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Tamil Nadu - [Chennai](#)

State urged to introduce millets under PDS

Special Correspondent

It will enlarge food basket in an era of climate change: M. S. Swaminathan

— Photo: K.V. Srinivasan



MSSRF chairman M.S. Swaminathan and National Biodiversity Authority Chairman P.L. Gautam at an exhibition on Agro Biodiversity management in Chennai on Monday.

Chennai: The government should introduce millets under the public distribution system, noon-meal scheme and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to promote community agro-biodiversity, said M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF).

At a State-level consultation, Mr. Swaminathan said the addition of millets to the PDS would enlarge the food basket in an era of climate change, which was changing rainfall patterns that could result in water scarcity and yield problems due to increase in temperatures.

As rain-fed crops such as little millet (samai), kodo millet (varagu), finger millet (kezhvaragu) have a problem of market access, the incorporation of millets into the public distribution system would improve the livelihood of the marginalised sections of society producing the crop in remote, hilly terrains, said V. Arivudai Nambi, Principal Scientist (Biodiversity), MSSRF.

Lack of insurance for millet crops, non-availability of manual processing facilities and loss of knowledge among women about culinary preparations using millets were the other issues, Mr. Nambi said. A change was needed at the policy level as the area under millets had been reduced, he emphasised.

The State should notify indigenous varieties and farmers should have better

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access to gene banks in universities and research institutions, said Dr.K. Vijayalakshmi of Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems.

A.G. Ponniah, Director, Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture, sought a closer look at government regulations on improved aquatic species, drugs from seas and potential commercialisation of traditional knowledge systems for the benefit of indigenous communities.

In his talk on changing scenario of insect pests and natural enemies in agriculture, Madras Christian College Principal Alexander Jesudasan asked farmers to be aware of the various forms of pest attacks and work together to prevent widespread damage.

National Biodiversity Authority Chairman P.L. Gautam, MSSRF Executive Director Ajay Parida, and farmers, livestock keepers and fishermen spoke at the consultation that would recommend steps to be followed by the government.

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