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Odisha: Farmers give a colorful welcome to the Eastern India Convention

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

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Report by Orissadiary.com correspondent;
Bhubaneswar: More than 120 farmers from Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa kick-started the Eastern India Convention for Millet Farmers. The event was inaugurated with brief ceremony wherein farmers from different states exchanged seeds with their brethren from the other states; this was done to the beats of traditional instruments from Odisha.

This was followed by Welcome Address by Shri.P.V.Satheesh, National Convener, Millet Network of India; wherein he gave a overview of the Millet Network of India and laid out the plan for the two-day Convention. Millet Network of India is a national network of farmers, organizations and individuals who have been practicing millet farming; or have been working with groups that are doing so. Contrary to the present paradigm of agriculture which focuses on mono-cropping, and on the use of chemical inputs, MINI stands for biodiversity based farming that focuses on traditional landraces of crops.

The Inaugural Session was graced by two eminent people from the development firmament of Odhisha—Prof. Radhamohan, well known environmentalist and the former Information Commissioner of the state of Odhisha; and Mr.Natwar Sarangi, a farmer leader of repute. In his address, Prof.Radhamohan pointed out the importance of millets to ensuring the health of farming and of farmers. He further highlighted the fact the agricultural sector faced a grave threat from the multi-nationals that have been making rapid inroads into the seed and fertilizer markets; and how they were influencing more and more people to move away from millet-based mixed farming.

During his powerful address to the gathering, Shri.Natwar Sarangi pointed out that people in the villages were moving away from millets owing to the availability of rice and wheat at subsidized rates at the PDS outlets, and of the fact that millets did not receive similar support.

The first day of the session was marked by the 'listening sessions' wherein farmers from different regions shared their experiences and travails in cultivating millets, with the other members of the congregation. The sessions were organized according to the state, with Jharkhand leading the order, followed by Chattisgarh and then by Orissa. During the sessions, the general observations made by farmers were that millet cultivation was declining owing to the lack of governmental support to millets from the State; and owing to the various pressures like the inroads being made by maize, cotton and other cash crops.

The Eastern India Convention of Millet Farmers is being organized by Millet Network of India, along with prominent development organizations from Nirman-Odisha, Agragaamee, Living Farms and MASS. Well-known development workers like Shri.Achyut Das, Shri.Jacob Nellithanam and Shri.Prasant Mohanty adorned the occasion.



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