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'Biodiversity site' status for Zaheerabad urged

Staff Reporter

HYDERABAD: A group of women farmers from four mandals of Medak district has approached the AP State Biodiversity Board to recognise the region where they work as Agro Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS). They assert that for generations, their families have been involved in farming/conservation of local bio-diversity in and around Zaheerabad.

The demand gains significance in the backdrop of World Diversity Day on Saturday, and 2010 being recognised as International Year for Bio-diversity. The women managed to grow over 20 varieties of millet-based crops in one acre by doing away with fertilizer and monoculture cultivation using 80 varieties of seed.

The crops they grow include jowar, bajra, kangini and kutki, many pulses, oilseeds. "This has helped us grow more," said Anjamma of Nyalkal at a media meet here on Saturday. Zaheerabad, Raikod, Jharasangam and Nyalkal are the mandals where millet is being cultivated.

"We are hoping that in three months, the women will be recognised for their work," said Deccan Development Society (DDS) president P. V. Satheesh. It is spearheading the campaign to achieve BHS tag, which will ban use of genetically-modified crops and SEZs in Zaheerabad. Products generated by women will get a better premium.

"The fertility of the soil in our region has improved because of our style of cultivation. We need recognition for our achievement," said Sarasamma, Sarpanch of Mirempur. Mr. Satheesh said "given their nutritious value, we want millets to be integrated into the public distribution system and mid-day meal schemes."

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