

Organic Mela Draws Crowds

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BANGALORE: It was not just health-conscious Bangaloreans, but also people from all walks of life who thronged the two-day Organic Mela organised by the Jaivik Krushik Samaj and Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) at Lalbagh here on Saturday.

There were a number of farmers who turned up and not necessarily with their produce.

"The mela is a very good opportunity to bring about more awareness. But organic farming still has a long way to go," said Kudlappa, an organic farmer from Nellur of Gadag district.

Apart from seeds of various food crops and vegetables, there were plenty of eatables such as jams, pickles, rotis, papads, juices made from organic produce.

Aim

The mela brings together farmers and producers of organic food from across the country, including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat. The main objective of organising the event was to bring awareness to consumers about what was happening in the organic movement, said N.R. Shetty of Sahaja Samrudha, an organic farmers' association, which is partnering the organisers.

Seminars

Not restricting itself to being merely a platform where produce is sold, seminars and practical demonstrations on different aspects of organic farming are being conducted for two days in which around 100 to 150 farmers are expected participate, said Mr. Shetty.

Calling for a separate ministry for small farmers, Subhash Mehta, Adviser for Food and Agriculture Organisation, said: "The Indian Government sanctions over Rs. 2,50,000 crore in farm subsidies. That amount goes only to farmers with large holdings, who constitute only 10 per cent of the total number of agriculturists. Therefore, a separate ministry should be constituted to look after the needs of farmers with small holdings as the Ministry for Agriculture has clearly failed to do so."

The mela, which is being held at the MHS near the Lalbagh Main Gate, concludes on Sunday.