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Small and marginal farmers question research conducted by agri scientists

Report on Raitha Teerpu released

Mysore, Nov 15, DHNS

A comprehensive report on the farmers jury was released by Kurubur Shanthakumar, a noted ryot leader and Santosh Koulagi, an organic farmer and writer, who were the members of the 'Raitha Teerpu' steering committee.

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Raitha Teerpu was an unique process where for the first time in the world small and marginal farmers questioned the current pattern of agricultural research and gave a historic verdict.

Held in Karnataka in December 2009, the jury led by women, indigenous dalit small and farmers heard 12 top agricultural scientists, researchers, social scientists, consumer activists, pastoralist and environmentalists and then asked them searching questions on the current trends and intent of agricultural research. P V Satheesh, south Asia coordinator of Alliance for Democratisation of Agricultural Research in South Asia (Adarsa) which had designed and led the Raitha Teerpu process, described the process as historic since it had shown the voiceless can play a prominent role in redesigning agricultural research which is seen as too complicated to be handled by farmers.

“The farmer Round tables which will start from tomorrow will herald a new era in bringing farmers onto the top of the policy pyramid. It is time that agricultural research went back to farmers since every one is a scientist and can see agriculture as a whole.

“This is completely different from scientists who engage with research as fragments which is dangerous for a farming which is always whole, complete and life affirming which can never be made into sub divisions,” he added.

Santosh Koulagi who had compiled and edited the report said that ‘Raitha Teerpu’ was the most fascinating experience in his decades of engagement with farmers and farming. This has brought forth the deep understanding of farming issues by the small and marginalised people and has made them understand who important it is to recognise this profound ecological knowledge.

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K N Ramchandra, coordinator, Adarsa-Mysore explained how the smallest farmers men and women had contributed significantly to the process. Fifty per cent of the jury was composed by women and more than 70 per cent came from dry land areas of the State. The farmers represented 21 districts of the State, primarily from the rainfed regions.

Shanthakumar described Raitha Teerpu as the most significant event in his long years of fighting for the farmers' causes. He promised to take the farmers verdict to farmers movement in the State and other parts of the country and explain its extraordinary significance to farmer leaders.

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