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UAS, Dharwad, formulates Declaration for inclusion of millets into PDS

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Nandita Vijay, Bangalore

University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dharwad, has now formulated a Dharwad Declaration in an effort to popularise consumption of millets. The university members who put together the document intend to seek the consideration of policy-makers, administrators, scientists, farmers and civil society groups from around the globe and the country. The declaration has suggested that the millet farmers engaged in its cultivation should be given bonus of Rs 10,000 per hectare of millets sought.

The declaration has called for the need of millets to be part of the Public Distribution System (PDS). The government will need to encourage its production, storage and distribution of millets at all levels. So long despite the high nutritive content of millets, its cultivation has not been given prime importance. There is need to withdraw the Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millets Promotion (INSIMP) as it destroys the millet cultivation.

Further, the declaration has also cited that the government should ensure that use of millets in the Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) school meal programme and include it as an integral meal at government canteens and institutions.

According to Dr B Ranganna, emeritus scientist (ICAR), university of agricultural sciences, Bangalore, the country is the largest producer of many kinds of millets, which are often referred to as coarse cereals. However, realising the nutrient composition of these grains they are now considered as nutria cereals (nutritious grains).

Small millets grown in India are barnyard millet (*Echinochloa frumentacea* link), foxtail millet (*Seteria italica*), kodo millet (*Paspalum scobiculatum*), little millet (*Panicum miliare* lamk) and proso millet (*Panicum milliaceam*). The cultivation of kodo millet, little millet and foxtail millet is more seen in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Barnyard and proso millets are largely grown in Uttaranchal state in the north, states Dr Ranganna.

At the 2-day national convention on millet-growers held at the university campus, it was highlighted that millets were an indispensable component in the daily diet and its popularity needed to be augmented. If there was ample support to the growers of millets, the crop would find a pride of place, stated P V Goankar of UAS, Dharwad.

On the one hand, the need to increase the area of millet cultivation was insisted upon, and on the other, the need to ensure awareness on the nutritional value of its consumption was to be highlighted. The declaration has also put forth the need to promote the manufacture of millet processing and husking equipment.

In the wake of land acquisitions and maize policy promotion, the declaration demanded the need to emphasise millets role to promote food health.

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