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'Include millets in the public distribution system'

Our Bureau

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Millet Network of India (MINI) has demanded that the Union Government include millets in the public distribution system, while announcing an ecological bonus to farmers growing millets. This will help the country address the food security and agrarian crisis.

"Besides, it will be an important tool in fighting the ill effects of climate change," Mr P.V. Satheesh, National Convenor of MINI, said.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday to announce the Hyderabad Declaration of the two-day National Consultation on Millets held here on June 5 and 6, he said the two major

advantages of growing millets were saving valuable water and ensuring the nutritional needs of the people.

"They can be grown in extreme and harsh weather conditions. They don't depend much on chemical fertilisers," he said.

A number of agricultural scientists, farmers' representatives, administrators and non-governmental organisations took part in the two-day meet.

"Millets have 30 to 300 per cent more nutritional elements such as calcium, minerals, iron and fibre. If Government encourages millets, it would help the farmers find markets for their produce," he said.

He, however, felt that there should be an enabling environment such as offering institutional finance, insurance and developing watersheds.

ECOLOGICAL BONUS

Since millet farming didn't consume much water and has zero dependence on chemical fertilisers, MINI felt that farmers could be given a bonus of Rs 5,000 an acre.

Mr Satheesh regretted that millet acreage had fallen over a period of time due to undue focus on rice and wheat. "From 45.9 million hectares in 1990, the acreage decreased to 31.5 million hectares, a drop of 35 per cent," he said.