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Dharwad Declaration calls for millets in PDS

BS Reporter / Chennai/ Dharwad October 24, 2011, 0:14 IST

The 'Dharwad Declaration' issued by the Millet Network of India has demanded the introduction of millets in the public distribution system, besides encouraging their production, storage and distribution at the local level.

The lack of encouragement for farmers to take up millet cultivation could facilitate the cornering of millet production by large industrial houses and corporations, the declaration warned.

The declaration was issued at the two-day national convention of millet farmers organised at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad. The declaration has been thrown open for consideration of policy makers, administrators, scientists, farmers and civil society groups in India and abroad.

Besides introducing millets in the PDS, the government should ensure the use of millets in Integrated Child Development Services, school mid-day meal programmes, social welfare hostels, government canteens and state celebrations.

This will not only ensure a large market for millets, but also recapture for millets their rightful position in the food culture in the country. This will also enhance the nutrition status of the population, the declaration said.

The government should withdraw the Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millets Promotion (INSIMP) as it destroys millet cultivation environment by insisting on hybridisation, mono-cropping and use of chemicals for cultivation of millets.

The declaration suggested that the government should adopt a new policy to promote cultivation of millets using traditional methods besides providing support bonus of Rs 10,000 per hectare to farmers growing millets.

The use of millets can be popularised only if awareness on its nutritional value is created among schoolchildren. So, the government should take steps to introduce information on importance of cultivating and consuming millets in school syllabus.

Besides, the government should promote manufacture and supply of manual machines to process millets. The government should also encourage research on millets and farmers should be involved in research-related activities.

The declaration expressed concern over the promotion of industrial maize, policies on land acquisition, and demanded rightful emphasis of millets' role in safeguarding human health and their recognition as health food.

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