



## DECCAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

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***director***

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Honorable ***Mr Chief Minister,***

Warm greetings from the Deccan Development Society on behalf of over 5000 very small women farmers of Zaheerabad region in Sangareddy district for your historic decision of extending Rs 4000 per acre for purchase of manures.

A couple of weeks ago when you had announced a support for fertilizers we were very worried about it. Our apprehension was caused by the impression that this support may entirely go to chemical fertilizers and the consequences of such a possibility were frightening. As you are kindly aware 60-65% Telangana farms are unirrigated lands. Much of them are poor soils. If chemical fertilizers are applied on them all these lands will face the possibility of turning into deserts. The example of Punjab is in front of all of us. The most fertile alluvial soils which produced four tons of grains per application of one unit of fertilizer 30 years ago need four times the fertilizers for production of the same amount of grains today. So much so that the father of chemical agriculture in India Dr M S Swaminathan had to warn them to stop using chemical fertilizers. If that is the consequence on such deep soils of Punjab, imagine what would happen to the shallow poor soils of Telangana.

Therefore we were doubly relieved that in the TRS plenary you personally clarified that the support will be in the form of cash and the farmers are free to buy farmyard manure or chemical fertilizers with the support of Rs 4000 per acre per season. This was a revolutionary step and once again on behalf of all the organic farmers we are working with, we thank you for this step.

But Mr Chief Minister can you please move forward from this position and declare an enhanced support for those farmers who tend to their soils organically. Because they are truly realizing your concept of Golden Telangana by keeping the soil of this

land fertile for future generation. The quantum and modality of this support can be discussed and finalized. However we request that atleast 25% of your support should reach non chemical farmers. Telangana will remember you and your government forever for this action.

### **MNREGA**

You must once again be complemented for thinking of MNREGA support for agriculture. Deccan Development Society has been arguing for this support for over 10 years. We have been unable to understand the reluctance of bureaucrats to extend this support. One of the biggest expenditures the farmers face is for weeding. Especially the organic farmers who do not use weedicides to control weeds. Sometimes they have to pay exorbitant rates for getting their lands weeded. It could be as high as Rs 5000 per acre. Therefore if this activity is supported under MNREGA, farmers will heave a sigh of relief. Almost 40% of the cost of cultivation can be met from this support.

Similarly the cost of ploughing by bullocks has gone through the roof. While a couple of years ago farmers could easily get their lands ploughed for under Rs 1000 pw acre. Today it costs them not less than Rs 3000 . For a small and marginal farmer, this is a heavy burden that he cannot bear. As a result many marginal farmers choose to leave their lands fallow than to cultivate them. Your move to support farming activities under MNREGA will be a boon to such farmers.

### **Issue of Pesticides**

Mr Chief Minister, We would also like to draw your attention to the frightening fact of pesticide use in agriculture. We reportedly use 40 times more chemical pesticide in our agriculture compared to countries like US. This must be stopped at all costs if we have to leave behind a healthy land for a healthy younger generation. Over the last few years the number of non chemical alternatives have emerged such as Panchagavya, Jeevamrutham alongside a number of herbal concoctions. The beauty of all these is that they can be produced by the farmer him/herself at the household level. Thus without having to spend a fortune and feed our soils with poison we can save our crops from pests.

Mr Chief Minister, in your vision for small holder farmer agriculture please make provisions for supporting the production of such bio pesticides and bio fertilizers at the household level by farmers. It will not only mean a huge saving for them but also a worthwhile investment in developing Telangana into a land of healthy soil.

### **Please rethink 'Crop-Colonies'**

Mr Chief Minister, you have been advocating for crop colonies over the last couple of weeks. While this idea may sound interesting on paper, in reality it will have a number of unintended consequences for the small and the marginal. In essence crop colonies mean mono cultures and will go against the critical principle of agro biodiversity which not only protects crops from pests, and soils from infertility. Agro biodiversity lies at the heart of small and marginal farming and therefore we must protect it with all our might. Once an area is declared as a colony for a certain kind of crop, slowly the administrative mechanisms will work overtime to ensure that only that crop is grown and nothing else. This will be against the interest of the small and marginal farmers who maintain biodiversity on their farms as an insurance against crop failure of a certain crop. Mr Chief Minister, please let us not tamper with this powerful principle.

### **Please let us move forward**

Mr Chief Minister, in this highly competitive world, it is not easy if we only think of remedial measures. We must also bring onto the table bold visions of how we can make Telangana agriculture the top most in the country. For this we must peep into the future and envision how we can survive in the days and decades of climate change which will deny us abundant availability of water.

### **Telangana as a millet state.**

We have a culture of growing and consuming Jowar, Bajra, Korra and such valuable millets. The way we are celebrating Bathukamma, Bonalu and other cultural traditions of Telangana we must also celebrate millets as the State Crop and strive to provide it a special status. Millet cultivation is pro poor, pro women and pro environment. It can withstand all climatic stresses and stay as a climate smart crop. It doesn't need water or chemical inputs and grows abundantly in biodiverse atmosphere. Taking into account all these factors, the Telangana government, in order to continue its pro -farmer steps should declare the following:

- a) Water bonus for millet farmers for saving a huge a quantity of six million litres of water per acre.
- b) Biodiversity bonus for keeping alive the critical principle of biodiversity on their farms.

c) Nutritional bonus for providing the most nutritious crops for the poorest populations who will face the crisis of malnutrition in the coming decades of climate crisis.

d) Climate change bonus for growing climate smart crops.

Please think of these steps Mr Chief Minister. Already our neighboring states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are moving ahead in this direction. While Andhra Pradesh has a state policy of a **comprehensive millet development** Karnataka has recently announced that it would like Karnataka to be a millet state and an organic state.

Mr Chief Minister, we should outshine these initiatives of our neighbors. Therefore we urge you to immediately declare **Telangana an Organic Millet State**. If you can do this you will be remembered as one of the most iconic policies that India has seen in decades.

with warm regards,



(pvsatheesh)  
Director, Deccan Development Society  
National Convenor, Millet Network of India

**To**  
**Sri K Chandrashekar Rao, Honourable Chief Minister, Government of Telangana**

Copy to:

- Sri P Srinivas Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Government of Telangana
- Sri. A.P. Jithender Reddy, Member of Parliament, Telangana
- Sri B. Vinod Kumar, Member of Parliament, Telangana
- Dr. K. Keshava Rao, Member of Parliament, Telangana
- Dr. D. Srinivasulu, IAS, Prl. Secretary (AM&Co-op), Government of Telangana
- C. Parthasarathi, IAS, APC & Secretary, Government of Telangana
- Dr. M. Jagan Mohan, IAS, Commissioner of Agriculture, Government of Telangana
- Sri Shekhar Prasad Singh, IAS, Chief Secretary, Government of Telangana
- Dr. Rajiv Sharma, IAS, Chief Advisor, Government of Telangana
- Sri B. P. Acharya, IAS, Special Chief Secretary, Government of Telangana
- Sri K. Ramakrishna Rao, IAS, Principal Secretary - Finance, Government of Telangana