



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**International Seed day, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

### **ON FARM CONSERVATION OF INDIGENOUS SEEDS IS A MUST TO COUNTER CLIMATE CHANGE**

#### **MINI MEMBERS PRESENT FOUR CHALLENGING DEMANDS TO GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

As temperatures rise, land sink below the sea and mountains melt, India's agriculture is set to be most affected by the vagaries of the changing climate. The solutions to adapt to this crisis are internationally emerging in the form of the creation of new improved seed varieties, propriety technology options and also conservation of the world's seed germplasm in deep freeze banks. The locks and keys to these lay far away from the origins of the seed, sourced from farmers in India.

As we hold on to the Government of India decision on Bt Brinjal, India's Public Sector Agriculture Universities and research centres get stronger in their agenda for private sector collaborations with seed and fertilizers companies. The future of India's agriculture hangs in the MoUs and funds being signed towards furthering Genetic Engineering, Nanotechnology into food crops, and organised contract farming like never before. Millets jowar, bajra, ragi, which till recently were saved through its sheer neglect, are now being seen as commercially important for the production of biofuels and nutraceuticals.

As the Government of India continues to create and revise draconian laws like the Seed Bill, 2009 and the National Biodiversity Regulatory Authority (NBRA) Bill, 2009 behind closed doors, the future of India's seeds and its on farm conservation remains hanging. It takes the decision making into the realm of mainstream science and expertise, entirely ignoring the farmer seeds and practices which are the heritage of India's agriculture.

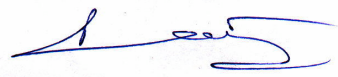
On International Seed Day, we the members of Millet Network of India come together to reject all these non-solutions to India's agriculture. For remote farming communities who till date hold the seeds to the core of the culture of cultivation, selling or trade in seeds is a no-no. Seeds are only to be shared, borrowed or exchanged.

**We at MINI believe that the current trend seeds to eradicated and replace indigenous landraces with modern seeds, is not only, curtailing the genetic diversity which is the last reign of hope for combating climate crisis. Despite false claims it only disenfranchise farmers with increased debt through continued use of external inputs like technology, fertilizers and the seed itself which is to be purchased each year from the markets.**

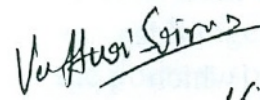
**We at MINI also reiterate the critical importance of Millets in the era of climate change, and its promotion not as genetically engineered monocrops, but as biodiverse and multi cropping cultures. It is important to note that with the projected 2 degree celsius temperature rise, wheat might disappear from our midst, since it is an extremely thermal sensitive crop. Similarly, the way rice is grown under standing water makes it a dangerous crop under climate change conditions. Methane emanating from water-drenched rice fields, is a green house gas, that severely threatens our environment. Millets are all-season crops whereas wheat is season specific. If there is any cropping system that can withstand these challenges, survive and flourish, it is the millet system, where the traditional seed diversity play a crucial role.**

**We believe that India's farming cultures and seeds cannot be conserved in deep freezes, exploitative policies or through propriety technologies. For the culture of agricultivation to survive in India and farmer's wisdom to grow in continuum, we call out for a complete Farmer Proofing of India's agriculture. We seek from Government of India that:**

- 1. Millets be brought on the Food Map of India through active promotion in agricultural schemes, public distribution systems and biodiveristy bonuses.**
- 2. There be a full and detailed enquiry led by biodivers and millet based farmers into the current funding sources of public sector agriculture universities and research centres.**
- 3. There be a complete moratorium on GE crops till such time detailed independent scientific enquiry is ordered on the need for these crops of the future of India's agriculture.**
- 4. Pending laws like the Seed Bill and NBRA Bill not be introduced in the Parliament till such time they are discussed and explained to the farming communities who are likely to be most affected by it.**



**PV Satheesh  
Convener**



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National Coordinator**