

ADARSA

Alliance for Democratising 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 Gulbarga has deanded that corporate funded agricultural research must be rejected by the agricultural universities in Karnataka. It also demanded that all agricultural policy formulations must have farmers as lead collaborators and such formulations must be lead by them. Farmers must have right to intervene in all anti farmers policies of the state. The Round Table also strongly urged the government to keep food produce out of the Price Rise Indes.

These demands were made in the Raitateerpu Farmers Round Table-III which was held at Rajarajeshwari Hotel, Gulbarga on 3rd December and was attended by about 40 farmer leaders from Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha, Sayavava Mission, Krishi Mission from the districts of Gulbarga, Yadagiri, Bidar, Bijapur and Raichur.

The Round Table was third of the seven farmers round tables being planned across Karnataka by ADARSA [Alliance for Democratising Agricultural Research in South Asia]. The first Round Table took place in Mandya on November 16, 2010. [with the districts of Chamarajanagar, Mysore, Mandya and Ramanagara]. The II Round Table took place at Dharwad [with the Districts of Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri and Koppal] on November 24, 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*, a farmers jury which took place in December 2009 near Bangalore, for the first time in the world, small and marginal farmers had questioned the current pattern of agricultural research and delivered 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 Democratisation 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 normally seen as too complicated to be handled by farmers

Six members of the *Raita Teerpu* farmers jury from the region, Smt Laxmibai Kamble, and Smt Aajamma from Gulbarga District, Smt Shobhavati Tugave and Shri Maruti Kamble from Bidar participated in the Round Table and shared their soul-lifting experience from *Raita Teerpu*.

Shri Ananda Teertha Pyati, a member of the Raitateerpu Steering Committee said that the missing link between Agricultural Research and Extension was the unaccountability of the researchers and extension agents to farmers. Farmers who silently suffered the impact of the research on their fields had not enjoyed the right to question the researchers. This gap had been filled by *Raita Teerpu* which had restored in farmers the right and confidence to question agricultural research.

Shri Vishwanath Patil., President, Bidar District KRRS, another member of the *Raita Teerpu* steering committee opined that the Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha take a clear stand on traditional seeds and self reliant farming. He also wanted the KRRS to offer a larger space in its leadership for very small and marginalised farmers from the excluded sections of the society. This was necessitated by the *Raita Teerpu* where the jury composed of voiceless small and marginal farmers had totally rejected the agricultural research that promoted the chemical, external input based farming practices. Thus the division between agricultural researchers and small farmers was clear in the *Raita Teerpu*. The *Raita Teerpu* had given a new dimension to our understanding of farming.

Shri Subbanna Biradar, the third member of the Steering Committee said that the *Raita Teerpu* had offered a platform for small and marginal farmers to articulate their own worldview. It had the potential to make the administrators and researchers to give a new weightage to farmers' opinions. He urged that *Raita Teerpu* must be taken to taluka and village levels to make it more effective. Farmer organisations, NGOs and peoples movements and media must publicise this extensively in their own spheres to create more awakening among farmers.

Shri M B Patil, Dy Director, Doordarshan, Gulbarga, who facilitated a session on *Farmers Movements and Raita Teerpu* expressed the apprehension that the developments in the agricultural field had been successful in making farmers lose their independence and become totally dependent on external inputs. The new freedom movement in India should lead towards farming independence. The *Raita Teerpu* was a tool which could facilitate this new freedom.

Shri Basavaraj Tambake, Vice President, Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha said that the entire Indian Parliament and bureaucracy seemed to have no concern for farmers. This had lead to new movement of farmers demanding self respect and a recognition for their voice. In this sense the *Raita Teerpu* had given a direction not only for farmer movements but also the the entire farming community. This had offered a new healthy and hopeful development for farming.

Shri Sidramappa, President, Bijapur District KRRS said that this process must be taken to the village level

Mr Basavaraj Ingin, President, *Karnataka Togari Belegarara Sangha*, said that all policy formulations related to agriculture must have farmers as collaborators and work under the direction of the farmers. Farmers must have the right to intervene in all anti farmer policies of the government. He said that it was extremely important to see that *Raita Teerpu* dissemination and implementation is forcefully pursued. He also demanded that government-funded


agricultural universities must reject research projects funded by multinational corporations.

Shri V G Desai, President of the Agricultural Labour Organisation agreed that the *Raita Teerpu* verdict was 99% pro farmer and provided an intellectual context to farmers movements. He stressed the urgency to take the Verdict forward and the only way to do so was to strengthen farmers' movements.

Shri Sidramappa, farmer leader from Bidar said that by giving a major role to small and marginal farmers, SCs and STs *Raita Teerpu* had reminded him of the revolutionary movement of Saint Basaveshwara in which he had provided leadership to artisanal and backward castes of the society. *Raita Teerpu* was reminiscent of this revolutionary ideal.

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

1. Government funded agricultural universities must reject research funding offers by private corporations, especially multinational corporations
2. All agricultural related policy formulations must take place in collaboration with and under the leadership of farmers
3. *Raita Teerpu* has clearly pointed to the wide gap between the current agricultural research and farmers concerns. The research heavily geared towards promoting chemical, external input based farming and has rendered farmers into helpless dependents upon external inputs such as seeds and fertilisers. Small and marginal farmers especially from excluded sections such as dalits and adivasis have become victims of this research and have silently suffered its negative consequences on their land and water. Hence they clearly prefer self reliant organic farming systems. This mismatch must go by making agricultural research oriented towards farmer preferences.
4. *Raita Teerpu* has provided a strong platform for small and marginal farmers to articulate their own vision of agriculture. It has the potential to compel the administrators and researchers to give a new weightage to farmer opinions.
5. *Raita teerpu* provides an intellectual context to farmers movements. Therefore the message of *Raita Teerpu* must be taken to village and Taluka levels to make it more effective. Farmers' organisations, people's movements, civil society organisations and media must extensively publicise *RaitaTeerpu* in their own spheres to create further awakening about the values upheld by *Raita Teerpu*.
6. The *Raita Teerpu* is a new direction not only for farmer movements but also for the entire farming community. This offers us a new healthy and hopeful development for farming.
7. Therefore *Raita Teerpu* must be presented and discussed at every village level. All farmer organisations must come together to take this message forward.
8. In view of the clear verdict by the *Raita Teerpu* against the use of external inputs in farming such as hybrid seeds and chemical fertilisers, the Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha must take a clear stand in favour of traditional seeds and self reliant farming.
9. Young farmers must receive special incentives from the government to engage in their own agricultural research on their farms
10. While the employees in the government and organised sectors have been consistently getting increased salaries year after year, every time food and farm produce rates are increased there goes a hue and cry. Therefore food prices must be decoupled from Price Rise Index.



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