PADDY
A NEWSLETTER FROM THE SAVE OUR RICE CAMPAIGN
NO. 9 & 10 • JANUARY 2011

Editorial

Food, farmers and freedom

Someone asked me the other day what the Kisan Swaraj Yatra is. It took me few seconds to answer, 'This is about food, farmers and freedom'. 'You have been fighting pesticides, Bt Brinjal etc. Is Kisan Swaraj Yatra against something?' 'No', I said. 'This is not against anything, but for something. This is for sustainable and holistic agriculture. This is for the right to have safe andnutritious food and the food security of our country. This is for our freedom. The freedom to choose our seeds, our food and freedom to choose a life which is healthy, peaceful and to help build a society which respects nature, life and people. 'This is interesting' she said. 'I am so terrified about food these days after listening to the discussions on pesticide contamination and health impacts of genetically modified food. Why does our government support such technologies? Why do they encourage more and more seed companies and food processing companies while they neglect our farmers who feed our nation against all odds? I have stopped buying my food from the super markets. I go to a local farmers market where at least I get fresh, pesticide-free fruits and vegetables and I am happy that my hard earned money goes directly to the local farmers'.

My cousin, a software engineer in Pune told me that their main topic of discussion these days is about food, both its quality and price. Some of his friends have left their lucrative jobs to work with farmers. Some of them have even turned to farming with the idea of growing good food for their children and want to share the surplus, if any, with friends and relatives. Few days ago an ayurveda doctor from my town told me that it is possible to produce a number of herbal pest repellents that are cheaper than chemical pesticides. She is advising her patients to eat organic and fresh food. This we hear every day from various quarters. Farmers, consumers, students, mothers, teachers, health experts, political activists, journalists, nutritionists, are all worried about food. Mothers are worried that everything including their breast milk is laced with poison.

Most farmers are in despair, except those farmers who have moved away from the Green Revolution technologies and strategies and have found a new holistic way of dealing with soil health, crop management and seed improvement. They have re discovered the secrets of our soil, the ancient wisdom of farming and the happiness of sharing. This is exactly opposite of the current main stream paradigm of corporate science and its proponents who now tell us that the only way to save farmers is through introducing hybrids and genetically modified crops . They are again going to take our farmers for a ride. Many farmers know they are on a treadmill, they admit that their lands have become infertile, their water sources are drying up, their productivity is declining despite pouring greater amounts of chemicals into the land and they are losing their seeds or have already lost most of them. Many of them have lost hope, they believe that there is no way out and some of them have chosen death and many more have chosen to leave farming.

How do we take these thoughts, concerns forward? How to bring more people into this path of hope and revival?

With this deep anguish about our food and farmers – our Annam that is being manipulated both by scientists and seed and food companies and our annadatas, who have been forgotten by the developers and economists, about 400 organisations from the grassroots and thousands of individuals from all over the country initiated the Kisan Swaraj Yatra from October 2nd 2010 from Sabarmati Ashram. The yatra went through 21 states and reached Rajghat Delhi on December 11th. A kisan swaraj policy was unveiled at the function attended by the yatris, farmers, people from many walks of life and distinguished guests.

During the yatra they met a lot of like minded people, both invited and uninvited, who came in large

numbers to welcome the yatris, participate, watch , listen and interact with them. It was an overwhelming and humbling experience, many farmers and activists in the yatra said. They listened to people who shared their views on self reliance and freedom and a path of development which is not killing people and environment. Some felt that this yatra should have been undertaken much before this. They felt that the country has already taken to a suicidal path, destroying all its natural richness, heritage, diversity and pride. How do we turn this tide? Some others asked. Interestingly, no body challenged the yatra and its objectives. That is why this yatra -a new beginning!

The Editors

Seed Sovereignty

by Krishna Prasad & Anitha Reddy, Sahaja Samruddha

Srenika Raj from Chinnikate is a 5th generation farmer, and a seed saver of "Budda Batha" rice. Budda Batha is a drought tolerant rice variety, of five months duration, grown since multiple generations in Chinnikatte, Haveri district. Budda Batha is sown during June and harvested in November. Seed saving is nothing new to Raj, who has learnt it from his father who in turn mastered it from his father and grandfather. The large extended family farms and lives together since generations and their family home has large bamboo structures called "galige", which look like miniature-wells, to store their precious paddy seeds.

