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Online edition of India's National Newspaper
Monday, Dec 20, 2010
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KRRS favours farmers doing research

Special Correspondent

'Research should be restricted to organic farming with focus on self-reliance'



Dhanakirti Balipa (left), KRRS Dakshina Kannada unit president, Rita Naronha, professor, Roshni Nilaya, and P.V. Satheesh, South Asia Coordinator for Adarsa, addressing presspersons in Mangalore on Sunday.

MANGALORE: Agricultural universities and research stations should leave agricultural research to farmers, who have research skills and deep understanding of agricultural technology, said representative farmers of Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha (KRRS) and organisations supporting them at a press meet held here on Sunday.

KRRS Dakshina Kannada district unit president Dhanakirti Balipa said that farmers should lead research instead of bureaucrats, who had no knowledge of agriculture but had been entrusted with the policy of making powers in agricultural research. Research should be conducted only on organic and self-reliant agriculture and farmers should have the final say on it.

The demand to involve farmers in agricultural research was made in the "Raita Teerpu" Farmers Roundtable-IV held in Roshni Nilaya, Mangalore, on Saturday.

Nearly 60 farmer leaders from Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha (KRRS) from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Disha Trust, Mangalore, Women Vegetable Growers Association, Mangalore, attended the meet.

Called the "Mangalore Declaration on Raita Teerpu," the 12-point declaration demands that responsibility for agricultural research be handed over to farmers and research grants given to them directly as they had plenty of research skills and deep knowledge of farm technologies. It demanded closure of public research system estimated at crores of rupees and handing over research to farmers. The charter of demands said that a report from an

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expert committee of the Karnataka Government advocated plantation of jatropha was a multinational conspiracy to break the back of food farming and that the Karnataka Government should not accept this report. It wanted farmers to reject sops such as free power and free seeds. "Raita Teerpu" is a jury of small and marginal farmers, which had first questioned the current pattern of agricultural research at a meet held in Bangalore on December 2009. 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 asked them searching questions on the current trends and intent of agricultural research.

Alliance for Democratising Agricultural Research in South Asia (Adarsa) director P.V. Satheesh said that, at present, farmers benefited from the research done in agricultural universities. There was a thinking that farmers lacked expertise to lead research in agricultural universities. However, farmers could lead agricultural research even better, he said.

The roundtable was fourth in a series of seven farmers' roundtables being organised throughout the State by Adarsa. The first and second roundtables took place in Mandya and Dharwad on November 16 and November 24 respectively. Mr. Satheesh said farmers' groups worked towards building a pyramid of opinion with Raita Teerpu as its base. "We want to organise seven roundtables to influence agricultural scientists, civil society, and media, at the national and international levels. Rita Noronha, Professor, Roshni Nilaya, said that the propositions put forward by the Government such as "special agricultural zones" were "marketable" ideas. Ultimately, the zones would offer nothing for small farmers. "They talk of wastelands. However, land was never a waste, it is always a source of some resource," said Ms. Noronha.

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