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PRESS RELEASE

MAA TELANGANA MAA VYAVASAYAM

We the citizens of Telangana were overwhelmed at the thought of '**Mana Telangana Mana Vyavasam**' which the State government pondered as its step towards Bangaru Telangana. We fondly hoped that this would bring back to us our lost heritage of autonomous agriculture and prosperity which the Telangana people enjoyed for centuries. But the hopes lasted only until we realized that **Mana Telangana Mana Vyavasam** was a false slogan in the sense that it was neither representative of Telangana nor was it a people's agriculture. Even before the happiness of the Great Escape from the clutches of Bt Cotton had sunk in, that in the name of **Alternative** the State government has started to push us into the booby trap of GM-ready crops such as Soy and Maize.

We severely deplore the fact that in the sacred name of Telangana the government is increasingly promoting industrial crops which may advance the industrial agenda of the state but will put its peasantry back by decades. We are extremely pained by the fact that the Telangana government which took birth as a result of long fought movements has belied all its revolutionary hopes and is leading its peasantry to a precarious agricultural future of our State.

In this context, under the leadership of its small and marginal women farmers, DDS and the Millet Network of India is devising a plan for an awareness movement called '**Ma Telangana Ma Vyavasayam**' as an alternative to the **Alternatives**. This movement led by **Millet sisters** will try to open the eyes of the Government of Telangana to the REAL and authentic crops of the state such as **Millet**s and **crop diversity** which ensured their food and nutritional security along with fodder and ecological security even in the worst drought years. The story of Meedoddi Vinoda, a small farmer with a tiny holding is the most sterling illustration of this reality of the dry land small farmers of Telangana.

Recently, Ms Vinoda, from the village Nagwar, Medak district who was honoured with the award for '**excellence in farming**' has presented to the country a charter on her farming practice. In her words...

1. My crops don't need irrigation.
2. My farming provides me with millets, pulses, oil seeds
3. My crops have high nutrition values
4. My farming not only brings us food but also fodder to my livestock and fertility to my soil.
5. My kind of farming doesn't need chemical fertilizers, chemical pesticides 6 I never need to buy any seed from outside market. I plant seeds saved from my previous years' crops.
6. My crops grow well even in lands with low fertility a hallmark of the lands owned by the poor like us.
7. No farmer who followed my kind of farming has ever committed suicide.

In a landscape where mono cropping, especially cotton held sway over vast agricultural land, Vinoda marked her remarkable feat and set an example by earning upto two lakh rupees from her three acres of millet based bio diverse farm where she planted millets, pulses and oil seeds among other crops. Her neighbour who planted Bt cotton, blinded by the industrial ads, could earn only a maximum of Rs. 10,000 profit from his three acre land. He spent lakhs of rupees on market seeds, chemical inputs and pesticides.

After WTO inflicted a crushing blow that the government has realized the true face of Bt cotton and is busy drafting action plans for farmers to dispense with the cotton. But the women farmers of Deccan Development Society almost 15 years ago fought extensively for several years to motivate farmers against Bt cotton cultivation in the areas home to Bt cotton such as Warangal, Adilabad, Nalgonda to abandon the devil's crop. The women could help small farmers and their lands from falling victims to the disaster.

But it is so unfortunate that we are being pushed from one tragedy to the other. We are certainly happy that the State has decided to dispense with Bt cotton, but the new chorus on **Alternative Crops** which focus on mono cropping of pulses, turmeric and dangerous crops such as industrial maize, industrial soya sound extremely dangerous. Soy might seem to be a savior crop for our government, but our experiences with Bt Cotton are forcing us to foresee what Soy can do to the small farmers. Similar to how Bt cotton entered the cotton farms, genetically modified soya will soon invade our fields if spread at the behest of commercial interests.

The great lessons learned by countries such as Argentina, Brazil and America who cultivated GM Soya on a large scale are in front of us. GM Soya has had a disastrous impact on economics of farmers in US, Argentina and Brazil. Several studies revealed that there was no significant increase in on-farm profits from the adoption of GM RR soy in the US and that their cultivable lands have turned into deserts. Similar tragic stories echo from the same region that houses Industrial Maize. The European countries, wiser after these experiences are now vehemently opposing against GM crops from entering their lands. GM Seed industry which have faced a great defeat in those countries are now attempting to raid States such as Telangana.

We are also pained to see the efforts being taken by the government to promote rice in the region of Telangana which is known for its water crisis. It takes 4000litres of water to produce one Kilogram of rice. Hence in the year 2014, Telangana farmers by cultivating millets in 877236 ha have saved upto 115689883.68 trillion litres of water.

Government is being blind to the real solutions and is repeatedly dismissing the knowledge systems of thousands of small farmers who have been in the practice of real Telangana's agriculture rooted in millets.

Bangaru Telangana can be achieved only when we recognize our small farmers' knowledge and our crop diversity which is encapsulated in a farming system that constitutes millets such as Jowar, Bajra, Foxtail, Little millet etc, pulses, oil seeds, uncultivated greens which have ensured our communities with not just food, but fodder, fuel and nutrition and environmental securities. We should encourage the farming systems that have protected land from being polluted and our farmers from committing suicides. This is the **real alternative** we can provide our Telangana farmers with.



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