They know exactly what pests are likely to attack the stored seeds and as a preventive measure mix the seeds with dried neem leaves before storing them. After the galige is filled with paddy seeds the top is closed with paddy straw and plastered with cow dung. When the next sowing season arrives, the seeds are brought out, planted in the family fields and shared with other farmers. Like most farmers they save and store more seed than they need in case another farmer loses his seed or needs additional seed. This is not an unusual family or an extraordinary practice, this was the tradition followed in most farming communities.

A seed saver from Karnataka - *photo: Sahaja Samruddha*

Even now, in most rain fed areas, especially on small subsistence farms which are linked to local markets, seed production is an integral part of farming. Not as a "specialized" activity, but seamlessly merged with the growing of crops and the totality of work and life on a farm. All the agricultural biodiversity that is our heritage has been developed and maintained on such farms and these unknown farmers are our real seed breeders, claiming no intellectual property rights, no royalties, and no acknowledgement. Seeds and farmers go together - farmers select crops based on local conditions, exchange planting material freely amongst themselves and upon harvesting, choose the seeds to keep for the next planting season. Farmers are the producers and users of seeds.

The situation began changing when the first experts were brought in to 'improve' crops and make agriculture more 'profitable'. Now most of the essential inputs of farming, which used to be produced and recycled within the farm in a rhythmic manner, season after season, year after year, are being purchased from companies at very heavy cost. Of all the inputs required on a farm, the corporate grip over seeds is the most alarming because it threatens to hold farming and food security hostage to big business interests. First the public sector came with high yielding varieties (HYV) and hybrids and they were followed by the multinational seed companies. The latest weapon in the arsenal is the genetically engineered seed. Sadly the Indian agriculture establishment is playing hand maiden to the multinational seed companies who want to produce and sell GE seeds.

Today, within a few decades of the advent of the 'experts' we have lost most of our seed diversity and only fragments of this wealth survive in few pockets in remote or hilly areas or in backyard gardens which the agro-industry has not yet managed to invade. Even government policies discourage the saving of seeds by farmers. Tragically, most farmers have lost their connection with seeds. The companies charge very high premiums for the seeds, which farmers are forced to pay and they have to replace the seeds every year.

Companies dump seeds without checking their germination capacity. No guarantees are given for seed quality and the farmer is not compensated for losses incurred. This has caused serious damage to our agriculture and also led to many farmer suicides. The situation is exacerbated by poor regulation and absence of strict punitive measures to protect farmers' interests.

The way ahead

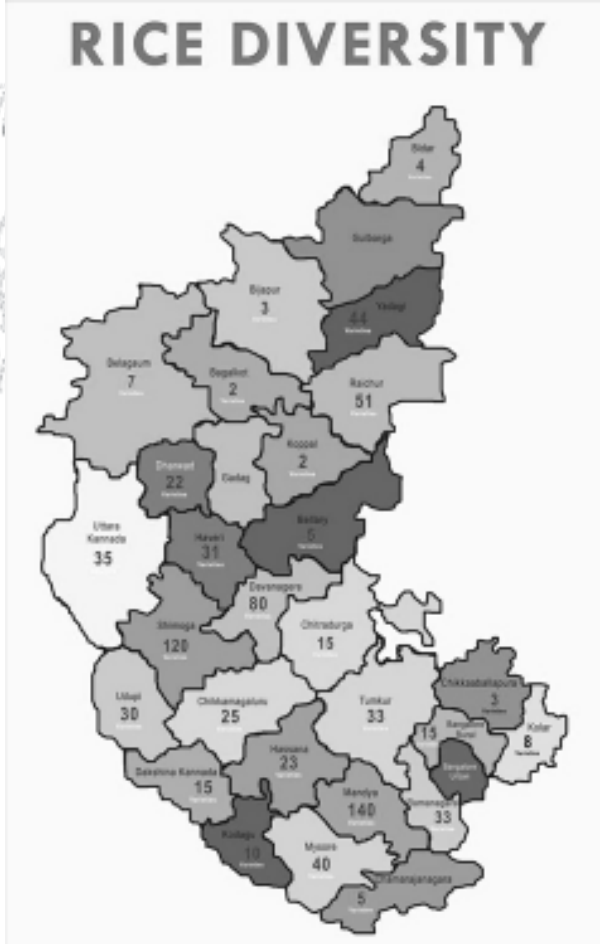
If the integrity of farming is to be restored and preserved, it is crucial for farmers to regain and retain self-reliance in all inputs, especially seeds. It is necessary for farmers to win back their primary role as seed breeders and custodians. In areas where seed saving still survives as an integral part of traditional farming, it needs to be honoured and safeguarded. Traditional seeds and crop improvement methods produce the same vigour and varietal purity claimed by hybrid methods. But this line of work is totally ignored because it empowers farmers to produce their own seed. Farmers' empowerment is the last thing that seed corporations are interested in.

