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North American Millets Alliance

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Quality Food Millets During Drought

Drought has affected U.S. food millets in 2026. Hard hit are three states, (Colorado, Nebraska, and South Dakota) which produce about ninety percent of U.S. proso—the main U.S. food millet. Although proso is extremely drought tolerant, its prices have gone up as rain stopped falling.

About 400,000 acres of proso are produced each year. The good news is there will be plenty of high quality food grade proso for the 2026-2027 marketing year thanks to progressive farm marketers.

Growers producing quality proso should be rewarded with better prices by segregating high-quality proso from common bin-run bird feed millets. This can be done by following three steps:

1. Set combine fan speed to blow out unfilled hulls, which will increase test weight.
2. Segregate and store higher test weight, lower dockage proso in separate bins.
3. Seek buyers paying premium prices for food-grade following the North American Millets Alliance (NAMA)'s new proso millet grading standards.

New proso grading standards released in 2025 by NAMA are publicly available online at <https://milletsalliance.org/proso-millet-grain-standards/>. Previous standards originating in the 1950s and '60s were based on proso for bird feed rather than human consumption. There are no current USDA grading standards for proso.

Health-consciousness has led the food industry to proso millet as a high nutrient, naturally produced ancient grain. Cooks, processors, and maltsters have sought Number 1 Grade, high-quality proso. Lower grades 2 and 3 are suitable for wild bird feed.

Enjoy millet, an alternative to rice, in your next meal, and ask your grocer for millet snacks—usually in the health-food aisle.

About the author: Gary W. Wietgreffe has been a U.S. Certified Crop Advisor for three decades, written two books on proso millet, coordinated proso irrigation research at Gobi-Altai Province, Mongolia (State University) and Uludag University, Bursa, Turkey, and supports North American Millets Alliance (NAMA) as senior agronomist.