

'Facilitate democratising agriculture research'

Both the food insecurity and agrarian crisis lead one to question the governance of agricultural research in India

DHARWAD: The Alliance for Democratising Agricultural Research in South Asia (ADARSA) intends to hold a Farmers Jury (Prajateerpu) in Karnataka in November 2009, according to Deccan Development Society Director P V Sathesh. The Deccan Development Society is pioneering the cause in India.

Mr Sathesh noted this while addressing the participants at a preliminary meeting regarding the holding of this 'Prajateerpu', organised in Dharwad recently. Farmers, agriculture scientists, representatives of different organisations, journalists, academicians, and development activists actively participated in the deliberations of the meeting.

Stating that the focus of the event will be assessing agriculture research activities from farmers' judgment, he said, "globalisation has had an irreparable impact on agriculture and agricultural economy in India." The focus of agriculture research has changed. Researches in the universities are hardly need-based.

He said, there was an ex-

tremely disturbing shift towards biotechnology and genetic engineering as the engine to drive Indian agriculture in the coming decades. Technology was being imposed on the farmers' knowledge, which had evolved over generations. To narrow the gap, organisations which shared similar interest around the world have initiated ADARSA. "The Farmers Jury is one of the steps towards achieving Democratisation of Agriculture Research," he added

He further stated that such an event was previously organised in Andhra Pradesh, which created policy-level impact. ADARSA wants to repeat the experience by holding Farmers Jury in Karnataka. Prior to the commencing of Farmers Jury, ADARSA will hold a consultative meeting in Bangalore with experts from South Karnataka, he added.

Head of K H Patil K V K (Hulkoti) L G Hiregoudar, Dharwad All India Radio Assistant Station Director C U Belakki, Agriculture scientists Dr Devakumar, Dr Ramesh Bhat, Dr Hanumaratti, and Dr Prabhuh, farmers C R. Budihal, Sure-



Deccan Development Society Director P V Sathesh addressing a preliminary meeting of 'Prajateerpu' in Dharwad.

shagouda Patil, seed conserver Shrenikaraju Yelavatti, Dr Sanjeev Kulkarni, Ramakrishna P Hegde, water activist Chanabasappa Shivappa Kombali, Dr Prakash Bhat, Shivaraj Hunugund of Green Foundation, Dr Raghu Murthugadde, environmental activist Pandurang Hegde, Agriculture Officer Channappa Angadi were among those who shared their views on the initiative.

Background

It is everyone's knowledge that while India boasts of having

the largest number of billionaires in the world, it is 125 in the Human Development Index. It also is home to the largest number of farmers suicides in the world. Over the last ten years, nearly 1.50 lakh farmers have committed suicide. While the country claims increasing level of productivity in food production over the years, India also has the highest number of hungry people. It also has the distinction of having more children suffering from malnutrition than the sub-Saharan Africa.

A study commissioned to find out the research trend in four leading agricultural universities and two major initiatives of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) the apex body of the Indian Government for agricultural research in India clearly points to an extremely disturbing shift towards biotechnology and genetic engineering as the engine to drive Indian agriculture in the coming decades.

IAASTD

It is in this context, there is a rethinking world over on agri-

cultural research. A recent international initiative that was sponsored by the FAO, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, UN Environment Programme, UNESCO, WHO and such other major global development organizations made a major departure from the conventional thinking on agricultural knowledge and research.

Called IAASTD (International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development), this initiative clearly articulated the global rethinking on the corporate controlled agricultural science which was possible because of the directions given by the Green Revolution model of agricultural science which heavily institutionalised the dependence on external inputs in agriculture.

The South Asian initiative called Alliance for Democratising Agricultural Research in South Asia is being lead by the Deccan Development Society and participated in groups from Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, alongside a number of groups from India.