It is the conviction to empower farmers and recapture our seed sovereignty which led us, at Sahaja Samrudha, ten years back to begin the work of reviving the culture of seed conservation in farms and later initiate the Save Our Rice Campaign in Karnataka. We have identified many farmer-seed savers and sourced traditional seeds from all over and are building a collection. Individual seed savers and organizations keen on conservation are identified and on-farm conservation of diverse landraces is being carried out. The two conditions are farmers should be willing to grow paddy organically and grow and conserve local varieties. The farmers grow different varieties in their own field, which are called "diversity blocks" These diversity blocks located on farmers fields become local decentralized seed banks and the seed collections are being multiplied. These multiplied seeds are further distributed to other farmers. . Presently about ten organic farmer groups and 250 individual farmers are directly involved in the rice conservation project and we have farmer seed savers in most of the districts in Karnataka (see map below, which gives the number of varieties being conserved in each district).

Continuous conservation and multiplication of popular paddy landraces has resulted in increased availability of indigenous seeds, which are being sown in thousands of new acres every year.

In addition we are working to revitalize our traditional practices of seed distribution, seed collection and multiplication and to also enhance the role of women as curators of seeds. Women always played a major role in our agriculture system but with changes in agriculture over the past few decades their role has been undermined. Enhancing their role in our agriculture and reviving our age old practices of seed exchange will increase conservation of agro-biodiversity.

The tradition of seed saving is the 10,000 year old legacy of farming which we can't afford to sacrifice and surrender to corporate pressures and interests! We have to gain control over our seeds – seed sovereignty is food security and freedom!



Paddy Conservation map - Sahaja Samruddha. The number provided within each district is the number of traditional varieties of paddy being conserved by farmers there in conjunction with Sahaja Samruddha.

Kisan Swaraj Yatra: Food - Farmers - Freedom

Towards a Kisan Swaraj Policy

Farmers and citizens around the country, who came together through a pan-Indian outreach effort called the Kisan Swaraj Yatra covering 21 states and involving dialogues with tens of thousands of citizens, are demanding that the nation should devote urgent attention to the continuing agricultural crisis and allocate highest priority to the agriculture sector, ending decades of neglect. India needs a comprehensive policy which aims at making farming a viable livelihood for crores of medium, small and marginal farmers – this is essential for the nation's food security and for ensuring a vibrant rural economy as the backbone for a vibrant India.


Kisan Swaraj Yatra at Palakkad

It is clear that the Western model of agriculture cannot show the way forward for India – with its high environmental and health costs, enormous subsidies to support a few agri-businesses and engaging only 2% of the population. India's own experiences of successful ecological farming and very productive small-farmer agriculture are in fact a beacon of hope. At this historic juncture, India can and should build an approach that gives primacy to farmer's livelihoods, its soil, water and ecology, and people's health, setting an example to the world. The new policy framework (Kisan Swaraj Policy) should be based on the four pillars of economic sustainability of agriculture-based livelihoods, ecological sustainability to preserve the productive natural resources, people's control over agricultural resources including land, water, forest, seed and knowledge, in addition to ensuring non-toxic, diverse, nutritious and adequate food for all Indians.

Demands and Policy Framework for Kisan Swaraj

1. Economic Sustainability and Income Security for Agricultural families

1.1. Establish a mechanism to guarantee a minimum living income to farming families. Appoint a Farmers' Income Commission as a statutory body which examines farmers' incomes every year and makes specific recommendations to ensure adequate income levels, including through remunerative prices and new policy options like direct income support.

1.2. Recast methods of determining agricultural costs and prices to reflect the real cultivation costs (including correctly valued labour costs and farmers' own resources) as well as living costs that ensure a dignified living. The Minimum Support Price should be fixed to ensure at least 50% profit over the real costs as well as to cover the living costs. Any reduction in this should be compensated as direct income support.

1.3. Restructure the Food Security Systems to emphasize and ensure fair market to the farmers, for a variety of food crops. PDS should be organized on the basis of procurement directly from farmers and localized storage and distribution, transporting only the surplus.

