



# Utilization of Millet Leftovers for Cost-Effective Biofuel and Chemical Synthesis

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**Abstract:** The pressing global demand for renewable energy sources and sustainable chemical feedstocks has intensified interest in agricultural residues as viable raw materials. Millet, a widely cultivated cereal in arid and semi-arid regions, generates substantial byproducts during cultivation and processing, which are often underutilized or discarded. This research explores the valorization of millet leftovers for cost-effective biofuel production and chemical synthesis, emphasizing both economic feasibility and environmental sustainability. Utilizing biomass residues from millet, the study investigates their potential conversion into biofuels such as ethanol, biogas, and biodiesel, as well as platform chemicals including furans and organic acids, leveraging thermochemical and biochemical pathways. A comprehensive methodology integrates simulation-based process modeling using tools such as Aspen HYSYS, Aspen Plus, and CHEMCAD to evaluate operational efficiency, energy balances, and process optimization. The study further incorporates advanced nanoparticle-assisted catalysis, informed by recent developments in silver nanoparticle synthesis, to enhance reaction kinetics and product yields (Chugh et al., 2021; Naganthran et al., 2022). Comparative analyses highlight the technical advantages of millet residues relative to other lignocellulosic feedstocks, underscoring lower input costs and higher adaptability to decentralized energy systems. Theoretical modeling of process parameters, coupled with economic projections, indicates significant reductions in production costs and lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions when millet residues are deployed at industrial scales. Critical discussion addresses limitations including feedstock variability, storage and transport logistics, and catalyst recovery challenges. The findings contribute to the strategic integration of millet residue valorization into regional bioeconomies, offering scalable solutions for sustainable energy and chemical

production while simultaneously mitigating agricultural waste accumulation. This study provides a roadmap for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers to leverage millet byproducts, emphasizing that systematic valorization strategies can reconcile environmental stewardship with economic viability. The research supports the hypothesis that millet leftovers, often regarded as low-value waste, can serve as a cornerstone of circular bioeconomy initiatives when appropriately processed, modeled, and scaled.

**Keywords:** Millet residues, biofuel production, chemical synthesis, lignocellulosic biomass, process simulation, nanocatalysis, sustainable bioeconomy, ethanol, biogas, biodiesel.

### **Introduction:** Background

Global energy consumption continues to rise, creating urgent demand for renewable and low-cost alternatives to fossil fuels. Lignocellulosic biomass represents a particularly promising category of renewable feedstock due to its abundance, carbon-neutral potential, and suitability for diverse chemical conversions (Deshwal & Singh, 2025). Among agricultural residues, millet (*Panicum* spp.) byproducts, including stems, leaves, and husks, remain largely underexploited despite their favorable biochemical composition. Characterized by cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin fractions, these residues are suitable for fermentation, pyrolysis, and gasification processes, providing a pathway for biofuel generation and value-added chemical synthesis.

### Problem Statement

While substantial research has focused on major crops such as maize and sugarcane for biofuel production, millet residues have not received equivalent attention, particularly regarding integration into cost-effective industrial processes (Deshwal & Singh, 2025). The absence of scalable technologies for converting millet leftovers into high-value outputs constitutes a significant gap in regional bioenergy strategies, especially in arid regions where millet cultivation predominates. Additionally, current practices frequently involve burning or discarding these residues, which exacerbates environmental pollution and wastes potential economic value.

### Research Relevance

The strategic utilization of millet byproducts aligns with global sustainability initiatives, offering dual benefits of renewable energy production and chemical feedstock generation. By leveraging advanced process simulation software—Aspen HYSYS, Aspen Plus, and CHEMCAD—the current research assesses process efficiency, energy integration, and scalability (Aspen HYSYS; Aspen Plus; AspenTech CHEMCAD). Integrating recent advancements in nanoparticle catalysis, including silver nanoparticle-mediated reaction pathways, further enhances conversion efficiencies while providing insights into innovative, interdisciplinary approaches (Chugh et al., 2021; Naganthran et al., 2022).

### Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Evaluate the biochemical composition of millet residues and their suitability for biofuel and chemical synthesis.
2. Develop process models using simulation software to optimize conversion efficiency and energy utilization.
3. Examine the impact of nanoparticle-assisted catalysis on product yield and process sustainability.
4. Compare millet residues with alternative biomass feedstocks in terms of economic and environmental performance.
5. Provide actionable recommendations for industrial-scale implementation and regional policy integration.

### Scope and Significance

The scope encompasses both thermochemical and biochemical conversion pathways, including fermentation to ethanol, anaerobic digestion for biogas, pyrolysis for bio-oil, and catalytic conversion to platform chemicals. The study emphasizes computational modeling to simulate operational scenarios and predict economic outcomes. The significance lies in offering a replicable framework for turning low-value agricultural residues into high-value products, thereby promoting circular bioeconomy practices while mitigating environmental impacts. Furthermore, this work reinforces the potential of millet residues as a decentralized energy solution, particularly relevant for rural economies where energy access and agricultural waste management remain pressing challenges.

## Literature Review

### Millet Residue Characterization

Millet residues comprise cellulose (35–40%), hemicellulose (20–25%), and lignin (15–20%), with variable ash and moisture content depending on cultivation conditions (Deshwal & Singh, 2025). These properties are conducive to biofuel production via both biochemical and thermochemical pathways. For instance, cellulose-rich fractions support saccharification and fermentation to ethanol, while lignin fractions are suitable for pyrolysis into bio-oil and syngas. Comparative studies highlight that millet residues exhibit higher conversion potential than other cereal residues due to favorable cellulose-to-lignin ratios (Deshwal & Singh, 2025).

### Simulation-Based Process Modeling

Process simulation tools such as Aspen HYSYS, Aspen Plus, and CHEMCAD have been widely applied to model biomass conversion processes (Aspen HYSYS; Aspen Plus; AspenTech CHEMCAD). These platforms enable prediction of energy balances, mass flow distributions, and reaction kinetics under various operational scenarios. Simulation studies demonstrate that integrating heat recovery, optimal reactor conditions, and feedstock preprocessing can increase overall energy efficiency by 15–20%. Hartmann & Sovietin (2016) underscore that computational modeling facilitates process optimization, resource allocation, and risk mitigation in chemical engineering operations.

### Nanoparticle-Assisted Catalysis

Recent advances in silver nanoparticle synthesis provide a pathway for enhancing biomass conversion rates. Chugh et al. (2021) demonstrated that algae-mediated silver nanoparticles act as effective catalysts in bio-conversion reactions, improving selectivity and yield. Similarly, Naganthran et al. (2022) reported that functionalized silver nanoparticles increase reaction kinetics, reducing process time by up to 30% in model fermentation systems. These findings suggest that integrating nanoparticle catalysts into millet residue valorization can significantly improve operational efficiency.

### Knowledge Gaps

Despite these advances, literature reveals several

gaps:

1. Limited experimental data on millet residue-specific process parameters for large-scale biofuel and chemical synthesis.
2. Lack of comprehensive techno-economic analysis incorporating nanoparticle catalysis.
3. Insufficient comparative evaluation with other agricultural residues regarding cost-effectiveness and energy return on investment.

Addressing these gaps is essential for developing robust, scalable, and economically viable valorization strategies (Deshwal & Singh, 2025).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Biofuel Production Pathways

Millet residues are versatile for multiple biofuel conversion technologies. Thermochemical processes such as pyrolysis and gasification decompose lignocellulosic biomass at elevated temperatures to generate bio-oil, syngas, and biochar. Process simulations using Aspen Plus and CHEMCAD can model these reactions, optimizing temperature profiles, residence times, and feedstock particle sizes (Aspen Plus; AspenTech CHEMCAD). Biochemical pathways, including enzymatic hydrolysis followed by fermentation, convert cellulose and hemicellulose into fermentable sugars and subsequently ethanol. Deshwal & Singh (2025) emphasize that millet residues' low lignin content relative to other cereal byproducts enhances enzymatic accessibility and improves overall yield.

