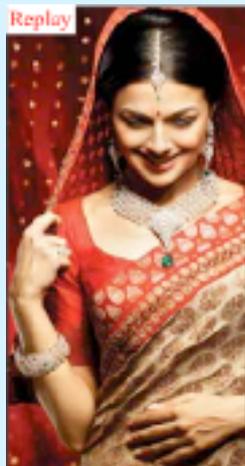




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Report on farmers' jury released

Special Correspondent

'It shows the voiceless can play a prominent role in redesigning agricultural research'

MYSORE: 'Democratisation of Agricultural Research in Karnataka', a report on the farmers' jury or 'Raitha Teerpu', was released by president of the Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers' Association Kuruburu Shantha Kumar and leading organic farmer and writer Santhosh Koulagi, here on Monday.

The farmers' jury, which was held in an ashram near Bangalore in December 2009, was a unique process wherein for the first time in the world small and marginal farmers questioned the paradigm of modern agricultural research and gave their verdict.

A 30-member jury led by small farmers, farming women, agricultural labourers and Dalits, heard versions from top agricultural scientists, consumer activists, pastoralists and environmentalists. Interestingly, they also asked them searching questions on the current trends in agriculture during the meeting.

P.V. Sateesh, South-Asia coordinator of the Alliance for Democratisation of Agricultural Research in South Asia (ADARSHA), which had designed and led the farmers' jury, described it as "historic". According to him the jury had shown how the voiceless could play a prominent role in redesigning agricultural research, which was seen as too complicated for the farmers to handle.

New era

The farmers' round table conferences, which will commence on Tuesday, will herald a new era in bringing farmers to the top of the policy pyramid. "It was time for the agricultural research to return to farmers. Every farmer was a scientist and could see agriculture in its holistic form that was different from scientists, who engage with research as fragments, a dangerous trend," he noted.

He said that the verdict that addressed the government policy makers, universities and agricultural scientists, underlined the great need for

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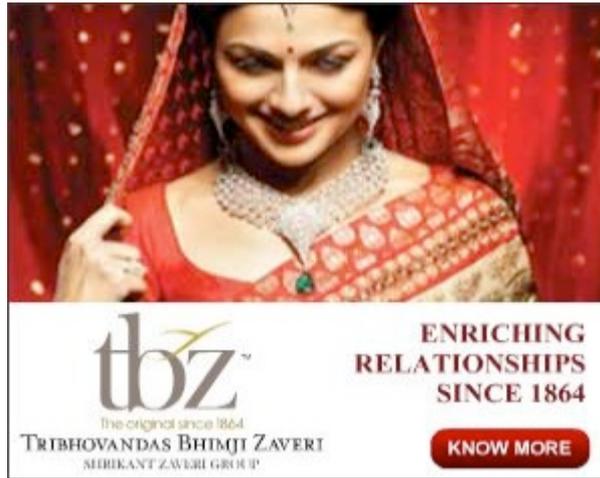
pro-farmer agricultural research. This was important as now farmers could not return to traditional farming, but found it too expensive to pursue modern farming practices.

He also said that the jury noted that the Government had to recognise the native talent and innovations.

“The jury ruled against research in hybrid varieties, which demands use of expensive chemicals and fertilizers. It demanded research on local land races that are adaptable to the ecosystems, are drought resistant and can be produced by farmers themselves,” he noted.

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