1.4. For all 25 or more crops for which MSP is declared, establish Market Stabilization Fund to ensure that the MSP is realized by farmers and protect them against market fluctuations.

1.5. Invest in rural infrastructure through storage and processing units and financial support, for increasing farmers' holding capacity so that they can take advantage of the market.

1.6. Direct subsidies to farmers: Support farmers' own inputs, especially in case of ecological farming, on par with external inputs through subsidies directly delivered to farmers.

1.7. Provide a labour subsidy for farmers for 40 days/acre/season in irrigated areas and 60 days/acre/season in rain fed areas for various crops. This should be in addition to support to NREGA and efforts to converge NREGA and agriculture should continue.

1.8. Enact comprehensive social security legislation for all agricultural workers and farmers (incl. tenant farmers) to cover pensions, healthcare and accident/life insurance.

2. Ensuring Ecological Sustainability of farming

2.1. Implement a time-bound plan to transition Indian agriculture to ecologically sustainable methods – at the rate of 10% of cultivated land area each year – establishing support systems and incentives to enable this.

2.2. Phase out all Toxic Agri-Chemicals: All Class I (Class Ia and Class IIb) and Class II pesticides should be banned in India and others should be phased out according to a time-bound plan. This is important in the context of constantly-emerging evidence on the

adverse effects of such chemicals as well as the possibilities thrown up by rapid expansion of ecological farming methods, including of NPM (Non Pesticidal Management of crops).

2.3. Continue the moratorium on the commercial release of GM crops. Enact a comprehensive law for ensuring bio-safety in the context of the GM trials as well as processed foods entering Indian markets.

2.4. Focus on rain-fed agriculture and drought adaptation: Technology Mission with adequate budget allocations for rain-fed production systems to address issues across the value chain, establishing support systems for dry land crops like millets, pulses and oilseeds.

2.5. Allocate fifty percent agri-research funding immediately towards research on Ecological farming/ sustainable agriculture using participatory approaches, and redirect the agenda of the NARS from corporate-driven high-input intensive technologies to farmer-led sustainable technologies. Democratize and make the NARS institutions accountable to the sustainability of agriculture.

2.6. The country's response to Climate Change and the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture should focus on resilient systems, locally adapted varieties, and ecological farming practices along with increasing biodiversity, which will act as the best adaptation for climate change, instead of pursuing "climate-proof" GM crops.

3. Ensure protection of communities' rights and resources

3.1. Intellectual Property Rights of any form should not be allowed on seeds and seed producing technologies, and knowledge belonging to the farming community. The agreements by state and central governments and public research institutions with seed companies like Monsanto which have IPR implications should be immediately cancelled.

3.2. Empower Government to regulate seed prices and royalties paid for technology licenses through explicit provisions in seed legislation. State governments should be granted powers to regulate seed licenses, compensation for defective seed, the sale price of seeds and royalty paid on seeds.

3.3. Promote farmer-breeders and release farmer-bred varieties through the formal system; promote Community seed banks or seed centers at panchayat level for seed exchange.

3.4. Stop Forcible acquisition and diversion of agricultural lands, both rain fed and irrigated, to non-agricultural and non-food uses. The current Land Acquisition Act should be abolished and replaced by a pro-people Act based on prior informed consent. A mandatory land audit should be undertaken every five years.

3.5. The Forest Rights Act should be implemented effectively. Forced displacement of adivasis and destruction of invaluable forest land for industry and mining should be stopped.

3.6. Privatization of Water resources should be stopped; re-prioritization of water usage across sectors should be taken up, prioritizing drinking water and agriculture; small water bodies such as tanks should be developed and maintained under community control.

4. Ensure safe, nutritious, diverse and adequate food for all

4.1. Phase out all toxic technologies in farming so that the right to safe food for all Indians is safeguarded.

4.2. Recast all food security schemes including the PDS into universal and decentralized systems of local production, procurement, storage and distribution, while including millets, pulses and oilseeds as an integral part.

4.3. Ensure that consumers' right to informed choices with regard to chemical residues and GM foods is ensured through proper standards and labeling regimes.

Yatris at Pazhassi Memorial

Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA) is a network of individuals and organizations working to create an enabling environment for ecologically safe and economically viable sustainable agriculture. The Alliance is an effort to bring together practitioners, farmer organizations, researchers, policy makers and consumers onto a platform to promote successful experiences of sustainable agriculture for further scaling up and mainstreaming.

