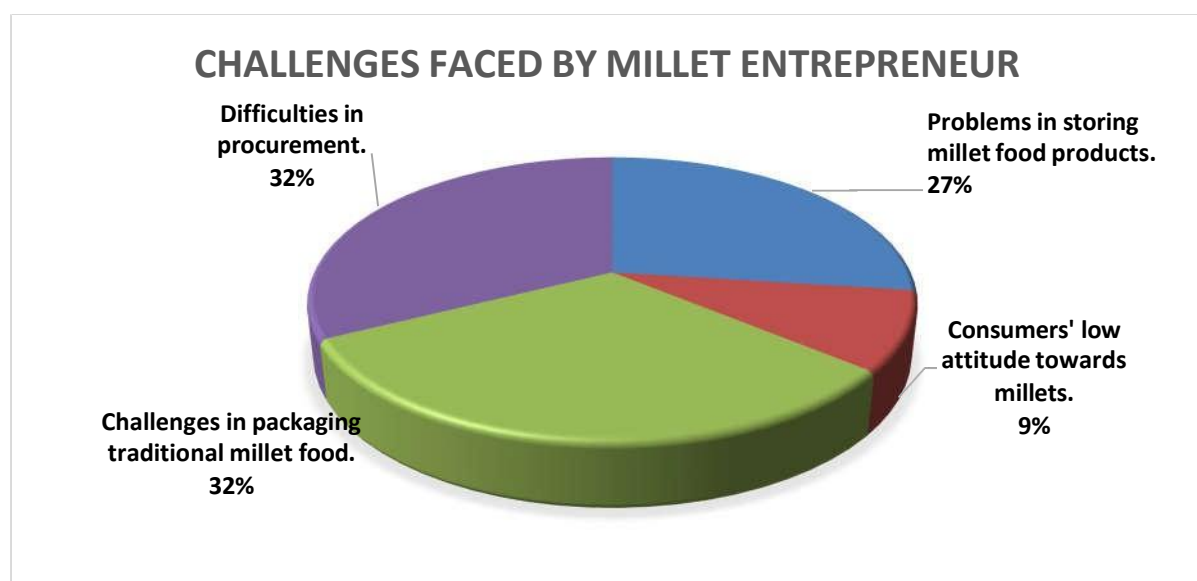


CHART 1

## INTERPRETATION

The above chart indicates the percentage of various business opportunities for Millet entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu chosen by millet entrepreneurs. From the analysis, the study found that 21% and 20% of millet entrepreneurs strongly agreed that awareness about millet and change of mindset among consumers toward a healthy lifestyle respectively as opportunities. And 18%, 17%, and 12% of them strongly agreed that the variety of food products present in millet, technical advancement in production, Government financial support, and nutritional value of millet compared to other food respectively as opportunities.

