

Declaration on Millets

IV National Convention on Millets

Ending Hunger, Achieving Food and Nutritional Security & Promoting Sustainable Agriculture

CESS, Hyderabad, Telangana India

November 25-26, 2015

We the farmers, scientists, nutritionists, environmentalists, academicians and civil society activists concerned about millets belonging to several regions of India – from the hills of Himachal Pradesh to the plains of Deccan, from the adivasi areas of Madhya Pradesh to the mountains of Nagaland-- have met at Hyderabad in Telangana on November 25 & 26, 2015 to discuss the various facets, strengths and problems of millet cultivation and consumption in India.

We divided the two day event into a number of Listening Sessions to discuss the role of *Millets in Food and Nutritional security of India, Millets and the Climate Change* and *Millets as backbone of ecological agriculture*, in which we heard farmers, scientists, policy makers from Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and Tamil Nadu who vividly described the millet situation in their states. We also heard presentations of scientists, especially from the *Centre for Economic and Social Studies & Telangana State Agricultural University, Hyderabad*.

After detailed discussions of the hopes and fears raised by the participants in the convention, a careful analysis of the issues presented, we have drafted the **Hyderabad Declaration on Millets** to bring out the current concerns of the millet community for the consideration of policy makers, administrators, scientists, farmers and civil society groups in India and abroad.

1. The IV National convention sincerely thanks the August Parliament of India for having passed the National Food Security Act, and wants to remind the honorable parliamentarians that the spirit of the Act is still not being realized because of the failure of Food Corporation of India and the State governments to procure and supply millets in PDS.
2. The convention notes with deep concern that while the entire world is turning towards ecological/organic agriculture for its food and nutritional security, India is still grappling with conventional models of chemical and high input farming. Therefore this convention strongly recommends that the governments take note of changing food preferences and make India a strong base for ecological agriculture.
3. In the light on the Paris summit on climate change, India should make a climate commitment by providing guaranteed MNREGA employment to support millet farming.

4. The convention reiterates its demand made in previous conventions to provide certain honorarium to millet farmers for their contribution to climate change, water conservation and nutrition.
5. The convention urges the government and civil society organizations to work together to provide a new recognition for millets through celebrations of National and International Day of millets on the lines of International Day of Quinoa. Such celebrations should foreground the contribution of millets to human health, nutrition and environment. This effort should be brought up by pitching for special slots on Radio and Television.
6. The convention has heard a large number of farmers' experiences from across the country that celebrate millet based ecological agriculture. These experiences could be woven into a policy matrix that ensures the security of India's food, farming and climate. In this process we urge science and research community to recognize millet farmers' knowledge as authentic science.
7. The Paramparagat Krishi Vignyan Yojana (PKVY) is a laudable effort from the government to re-emigrate the traditional agricultural systems and practices. A major portion of PKVY program should dedicate itself to a millet mission that seeks to promote millet anchored biodiverse and ecological farming practices.
8. Apart from ensuring security for food, fodder, health, livelihood and climate **millets also promote peace**. There is an urgent need to recognize this especially in the context of conflict torn States for whom **millets are the bonding crops**.
9. A prestigious awareness program of the ministry of government of India has somehow missed the environmental significance of millets all this years. This shortcoming must be corrected by designing an NEAC specially focused on millets should formulate a special program for growing millets and their invaluable environmental contributions. If done in 2016 it will create a Nation- wide awareness about millets and add to India's efforts to mitigate climate crises.
10. A longtime absence of focus on and encouragement for millet farming has resulted in a severe shortage of traditional cultivars of millets even while the National and International gene banks such as NBPGR and ICRISAT of dealing with a wealth of such cultivars therefore this convention demands that these organizations take pro active steps to repatriate the heirloom seeds and germplasm to the communities of this country who have grown these crops and have trustfully deposited the seeds in the Gene banks.
11. Many misleading claims by agricultural input companies have tempted farmers to purchase environmentally harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides as well as genetically engineered seeds that will permanently cripple our environment as well as farmers' knowledge, therefore this convention strongly demands that the Advertising Standards Council of India keeps a close watch on and seriously regulate such advertisements .

12. Misplaced subsidies by the governments at the States as well as Center have moved our agriculture towards high input dependence and mechanization. If this subsidies can be routed for traditional farm tools which are in line with the agro ecological practices of the small and marginal farmers (for example in various parts of the country traditional ploughs utilize more than half a dozen species of trees each dedicated to a particular ploughing purpose and thereby enhance the biodiversity of farm bund plantations).
13. The public food programs of the governments must now concentrate more and more on the nutritional security of the children, women and the poor thereby shifting the focus from food security to nutritional security. Therefore all public food programs must mandatorily be linked to the cultivation and consumption of millets.
14. In line with demand, this convention recommends all the government medical institutions – AYUSH and Naturopathy hospitals to serve millet food for its inherent medicinal and nutritional values.
15. Keeping farmers’ parameters at center stage, studying ecological, economic, cultural and nutritional contributions of millets should be in the fore front of the National Agricultural Research system, parent-teacher and children education.
16. One way of ensuring that all the above demands are successfully met is by ensuring higher minimum support price for millet farmers. Comparatively richer and more articulate farmers who cultivate cotton, cane and other commodity crops have seen that their MSPs jumping at least two-three folds in the last five years. Millet farmers in comparison have neither the voice nor the organization to amplify their demands therefore the governments must unilaterally increase the Minimum Support Price for millets in line with the other crops.

Endorsements from

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