Green Revolution in Eastern India – A recipe designed to evict farmers from farming

by Living Farms

The Indian Finance minister Mr.Pranab Mukherjee in his budget presentation on Feb 26th, 2010 said that India will plough US$86 million into extending its green revolution to the eastern dry lands.The need for this second Green Revolution is rationalized by citing that its first incarnation in the sixties was confined to only 10% of the country, and therefore it is high time to cover more ground. At the same time, policy makers consider the eastern states "agriculturally backward" and claim that the only way to develop them is through the Green Revolution model. The government's ambitions are outlined in its "Strategic Plans for Green Revolution in Odisha"[1], which calls for: selection and adoption of suitable hybrid varieties, increased use of fertilisers, increased mechanisation, and promotion of export-oriented agriculture. The essential idea of this second green revolution is to promote widespread contract-farming and to replace cultivation of food-crops with cash-crops.

The push for hybrid rice is central to this second Green Revolution through public-private-partnerships for the production, procurement and marketing of seeds. According to the Minister of Agriculture, Government of India Mr.Sharad Pawar: "Seed production of hybrid rice will have to be planned and implemented with active association of state agricultural universities and public and private sector seed-producing companies to meet the needs of the farmers."[2]

Farmers in the eastern states, however, know the real score with hybrid rice. Hybrid rice experience from all over Asia shows that this is a failed technology increasingly rejected by farmers and consumers; importantly, the promotion of hybrid rice ignores the available diversity in the region. This is certainly not the answer to the problems of farmers or food security. Neither is genetically engineered (GE) rice that will follow hybrid rice, being tested by almost all seed companies.

For Natbar Sarangi, a farmer in Odisha who grows 342 traditional varieties of rice, using hybrid rice is out of the question. "If I use hybrid rice, it will make me dependent on the market and seed companies and I don't want that. And because it will require synthetic chemicals, it will pollute both my pond and my paddy, which I can't allow to happen."[3]

There is no rationale to resurrect the ghost of the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution proved to be ecologically unsustainable, environmentally hazardous, economically non-viable and a threat to the existence of small/marginal farmers and share croppers. It has left its irreparable socio-cultural, environmental, health and economic impacts on the farming communities and consumers.

Eastern India still has "invaluable genetic diversity of crops which farmers have developed over centuries to suit various growing conditions and preferences and this is a heritage which is endangered by the promotion of Green Revolution seeds and technology. It is much better to support the living-systems that farmers in eastern India have generated with their own seeds and knowledge systems."[4]

Adapted from article published jointly by Living Farms and GRAIN in GRAIN blog on Sep, 21, 2010 (http://www.grain.org/hybridrice/?lid=230)

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[1] Strategic Plans for Green Revolution in context to Odisha, http://nfsm.gov.in/State_Action_Plans/GreenOrissa.pdf

[2,3] http://www.grain.org/hybridrice/?lid=230

[4] Odisha workshop on GR in the Eastern states, September 6-7, 2010

An agriculture graduate produces rice for her wedding!

by Leneesh K

While people negotiate dowries, buy gold and luxurious durables for their wedding, a young couple in Kerala have shown a different path worth emulating. Vani, an agriculture graduate from Kerala and her bridegroom grew and harvested all the rice required for their wedding feast. Vani, a student of Kerala Agriculture University, met Vijith, an engineering student, a few years back. Both were activists with the Kerala chapter of "One Earth One Life" an environmental organization. Last year they decided to get married to each other and to live and work together for the environment.

While planning their wedding, they decided that it should be different and also send a message to young people and the society. Both decided that the message should be about the value of producing one's food and respect for agricultural work. Therefore they

decided to grow the paddy required for their wedding feast. "Traditionally all the households in Kerala used to produce grains for all their requirements including weddings. We wish to continue that tradition. We also need to propagate that. That is why we made a decision like this", said Vani. They harvested the paddy together in November. The wedding was on 26th December. PADDY wishes them a prosperous, sustainable and fulfilling life ahead!

Warm welcome for Kisan Swaraj Yatra in Kerala

by Leneesh K

Mananthavady (Kerala): The Kisan Swaraj Yatra arrived in Kerala on 30th Oct, the 29th day since they started from Sabarmati. The yatra passed through the northern Kerala districts of Palakkad and Wayanad from 30th to 1st November. Travelling from Palakkad the yatris arrived at Wayanad where they visited a traditional paddy demonstration plot maintained by the Save Our Rice campaign at Kammana village. Twenty two (22) varieties of traditional paddy grown in Wayanad are demonstrated here. The plot is maintained on the land of a farmer named Raman.