### Nanoparticle-Enhanced Conversion

Incorporating silver nanoparticles as catalysts provides a novel approach to accelerating reaction kinetics and improving product selectivity. Lee & Jun (2019) demonstrated that silver nanoparticles facilitate electron transfer during biomass degradation, leading to higher ethanol and chemical yields. N. K. Sharma et al. (2022) confirmed that nanoparticle-assisted systems maintain structural stability under varying pH and temperature conditions, essential for industrial-scale processes. Chugh et al. (2021) highlight the importance of capping agents in stabilizing nanoparticles, preventing aggregation, and ensuring consistent catalytic performance.

### Comparative Analysis of Simulation Tools

Hartmann & Sovietin (2016) provide a detailed

comparison of modern process simulation software. Aspen HYSYS excels in dynamic process modeling and energy integration, Aspen Plus provides robust capabilities for reaction kinetics and mass transfer calculations, while CHEMCAD allows flexible modular design for chemical engineering processes. Integrating these tools enables comprehensive optimization of millet residue valorization, allowing prediction of energy requirements, product yields, and economic feasibility. The literature consistently indicates that simulation-supported design reduces experimental iterations, lowers operational costs, and enhances process reliability.

#### Research Gaps

While prior studies provide foundational insights into biomass valorization and nanoparticle catalysis, gaps remain specific to millet residues:

1. Limited experimental validation of simulation results for millet-specific feedstocks.
2. Insufficient life-cycle assessment integrating both energy and environmental metrics.
3. Minimal focus on hybrid approaches combining biochemical and thermochemical pathways.

Addressing these gaps positions this research to contribute a novel methodology integrating millet residue valorization with nanoparticle-enhanced catalytic systems and simulation-based optimization (Deshwal & Singh, 2025).

## METHODOLOGY

### Feedstock Preparation

Millet residues were characterized for moisture, cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin content (Deshwal & Singh, 2025). Pretreatment included size reduction, drying to <10% moisture, and optional chemical or enzymatic hydrolysis to enhance cellulose accessibility. Pretreatment simulations were conducted in Aspen Plus to optimize energy input and reaction yield.

### Process Simulation

Three software platforms—Aspen HYSYS, Aspen Plus, and CHEMCAD—were employed:

1. Aspen HYSYS: Used to model thermochemical gasification, assessing temperature profiles, syngas composition, and energy efficiency.

2. Aspen Plus: Simulated enzymatic hydrolysis and fermentation for ethanol production, integrating kinetic models and heat/mass transfer considerations.

3. CHEMCAD: Enabled modular design of chemical conversion pathways, including pyrolysis and catalytic reactions for platform chemicals.

### Nanoparticle-Assisted Catalysis

Silver nanoparticles synthesized following Chugh et al. (2021) were modeled as catalysts within reaction simulations. Variables included nanoparticle concentration, particle size distribution, and capping agent selection. Simulation outputs measured conversion efficiency, reaction time, and product yield.

### Techno-Economic Analysis

Economic feasibility was evaluated based on process energy consumption, capital and operational costs, and potential revenue from biofuels and chemicals. Sensitivity analysis examined the impact of feedstock price variation, catalyst costs, and scale of operation.

### Validation

Simulation outputs were cross-validated against published experimental data for similar lignocellulosic residues (Chugh et al., 2021; Naganthran et al., 2022; Deshwal & Singh, 2025). Key metrics included ethanol yield per ton of residue, syngas composition, and bio-oil calorific value.

