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Special Correspondent

The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha has urged the government to buy all the foodgrains required for distribution under the public distribution system (PDS) directly from farmers.

“The government should drop the idea of buying grains from traders. It should buy the grains directly from farmers as it will not only relieve farmers from the clutches of traders but also make them self-reliant. It will create an assured market for the produce and arrest the gradual decline in the area under food crops,” Vishhwanath Patil Koutha, KRRS district unit president, told presspersons here on Friday.

Farmers in Karnataka grew adequate quantity of jowar for distribution under the PDS. They were willing to supply grains, if they were given remunerative prices, he said and urged the State government to increase the minimum support price for jowar from the present Rs. 1,800 a quintal to Rs. 2,500 a quintal, even though it was less than the prevailing market rate of Rs. 3,000 a quintal, he said.

Earlier, P.V. Sateesh, director of the Deccan Development Society, a non-governmental organisation promoting millets, welcomed the decision of the State government to introduce jowar and millets under the PDS. The Millet Network of India and KRRS had succeeded in convincing the government on introducing grains other than rice and wheat under PDS. “We are taking up a pilot project to introduce millet-based food products in anganwadis in Bidar district,” he said. The sangha had taken up a pilot project to estimate the cultivated area and availability of jowar and millets in north and south Karnataka. A team of farmers was working in Aurad taluk and another in HD Kote taluk, Mysore district. Both had found optimum stock of these grains. However, farmers wanted better prices for them, he said.

Srimant Biradar, who headed the team that surveyed jowar-growers in Aurad taluk, said that in Thana Kushnoor hobli alone, there was an assured quantity of over 22,000 quintals of jowar available. This would go up by 15-20 times, if the whole district's production was included, he said. The KRRS was willing to convince farmers to supply jowar and millets if the government was willing to negotiate the prices with them, he said.