

MINI makes a big case for Millets

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Belgaum: The Millet Network of India (MINI) has launched a campaign to get "millets" high priority in the new National Food Security Act and introduced in the country's Public Distribution System through various channels and forums, besides appealing to farmers to take up millet farming with a view to fortify India's food system.

"Karnataka as a leading agrarian state in the country must take urgent steps to draw up the new signposts for food and farming future of the country. These new signposts must emerge from a definite shift from a total dependence on irrigation-based farming systems to a renewal of the non-irrigated rain-fed indigenous farming systems which, wherever they continue to be practised, have held the poorer farming communities in good stead," said P.V. Satheesh, MINI convener, Hyderabad, and G.. Krishna Prasad, convener, Sahaja Samrudha, Bangalore.

In a release here on Wednesday, they observed: "At this critical juncture in India where a new National Food Security Act is being drafted in the background of an unprecedented drought and looming climate change crisis, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift in shaping the food and farming futures of this country. If we fail now, the coming decades will find us desolate for food and enervated in farming."

They said the rain-fed, millet-based farming systems had multiple advantages in relation to climate change crisis. In order to fortify the Indian food system, it was necessary to bring back millets into the people's diet in India.

The MINI and organisations like Sahaja Samrudha are urging the Centre to ensure millets got priority in the National Food Security Act.

The State Government should distribute millets through PDS in Karnataka in phases, beginning from millet-growing districts, introduce millet-meals twice a week under midday meal scheme in schools and welfare hostels, which will also provide highly nutritious meals for the young children thereby, ensuring their healthy growth.

The other demands include recognising millets as climate change compliant crop and promote their cultivation and consumption as millets are intrinsically drought-resistant crop and withstand higher degrees of heat, drought, lower rainfall, water crisis and high malnutrition.

The Government should announce a series of incentives to dry land farmers, such as biodiversity bonus, water conservation bonus and climate change bonus. Together, the incentive should offer at least Rs. 5000 a hectare for minor millet farmers and Rs. 2,000 a hectare for major millet farmers. The total area in Karnataka under minor millet farming is about 11.4 lakh hectares.