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# THE HINDU

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## 'Introduction of millets in hostels possible'

Bio-diversity festival commences on a colourful note

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**YEDAKULAPALLE (MEDAK DISTRICT):** The month-long bio-diversity festival commenced on a colourful note in this remote village on Thursday. Bullocks and carts were decorated with colours and pink ribbons were tied to the horns of bullocks.

The healthy bullocks were ready to commence the month-long journey, halting in seventy-odd villages in four mandals on the way. The carts were fixed with transparent boxes exhibiting millets of different varieties. For a

change, women farmers were in the forefront in organising the festival pushing male dominance to the backseat.

G.D. Priyadarshini, Commissioner and Director of Agriculture, promised to introduce millets in hostels, provided there was an increase in production.

"You are now producing millets that can be consumed by your family members and the remaining can be set aside for sale in the market. If you are able to increase production, we would introduce it in hostels at primary level. I will raise this issue at both the State and Central Government level and demand for introduction of millets in Public Distribution System (PDS)," said Ms. Priyadarshini, while addressing farmers after for-

mally inaugurating the 17th Bio-diversity festival here on Thursday.

The festival was organised by the Deccan Development Society (DDS), an NGO working with farmers on millets in four mandals of Zaheerabad. The programme was presided over by DDS director P.V. Satheesh.

Mr. Satheesh, in response, said that they were ready to take up the responsibility of increasing the production and urged the government to create level-playing field for millet farmers. Stating that introduction of millets in PDS was left to the State Government, he said that at least two kilograms of jowar should be distributed along with four kilograms of rice in the PDS system.

He urged the State government to encourage crops that sustain the life of farmers, mother earth and environment. Some of the women farmers present also expressed willingness to increase production, provided there was assurance for buying the yield.

B. Hukya Naik, Joint Director, Agriculture, said there was potential for introduction of millets in hostels and mid-day meals.

Dr. T.G. Nageswra Rao, Director, Indian Institute of Millet Research, said different varieties of foods with millets were possible and efforts are on to increase the demand for millets.

"It's amazing that the area is vibrating with millets," concluded Kevin from Australia.