



Save our Rice Campaign

Press Release

Thiruvananthapuram, 22nd September 2009

Protect Paddy Land and Food Sovereignty: South Indian Rice Forum

The Save our Rice Campaign concluded its two day workshop here in Thiruvananthapuram. Participants from three south Indian states consisting of farmers, agriculture groups, agriculture scientists, rice millers-traders gathered at Thiruvananthapuram for the two day workshop on the 21st and 22nd September at the Hotel Chaithram to deliberate and discuss on issues related to rice. The workshop concluded today with the formation of the South Indian Rice Forum.

The workshop was inaugurated by the honorable Agriculture minister Shri Mullakara Ratnakaran, yesterday by lighting a lamp and an inspiring talk to the gathering. The honorable minister stated that agri-culture is more than about food security and productivity, it is about community and culture and our future. Dr Nammalvar, farmer, philosopher and the organic agriculture guru, presented the Agriculture Minister with a paddy art festoon in recognition of the farmer-friendly schemes taken up in the State, especially on the revival of rice cultivation.

The two day workshop had experts, farmers and traders-millers collectively discussing issues related to increasing paddy production and improving farmers' income, potential of traditional varieties especially to address climate change crisis, challenges in Paddy farming, trade and economics issues in paddy farming. Various case studies of revival in paddy farming was also explored.

The discussions were led by Dr V S Vijayan, Chairman of the Kerala Biodiversity Board, Dr.P.V.Balachandran, Head, Paddy Mission of Kerala, Dr.Nammalwar, Dr. Devakumar, Senior Scientist from UAS, Bangalore, S Usha, Coordinator of the Save our Rice Campaign, Dr Leenakumari, Senior Scientist from the Mancombu Rice Research Station, Dr Gopalakrishnan Nair, Sri Krishnaprasad Director of Sahaja Samrudha, C Jayakumar, Director, Thanal and R Ponnambalam, Director of CREATE.

On the second day, Dr K N Harilal, Member, Kerala State Planning Board shared his concerns on the impact of international trade regimes on Rice and food Security.



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A beautiful display, by Sahaja Samruddha, from Karnataka, of 140 indigenous seed varieties including 16 varieties of salt resistant paddy and 12 varieties of deep water varieties was the highlight of the meeting. CREATE brought the 47 varieties of seeds from Tamilnadu which they are currently cultivating. The exhibition also had simple tools for harvesting and posters from the Campaign.

Dr. P.V.Balachandran from the Paddy Mission explained the Paddy Act of Kerala and the delegates from other states expressed the need to have similar protection in their states to prevent the tremendous loss of paddy growing lands, particularly in Tamilnadu.

Later the gathering deliberated on the paddy situation in the three states, and arrived at the four areas they need to work on. It was collectively decided that, going ahead, a concerted effort by the forum on paddy advocacy, research, marketing, training, processing and value addition and finally a deeper understanding of trade issues is critical to be effective. The group also concurred to support and further “Poison free paddy farming” in the three states and carry this message to other paddy growing states as well.

Dr. Nammalwar exhorted the workshop participants to be aware about the root causes of why farmers are leaving paddy farming in large numbers and to work towards addressing these issues so as to sustain and strengthen our primary food crop and make it possible for farmers to make a viable livelihood.

Four working groups were created to address the following issues: revival of paddy, increasing paddy production and improving farmers income, tapping the potential of traditional varieties of paddy, challenges in paddy farming and post harvest, value addition and marketing issues.

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