

## **Looking Away from Europe: A Wider Perspective on Millets in Dry Lands**

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Drylands cover approximately 40% of the world's land area and host around 40% of the world's population. The United Nations Environment Programme defines drylands as tropical and temperate areas with an aridity index of less than 0.65, including hyper-arid drylands or deserts with an aridity index below 0.05. These areas are especially sensitive to climate change, shifts in precipitation patterns and increases in extreme climatic and meteorological events. Nonetheless, drylands have been inhabited for thousands of years, and are today home to societies that display a wide array of adaptive behaviours. Such practices, evidenced by traditional ecological knowledge, are key to the resilience of these communities. Millets (the term “millets” is used to identify several genera of Panicoid grasses) are one of the major food sources in arid and semi-arid areas of the world and they have been important crops in the prehistory of Africa and Eurasia. This paper will discuss the role of such plants in prehistoric and current agricultural systems.