The carefully maintained demonstration plot, the beautiful green paddy fields nearby and the three hundred year old house belonging to the farmer, all of it was an unforgettable experience for the yatris, many of who were visiting this beautiful, verdant land for the first time. Many expressed their wonder at how a house made of clay, bamboo and hay has lasted for 300 years. The yatris unanimously agreed that the house and nearby paddy fields are a wonderful example to demonstrate how traditional farming and life can sustain each other.

A reception was organized for the yatris at Arangottukara village in Palakkad district where 15 odd women farmers are engaged in organic paddy cultivation. A reception was also organized under the auspices of Seed Farmers Network, and a play and folk music was staged. Kerala government extended its full support for the Kisan Swaraj Yatra and its goals.

Desi Rice greets yatra in Mysore!

When The Kisan Swaraj Yatra arrived in Mysore the Save Our Rice campaign was there with a lovely colourful rice festival to greet the yatris and the public at the Rangayana, in Mysore city. It was organized in collaboration with the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Nesara, Nisarga, Arambha Krushi Balaga, Ahara butti, Badaku Trust and Janapada Seva Trust .The festival delighted and awed the public and yatris with the myriad rice varieties ranging from Ambe Mohar, which breast feeding women are given to increase and improve the quality of link, diabetic rice, the beautiful and tasty Mysore mallige and many others.

Krishna Prasad, the lead organiser of the event said that Karnataka alone has 160 varieties of rice and the aim of this festival is to popularise traditional rice varieties among people and create demand for them. He said that the PDS distributes white rice but it is the unpolished varieties which have high nutritional content and medicinal properties. The yatra through Karnataka was punctuated with rice melas and public meetings and meetings with seed-saver farmers and other events.

Adapted from Deccan Herald, Nov 2nd 2010
http://www.deccanherald.com/content/109856/rangayana-plays-host-rice-show.html & http://www.hindu.com/2010/11/02/stories/2010110262140300.htm

Satoyama and "Stork-Nurturing Rice"

Return to ancient village wisdom in Japan has resulted in bringing back the oriental white stork[1] from extinction and creating "stork nurturing rice".

Japan lost its rural population to urbanization and agricultural lands were given away to industry. It has also been rapidly losing its bio-diversity. Realizing the need to conserve and rejuvenate its bio diversity Japan has resurrected its national and social heritage of Satoyama to achieve it.

Satoyama, which stands for "villages (sato) and mountains, woods and grasslands (yama)"[2], are Japanese ecosystems, created by humans over hundreds of years of interaction with nature, which are a combination of wood lands, orchards, paddy fields, streams, ponds, villages and farmsteads. These composite areas formed the basis of self sustaining eco systems which provided people with their needs

ranging from timber to food while nurturing and conserving all living beings within the system.

Toyooka, Hyogo Prefecture, in the West Honshu Island, with a population of 90,000 decided to bring back the oriental white stork, designated as a national treasure, which became extinct in 1971.[3] The storks, which were a common sight, disappeared due to modernization of agriculture, disappearance of paddy fields and wetlands and thereby loss of its food and habitat. The increased use of chemicals was another major problem; researchers found that accumulation of chemicals in the bodies of the storks had made them incapable of reproducing and that was the final blow.

Toyooka responded to this in the 1990s by recreating its traditional paddy fields, with irrigation channels and waterways emptying and flooding the fields the year around, thereby creating an eco system for fishes and other aquatic and amphibious creatures. The farmers of Toyooka taught themselves to grow paddy without chemicals or pesticides. The oriental white stork was released into this rejuvenated ecosystem in 2005. The first chicks in the wild were born in 2007.

Paddy grown in these areas has been named "Stork-Nurturing Rice" and in 2008, 520 tonnes (produced from 200 hectares) of this paddy was sold at a premium price, a part of which went into the white stork fund. The municipal government of Toyooka, the Agriculture Improvement and Diffusion centre and the community are working together to promote the "white stork-nurturing farming method".

