

ADARSA

Alliance for Democratising Agricultural Research in South Asia

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Research Priorities must be set at the farms and homes of farmers, demands farmers' Round Table

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Instead of focusing on individual crop agricultural research should go beyond individual crops and embrace the entire farming life. Only then can it strengthen the life of farmers, demanded the **Shimoga Round Table on Raita Teerpu**. The Round Table further asserted that research priorities should not be decided in universities and research institutions but in the farms and homes of farmers and include local wisdom, local knowledge and local culture. Only then can agricultural research can help farmers to withstand the current agrarian crisis.

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The Shimoga Round Table which focused on Democratising Agricultural Research, went on to say that agricultural research must be led by farmers and should complement the food sovereignty of the area in which it is being done. **It should promote agriculture instead of crops.**

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There was also a demand that the relationship between farmer suicides and agricultural research must be studied and if there are concrete evidences that the expensive farming practices are being promoted by agricultural research, such research should be corrected and abandoned.

Another significant demand made by the Round Table was to offer encouragement to long duration crops that withstand various weather stresses in the place of short term crops promoted current farm research which leads to frequent crop failures.

Similarly the current attitude of research which prescribes only one solution to a very wide area should give place to eco system specific solution to agricultural problems. Many SHG groups present in the Round Table demanded that information on agricultural research and farm trials must be publicised through their auspices.

In place of populist and misleading government programmes such as Loan Waivers, farmers would welcome more sustainable solutions that would stop them hankering after loans. A scientific and profitable price for their crops would be one such major solution.

A Farmers Round Table held in Mangalore has demanded that agricultural research should be left to farmers who have both research skills and deep understanding of agricultural technology. Further, agricultural universities and research stations should conduct research only on organic and self-reliant agriculture and farmers should have the final say on the research.

A significant demand from farmers was for the creation of a Farmers Tribunal on the lines of Consumers Courts and give it judicial powers to decide on farming issues.

The Round Table strongly opposed the Expert Committee report to the Government of Karnataka which has advocated growing of biofuel crops on “waste lands” in the state. Such an act would break the back of food farming, the Round Table has affirmed.

These demands were made in the **Raitateerpu Farmers Round Table-IV** which was held at Roshni Nilaya, Mangalore on December 18, 2010 and was attended by about 60 farmer leaders from Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha units from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Disha Trust Mangalore, Women Vegetable Growers Association, Mangalore.

The Round Table was fourth in a series of seven farmers round tables being organised 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 and the Third Round Table at Gulbarga [for Gulbarga, Bidar, Bijapur, Raichur and Yadgir Districts]. These round tables are an effort meant to spread the intrinsic values of the message of **Raita Teerpu**, a unique farmers jury on agricultural research held in Bangalore in December 2009.

The Shivamogga Round Table was the Fifth Farmers Round Table in a series of roundtables being organised in Karnataka as a follow up of **Raitateerpu**, a farmers jury, the first of its kind in the world, which took place in December 2009 near Bangalore. In this Jury, 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.

Mri 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 spoke on the occasion explained the transparent and democratic values which **Raita Teerpu** had upheld. He also said that the voiceless and the excluded lead the process and conclusively proved that the small and the marginalised could effectively challenge the current paradigm of agricultural research and offer some profound changes in it.

Presiding over the Round Table, Mr G L Janardhan, Director, *Parisara Adhyayana Kendra*, Shivamogga pointed that there were scores of farmers who were working as scientists on their own farms. But their knowledge and contribution had not been acknowledged by the scientific community. It was the aim of the **Shivamogga Round Table** to compel formal agricultural researchers to respect the scientific skill and knowledge of farmers and work with them as co

researchers.

Mr Pandurang Hegde from *Appiko Movement, Sirsi* explained the *Raita Teerpu* and said that out of 500 farmers who were listed a rigorous and transparent process was followed to make a final select of 30 persons who were all small and marginal farmers, dalits and tribals who strongly challenged the current paradigm of agricultural research.

Ms Lalita Bhat from Mavinssara, Mr Hoysala Appaji from Hassan and Iraiah Killedar of Belgaum all of who were members of the Jury in the *Raita Teerpu* shared their empowering experiences.

Quoting profusely from the rich biodiversity and food culture of Malnadu region, Prof T N Prakash from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore wondered whether the current agrarian crisis in Malnad was due to the decreasing food sovereignty in the region

The Round Table released a declaration called *Raita Teerpu Shivamogga Farmers Round Table Declaration* and warned that any law that threatens people's food sovereignty will be fought severely.

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