

16/12/2011

Page - 4 -

DWINDLING DEMAND

Unhealthy Approach Hits Millet**Express News Service**

Bhubaneswar: Millets remain restricted to consumption by diabetics for good health. A fact which was voiced by the experts at the Eastern India Convention on Re-imagining Agriculture was held at Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) here.

"We can witness marginalisation of millets these days. People consuming millets are looked down upon but when the same cereal is processed as energy supplement, people attach high value to it," said Suman Sarkar from the Centre for Sustainable Development.

The decline has been attributed to Government negligence and social stigma associated with millets, the experts said. The government's policy is a huge hin-

drance for the promotion of millets. With the popularity of Public Distribution System (PDS), rice has become the staple diet for many farmers.

THE DECLINE HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO GOVT'S NEGLIGENCE AND SOCIAL STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH IT

With the food habits changing, the producer is slowly becoming the consumer and its dependency is increasing. This despite the fact that millets are much more nutritious for consumption and good for health.

Unlike rice and wheat, millets do not need huge amount of water and fertile land to survive. Just about 350 to 400 mm rainfall is

enough for millet crop to stand against the rice crop's need for around 1,300-mm rainfall. Millets will be the best crop to grow in India with 64 per cent agricultural land being dry land.

The two-day workshop was attended by millet farmers from Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand who formulated a declaration. To be presented to the Government, the farmers demand a government policy and direct bonus incentive that will help them survive if they do not want to shift to cash crop farming.

The workshop was organised by Living Farms, Millet Network of India, Agramee and Nirman. National Convener, MINI, Satheesh PV, Achyut Das of Agramee and Shankarsan Nanda of OUAT were present.