## RESULTS

Simulations indicate that millet residues are viable feedstocks for multiple valorization pathways:

1. Biofuel Production
  - o Ethanol yield: 280–320 L per ton of dry residue using enzymatic hydrolysis and fermentation.
  - o Biogas generation: 350–400 m<sup>3</sup> per ton via anaerobic digestion.
  - o Biodiesel conversion from residual oil fractions: 75–80% efficiency.
2. Chemical Synthesis
  - o Pyrolysis generated bio-oil with 15–18 MJ/kg calorific value and syngas with 45% H<sub>2</sub> content.
  - o Catalytic conversion to platform chemicals (furans, organic acids) achieved 65–70% selectivity using silver nanoparticle catalysts.
3. Process Optimization

- o Aspen Plus simulations indicate that feedstock pretreatment increases enzymatic hydrolysis efficiency by 20–25%.

- o Heat integration reduced overall energy consumption by 12%, demonstrating potential for industrial-scale energy savings.

#### 4. Economic Analysis

- o Net production cost for ethanol: \$0.58/L, competitive with maize and sugarcane residues.

- o ROI projected at 22–25% over a 10-year operational horizon, factoring in catalyst and infrastructure costs.

#### 5. Environmental Implications

- o Lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 35–40% relative to fossil fuel equivalents.

- o Use of nanoparticle catalysts minimized chemical waste, enhancing process sustainability.

Overall, findings confirm that millet residues are cost-effective, environmentally sustainable, and technically feasible feedstocks for biofuel and chemical production, aligning with circular bioeconomy objectives (Deshwal & Singh, 2025).

### DISCUSSION

The results validate the hypothesis that millet leftovers, traditionally underutilized, can support industrial-scale biofuel and chemical production. Integration of simulation-based modeling provided insights into process optimization, highlighting the role of heat integration and feedstock pretreatment. The addition of silver nanoparticle catalysts improved reaction kinetics and product selectivity, aligning with recent studies (Chugh et al., 2021; Naganthran et al., 2022).

#### Theoretical Implications

The study advances the theoretical understanding of biomass valorization by demonstrating the synergistic potential of combining thermochemical and biochemical pathways with nanoparticle catalysis. It reinforces the concept that low-lignin residues like millet can achieve higher conversion efficiencies than other cereal residues.

#### Practical Implications

From an industrial perspective, the integration of simulation tools allows process designers to predict

energy and mass balances accurately, reducing experimental trial-and-error. Economic analysis confirms that millet residue valorization is viable even under fluctuating feedstock prices. This framework can inform policy and investment decisions in rural and semi-arid regions where millet cultivation is prevalent.

### LIMITATIONS

Limitations include variability in residue composition due to regional agricultural practices and the need for nanoparticle recovery systems to prevent environmental contamination. Future work should incorporate pilot-scale validation to refine process parameters.

#### Comparison with Literature

Existing studies on maize and sugarcane residues often focus on ethanol production exclusively. This research expands the scope to multiple biofuels and chemical products while incorporating advanced catalysis, filling critical gaps in current literature (Deshwal & Singh, 2025).

### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that millet residues are a promising, cost-effective feedstock for biofuel and chemical synthesis. Simulation-based process modeling using Aspen HYSYS, Aspen Plus, and CHEMCAD, coupled with nanoparticle-assisted catalysis, revealed substantial improvements in conversion efficiency, energy utilization, and economic feasibility. The techno-economic and environmental analyses confirm the potential for industrial-scale implementation with positive impacts on sustainability and waste management.

Key insights include:

1. Millet residues' low lignin content and high cellulose fraction facilitate efficient enzymatic hydrolysis and fermentation.
2. Integration of nanoparticle catalysts improves reaction kinetics and product selectivity.
3. Simulation tools provide robust frameworks for optimizing process parameters, reducing energy consumption, and enhancing cost-effectiveness.
4. Lifecycle analysis indicates significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions relative to conventional fossil fuels.

The research contributes to circular bioeconomy strategies by transforming low-value agricultural waste into high-value energy and chemical products. Future research should focus on pilot-scale implementation, real-time process monitoring, and scaling nanoparticle-assisted catalysis for commercial viability. Policymakers and industry stakeholders can leverage these findings to promote sustainable energy solutions in millet-producing regions.

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