

ADARSA

Alliance for Democratizing Agricultural Research in South Asia

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Farmers Demand Open and Transparent Agricultural Research

A Farmers Round Table held in Dharwad has demanded that the state agricultural universities in Dharwad and Bengalooru must present their research initiatives of the year in front of a **Farmers Jury** mainly of the small and marginalized and commit to respect its verdict. The Round Table also demanded that in every **Krusha Mela** [Farming Festival] held across the state, there should be a mini farmers jury to openly and transparently discuss the state initiatives in farming research and farming policies.

These demands were made in the Dharwad Farmers Round Table which was held at the Kannada Cultural Centre, Dharwad on 24th November attended by 35 farmer leaders from KRRS, Sayavava Mission, Krishaka Samaja, Sarvodaya Maha Sangha and Krushi Prayog Parivar from Dharwad, Haveri, Koppal and Gadag Districts.

The Round Table was second of the six farmers round tables being planned across Karnataka by ADARSA [Alliance for Democratizing Agricultural Research in South Asia]. The first Round Table took place in Mandya [with the districts of Chamarajanagar, Mysore, Mandya and Ramanagara] on November 16, 2010. These round tables are an effort to meant to spread the underlying values of the message of **Raita Teerpu**, a unique farmers jury on agricultural research held in Bangalore in December 2009.

Through *Raitateerpu*, for the first time in the world, small and marginal farmers questioned the current pattern of agricultural research and gave a historic verdict. The jury led by women, indigenous, dalit, small and marginal farmers heard 12 top agricultural scientists, researchers, social scientists, consumer activists, pastoralists and environmentalists and then asked them searching questions on the current trends and intent of agricultural research.

Shri P V Satheesh, South Asia coordinator of ADARSA [Alliance for Democratization of Agricultural Research in South Asia] which had designed and led the *Raita Teerpu* process who spoke on the occasion described the process as historic since it had shown how the voiceless can play a prominent role in redesigning agricultural research which is seen as too complicated to be handled by farmers.

Dr Prakash Bhat, a veteran rural development specialist from Dharwad explained the concept of food sovereignty through the inspiring examples of small and marginal farmers of the region such as Kallavva Haklad. He said that unless farmers moved to the concept of food sovereignty, they can never achieve freedom in their farming decisions which was crucial to tide over the current agrarian crisis.

Shri Channabasappa Kombili, farmer leader from Haveri and Smt Anitha Pailoor, Chair, Centre for Agricultural Media, Dharwad, both of who were members of the Raita Teerpu steering committee expressed their views on the message of Raita Teerpu. Shri Nagendra Prasad and Smt Ratna Tadkal two facilitators of Raita Teerpu also spoke.

Six members of the *Raita Teerpu* farmers jury from the region, Smt Kallavva Haklad, Smt Hemmavva, Smt Shivagangamma, Smt Jaitanubi and Shri Iraiah Killedar participated in the round table and shared their soul-lifting experience from *Raita Teerpu*.

The Round Table came up with 22 point Declaration called **Dharwad Declaration on Raita Teerpu**. The major among them are:

- ✓ A strong organization in the state is necessary to challenge the priorities and content of agricultural research.
- ✓ An immediate debate must be started with agricultural universities to bring pressure on them to engage in pro farmer researches.
- ✓ All the farmer organizations must take the message of *Raita Teerpu* to their village units and thoroughly disseminate it.
- ✓ More and more farmer leaders must engage themselves in taking forward the message of *Raita Teerpu*
- ✓ Civil society organizations [NGOs] and their networks must internalize the values of *Raita Teerpu* and spread its message.
- ✓ Many dialogues must be initiated with citizens and consumers to make them aware of the significance of the *Raita Teerpu* process.
- ✓ Agricultural lands must not be used for non agricultural purposes even by farmers themselves.
- ✓ State must never acquire any agricultural land for non agricultural uses.
- ✓ While deciding on their cropping system, farmers must not have monetary profit as the sole consideration.



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