

World Pulses Day and Its Significance

Geeta S Tamgale and Rajeshwari N

Department of Extension and Communication Management

College of Community Science, UAS, Dharwad

*Corresponding Author: tamagalegs@uasd.in

Cover Story

Pulses, also known as legumes, refer to the edible seeds of leguminous plants/pod-bearing plants grown for food. They exist in various shapes, varieties, sizes, and colors and remain a large part of dishes from across the world, the most popular and widely-consumed types of pulses are red gram, black gram, lentils, green gram etc. A traditional Indian cuisine features various dal dishes made from peas or lentils. Pulses strictly comprise dried seeds of leguminous plants cultivated for food and exclude vegetable crops harvested while still green. Their seeds are loaded with essential nutrients such as fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals, making them important and healthy super foods. It's important to note that pulses exclude crops harvested green (such as green peas and green beans), which are classified as vegetable crops. Additionally, crops primarily used for oil extraction (e.g., soybeans and groundnuts) and leguminous crops exclusively used for sowing purposes are not considered pulses.

Pulses are important crops for a variety of reasons. They provide essential nutrients, promote sustainable agriculture, contribute to food security, and have a positive impact on the environment. Pulses provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for rural women and youth. Pulses are important crops for multiple reasons, including:

Nutritional benefits

- **High protein content:** Pulses are an excellent source of plant-based protein, essential for building and repairing tissues. They are particularly important to them who do not consume non vegetarian food. They act as important sources of

Rich in fibre: Pulses are high in fibre, which helps with digestion, promotes gut health, and can help control blood sugar levels along with other health benefits.

- **Good source of vitamins and minerals:** Pulses are a good source of essential vitamins and minerals, including iron, zinc, folate, and magnesium. The nutritional quality increases further by sprouting.

Sustainable agriculture

- **Nitrogen-fixing:** Pulse crops are nitrogen-fixing crops and they can convert atmospheric nitrogen into a form that plants can use. This reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers, which can be harmful to the environment and also cost effective for the farmers.
- **Improves soil health:** Pulses improve soil health by adding organic matter by defoliating the vegetative matter and fix nitrogen to the soil through root nodules. This helps to improve soil fertility and crop yields.
- **Water-efficient:** Pulses require less water than many other crops, making them a more sustainable option in regions with limited water resources.

Economic benefits

- **Affordable source of protein:** Pulses are a relatively inexpensive source of protein compared to other sources like non vegetarian, making them accessible to people of all socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Contributes to food security:** By providing a reliable source of protein and other nutrients, pulses can help to improve food security and reduce hunger.
- **Supports small farmers:** Pulses are often grown by small farmers with less land holding, providing them with a source of income and contributing to rural development.

Environmental benefits

- **Reduces greenhouse gas emissions:** Pulses have a lower carbon footprint than many other protein sources, such as meat and dairy and

hence reduces greenhouse gas emission through animal husbandry sector.

- **Promotes biodiversity:** Pulses can be grown in rotation with other crops, which helps to promote biodiversity and soil health.
- **Adaptable to climate change:** Pulses are able to tolerate a wide range of climatic conditions and short duration crops. It makes them a more resilient crop in the face of climate change.

To honor the significance of these nutrient-packed food crops, the General Assembly of the United Nations, on December 20, 2013, adopted a special resolution (A/RES/68/231) and proclaimed 2016 as the International Year of Pulses (I.Y.P.). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (F.A.O.) led the celebration in 2016 and the event successfully increased public awareness about the nutritional and environmental benefits of pulses.

Building on the success and momentum of the I.Y.P., and recognizing the potential of pulses to further achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Burkina Faso, a landlocked West African nation, proposed the global observance of World Pulses Day. On December 20, 2018, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed February 10 as World Pulses Day through resolution (A/RES/73/251), and the day has been celebrated as a global event since 2019 and supported by many member nations. According to the U.N., pulses remain influential in mitigating the global challenges of poverty, food security and nutrition, human health, and soil health.

World Pulses Day takes place on February 10 each year. It is a yearly global event designated by the United Nations in 2018 to recognize the significance and nutritional benefits of pulses. The U.N. believes that pulses are not only nutritional; they can also

contribute to the development of sustainable food systems towards eradicating world hunger and poverty. According to the U.N., this is an effective strategy for achieving its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims at strengthening global peace and enhancing food security.

Significance of World Pulses Day

Celebration of World Pulses Day, holds great significance for several reasons:

- Pulses offer a reliable and affordable source of protein, especially in regions facing food insecurity. World Pulses Day emphasizes their potential to address hunger and malnutrition.
- Pulses contribute significantly to the agricultural economy, supporting farmers and rural communities. The day highlights their economic importance and promotes their cultivation and consumption.
- The day promotes further research and development related to pulse production, processing, and utilization, leading to improved varieties, increased yields, and better nutritional profiles.
- Pulses are deeply embedded in cultural traditions and cuisines worldwide. World Pulses Day celebrates this diversity and encourages exploring new flavors and culinary experiences.
- The day encourages the preservation of agricultural biodiversity and traditional farming practices.

World Pulses Day serves as a crucial reminder of the valuable role pulses play in our lives. By raising awareness, promoting action, and celebrating diversity, the day inspires us to contribute to a more sustainable, food-secure, and healthier future.

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