### CHALLENGES FACED BY MILLET ENTREPRENEUR.

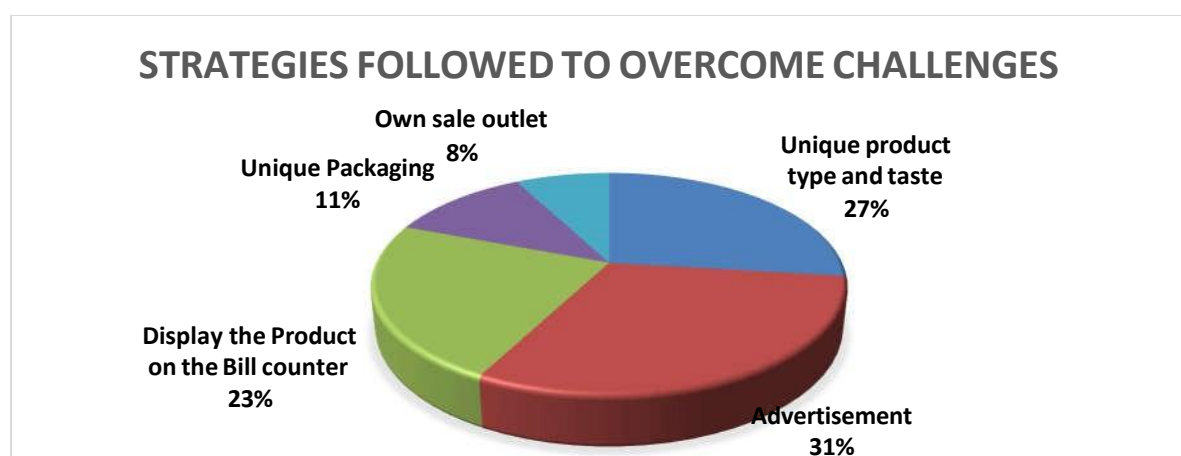


**CHART 2**

### INTERPRETATION

The above chart indicates the percentage of various business challenges for Millet entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu chosen by millet entrepreneurs. From the analysis, the study found that 32% of millet entrepreneurs strongly agreed that Difficulties in the procurement of millet and Challenges in packaging traditional millet food respectively as challenges. And 27%, and 9% of them strongly agreed that Problems in storing millet food products and Consumers' low attitude towards millet respectively as challenges.

### STRATEGIES FOLLOWED TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES



**CHART 3**

## INTERPRETATION

The above chart indicates the percentage of various strategies of Millet entrepreneurs used to overcome challenges in the market. From the analysis, the study found that 31% and 27% of millet entrepreneurs strongly agreed that Advertising for their products and the uniqueness of their products and taste as their strategies respectively. And 23%, 11%, and 8% of them strongly agreed that Displaying Products on the Bill counter, Unique packaging, and owning sale outlet respectively as their strategies.

**TABLE 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN ORGANIZATION SIZE AND STRATEGIES USED TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES**

	STRATEGIES USED TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES	VALUE
S1	Unique product type and taste	0.683**
S2	Advertisement	0.647**
S3	Display the Product on the Bill counter	0.698**
S4	Unique Packaging	0.572**
S5	Own sale outlet	0.571 **

## INTERPRETATION

From the analysis, we discovered that the strategy scales and size of the organization have the following Pearson correlations:  $r = 0.683$ ,  $r = 0.647$ ,  $r = 0.698$ ,  $r = 0.572$ , and  $r = 0.571$ ; additionally, significance=0.000 indicates that the age strategy variables have  $r$  values greater than 0.5, indicating a strong correlation between the strategy and the size of the organization, as well as the 2-tailed significance value, which in this case is.

**TABLE 2: REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES:**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.941 <sup>a</sup>	.901	.902	.927

## INTERPRETATION

Overall, the regression model seems to fit well; the low standard error of the estimate suggests that the predictions are accurate, and the high R-square value indicates that the predictors account for a good amount of variance.

**TABLE 3: ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2518.370	3	901.157	1041.724	.001
	Residual	222.602	47	.862		
	Total	2740.972	50			
a. Dependent Variable: Challenges Mean						

## INTERPRETATION

To determine if the model provides a good fit to the data, the analysis of variance is utilized. The aforementioned table provides evidence that the model accurately predicts the ways in which business challenges for millet entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu are impacted by the predictor variable of Strategies. The fact that the F-value calculated is 1041.724 indicates that the variance between groups (explained by the model) is significantly larger than the variance within groups (residual variance). The significance P value here is 0.001, which is very small, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant at conventional significance.

## FINDINGS

- The majority of the respondents' mentioned the key business opportunities for the millets-based food products are awareness about millet the nutritional benefit of millets among consumers.
- The financial support and training provided by the government to start the business and also mentioned that the potential opportunity as the technical advancement in production process led to large scale production which reduces the cost associated with that.
- The findings regarding the difficulties and challenges faced by the millet entrepreneurs are problems in storing the millet products, difficulties in packaging



millet products, difficulties in procuring millet for making products, and consumer attitudes towards the millet product.

- The study found that women entrepreneurs receive more financial support from the government. Majority of them started exporting the products mainly to Asian countries.
- The strategies of Startups millet entrepreneurs show the uniqueness of their product to grab the market opportunities.
- The strategies of large companies using their brand names and thriving on innovation also concentrate on their outlet.

## CONCLUSION

This study's primary finding is that entrepreneurial prospects have increased as a result of the creation and marketing of millet-based value-added products and awareness generation among consumers about the benefits of millet. The startup millet entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu tackling the challenges for millet-based value-added products business majorly by using strategies such as providing unique value-added products by taste and process, by using target marketing with advertising and counter display. The large and medium-scale organizations overcome difficulties with strategies like owning sales outlets with their brand name and having tie-ups with lodging and college canteen as well as concentrating more on exports to enhance the business.

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