

# Millet body for local procurement clause in Food Security Bill

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THE Millet Network of India (MINI), an all-India alliance of 145 institutions and individuals consisting of farmers, scientists, nutritionists and environmentalists, on Wednesday urged the Union government to immediately restore the local procurement provision in the Food Security Bill, slated to be placed in the current session of Parliament.

“Only such provision that enables ‘opening of procure-

**The Millet Network of India also warned that the absence of the local procurement clause may take away the advantage from dryland farmers and hand over the reins to big corporate houses and multinationals**

ment centres within a radius of 10 kilometre wherever feasible and provide on-the-spot payment to farmers can ensure that the introduction of millets in the public distribution system (PDS) will stay pro-poor and benefit all farmers in the rainfed regions of India,” MINI national coordinator, PV Satheesh, told media-persons here.

MINI also warned that the absence of the clause may take away the advantage from dryland farmers and hand over the reins to big corporate houses and multinationals.

“Thus, what the right hand had given to the dryland farmers will be taken away by the left hand of the government,” he said, cautioning that the absence of a clear local procurement policy would take the soul away from the new Food Security Act.

Reminding the government that over 100 million rural people belonging to 10 million farming households were millet cultivators and constituted nearly 40 per cent of all farmers in the country, Satheesh said the government must be more sensitive to the welfare of these adivasi and dalit segments of the farming population in relation to the privileged farmers from irrigated, well-endowed farming areas of the country.

“If millets are not procured locally, the small dryland farmers will be left in the lurch,” he said, urging the Centre to go beyond PDS and introduce millets in all public food systems such as the Anganwadis, midday meals and social welfare hostel programmes.