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## ***PRESS RELEASE***

Millet Farmers from 10 different states of India have demanded that Indian Government accord millets the status of Food Sovereignty crops that offer independence and dignity to the small and marginal farmers, adivasis, dalits and women in this country.

This demand was made in the **Dharwad Declaration on Millets** released at the end of the two day **National Convention of Millet Farmers** held on October 16 and 17, 2011 at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad.

**The farmers have also asserted that** “millets are climate change compliant crops that resist the challenges such as global warming, water scarcity, recurring droughts and malnutrition posed to us in the coming era of climate change through their capacity to withstand these challenges. Therefore the farmers who cultivate millets must be offered multiple bonuses by the state, since they save India from the impacts of impending climate crisis”

In view of these changes they have demanded that millet farmers are paid the following bonuses in recognition of the ecosystemic services they provide:

- **Climate Change bonus** for being low carbon crops and hence help us fight the carbon crisis
- **Water Conservation bonus** since millet farmers grow their crop without irrigation. Thus every acre of millet farm saves the country upto six million litres. This is the “root print” of millets that needs state recognition and acknowledgement
- **Nutrition bonus** since millets crops are storehouses of nutrition For the impoverished populations residing in the dryland areas of India millets offer a huge nutrition solution during the climate change years when India will face a nutritional emergency.

The Declaration has also strongly opposed some of the “apparently pro millet initiatives such as INSIMP [Initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millet Promotion] under the Rashtriya Krishi Yojana. “INSIMP, which while overtly appear to be supporting millets, in actuality destroy the millet cultivation environment by insisting on hybridisation, monocropping and chemicalisation of millet cultivation” The Declaration calls for the immediate withdrawal of INSIMP and demands that if the Government and ICAR are serious about millet promotion, they should initiate a completely new policy which promotes the cultivation of millets in the traditional biodiverse, ecological fashion and

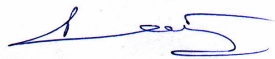
declare a support bonus of upto Rs.10,000 per hectare to farmers who are engaging in this form of millet cultivation..

The farmers have expressed great concern at the current promotion of industrial maize by different state governments in collusion with Multinational Corporations[MNC] such as Monsanto. "Such a "Cornation" of millet fields, we assert, will never promote food and other securities offered by millets. Even now more than 70% of all maize produced in India is for industrial consumption and not for people's plates. Any further promotion of maize will only convert all millet farmers into biofuel producers and take away their last stand as producers and controllers of food security of their community". The farmers have strongly demanded that millet farmers are extended the same support so that there are more level playing millet fields and help farmers to make informed decision on what we must cultivate and consume

On land acquisition policies announces by the government the Dharwad Declaration has said that the current emphasis on non acquisition of "fertile lands" which are defined as lands which are capable of growing crops in more than one season will be dangerous for millet farmers. "millet farms should not be treated as lands of low fertility and their acquisition should not be the first target of any land acquisition. Millets are the lifeline for many million farmers of dry land India who are bravely fighting challenged agricultural environments and also producing food and nutrition security for India's billions. This should be kept in serious consideration and millet lands should be treated as the most precious farm lands of India and no effort to be made to acquire these lands for any purpose, public or private. They must be respected as heritage lands and protected at all costs" says the Dharwad Declaration

The convention has also demanded on a just, scientifically calculated remunerative minimum support price for millets when they are procured by the government. They have demanded introduction of a syllabus in Indian schools and colleges which educated future generations on the special qualities of millets so that it can shape future generations that understand how millets can define the future of food and farming in India.

Forming community millet seed banks with state support in all millet villages is another strong demand made in the Declaration.



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