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Orissa | Posted on Dec 16, 2011 at 12:22pm IST

Unhealthy approach hits Millet

Express News Service , The New Indian Express

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BHUBANESWAR: Millets remain restricted to consumption by diabetics for good health. A fact which was voiced by the experts at the Eastern India Convention on Re-imagining Agriculture was held at Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) here.

“We can witness marginalisation of millets these days. People consuming millets are looked down upon but when the same cereal is processed as energy supplement, people attach high value to it,” said Suman Sarkar from the Centre for Sustainable Development.

The decline has been attributed to Government negligence and social stigma associated with millets, the experts said. The government’s policy is a huge hindrance for the promotion of millets. With the popularity of Public Distribution System (PDS), rice has become the staple diet for many farmers.

With the food habits changing, the producer is slowly becoming the consumer and its dependency is increasing. This despite the fact that millets are much more nutritious for consumption and good for health.

Unlike rice and wheat, millets do not need huge amount of water and fertile land to survive. Just about 350 to 400 mm rainfall is enough for millet crop to stand against the rice crop’s need for around 1,300-mm rainfall. Millets will be the best crop to grow in India with 64 per cent agricultural land being dry land.

The two-day workshop was attended by millet farmers from Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand who formulated a declaration. To be presented to the Government, the farmers demand a government policy and direct bonus incentive that will help them survive if they do not want to shift to cash crop farming.

The workshop was organised by Living Farms, Millet Network of India, Agragamee and Nirman. National Convener, MINI, Satheesh PV, Achyut Das of Agragamee and Shankarsan Nanda of OUAT were present.

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