Adapted from Japan Looks to Ancient Village Wisdom to Save Biodiversity, www.commondreams.org/headline/2010/11/01-0 & www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/japan-turns-back-clock-to-give-new-life-to-lost-storks-833596.html & www.env.go.jp/en/wpaper/2010/16_chpt3_s4.pdf

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[1] SA majestic white bird with black wings and a wing span of 2 meters

[2] *http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2010/11/01-0*

[3] It survived in China, Russia and Korea

ALCHEMY OF AUTUMN DEWS

Dr. Balaram Sahu

Autumn has just arrived
From the clean blue sky
Down to the lap of mother earth,
With the beautiful gifts of golden dews.
To give the bouts of heavenly bath!

Magic stream of autumn dews
Dribble down drop by drop
Celebrating life all the where
To make us all freshen up.

As the night goes deep and deep
Intimate dialogue sets in
Dewdrops wrap the earth
For health and wisdom to get in

Leaves, buds, flowers and seeds
Drenched in the autumn dews
Make one heavenly worth,
Blue sky prepares the next boost of dews.
For lives on the mother earth

An old woman in her seventies
Listens to the call of night dews
Spreads her harvested seeds and paddy
Over her thatched house roof

By this she observes
Dews strengthen her seeds
Make them fit for the next show,
Many possibilities ahead
To nurture these breeds!

Cosmic energies in the autumn dews.
Potentate her seeds she sows.
Seeds are sprouted, strong and stout
Promising for a better crop

She thanks the autumn dews
For it dribbles drop by drop
As usual she visits her croplands
Early in every morning
Gathers flowers, fruits and vegetables
Best nurtured by autumn dews.

Shrimati Narshi Bhatra of Tentulikhunti block in Nowrangpur district of Orissa, treats her seeds of paddy, pulses and vegetables with autumn dews before sowing. She gets a bumper crop by this traditional method. Many others also follow this traditional practice of Orissa and they get tremendous benefit out of it.

Salute to Seed Saver - Jambanna Goudaru

by Sahaja Samruddha

Jambanna Goudaru, an organic paddy farmer, who brought in a seed revolution in the hybrid and chemical hub of Karnataka –Sindhanur of Raichur District- and a member of the growing family of farmer-seed revivalists is no more.

Jambanna was not always an organic farmer; he worked as a clerk in a chemical company for about 8 years before shifting to wholesale marketing of paddy, as it was a lucrative business (as all the farmers in this belt cultivate only hybrid rice). Then he worked as a commission agent for marketing of rice, where he suffered severe losses after which he joined his father in agriculture. That was the turning point in his life. His interest in traditional paddy varieties was inspired by Revana Siddappa, a fellow farmer from Balaganur village, who has been growing different varieties of paddy. Since then Jambanna along with Revana Siddappa have been working towards creating awareness amongst farmers on sustainable agriculture and conservation of paddy varieties. This duo have encouraged and brought about a change in many farmers in this region.

Jambanna Goudaru

Jambanna Goudaru has maintained 51 different rice strains on his plot. His farm is almost a museum of verdant paddy varieties. The plot is easily distinguishable due to the different shades of gold, green and brown, in contrast to the neighbouring plots with a single colour and one variety. On 25th October 2010 he organized a field day along with Sahaja Samrudha and Save our Rice campaign, which drew a large crowd of farmers, farmer scientists, rice breeders, political leaders, agriculture officials, taluk and panchayat members, school children, SHG members and media. Jambanna shared with the famers and locals the efficient management of local germplasm and the performance of traditional varieties under organic cultivation.

Jambana Goudaru's last words while speaking to fellow farmers on the field day were, "Our forefathers never purchased seed from the market, they were selectors of seeds but with the many seed companies that have sprung up everywhere that produce hybrids or the high yielders we have become buyers of seeds. We have to change this and now become producers of our own seeds". He was deeply committed to paddy seed conservation and motivated many farmers to join the 'Save our Rice Campaign'.

His life ended with a freak electric mishap on 8th November, when he went to remove a telephone wire (that had contact with live wire), which had fallen on his land during a heavy downpour. He is survived by his wife and three children. The 'Save our Rice Campaign' mourns the untimely demise of Jambanna Goudaru. May his soul rest in peace and may God give the bereaved family and friends the strength to bear this huge loss.

How Chandana Chakrabarthy became a seed saver!

by Alauddin Ahamed

Chandana Chakrabarty is a housewife from a farming family of Pingaleswar village of Baduria block of North 24 parganas in West Bengal. She has a post graduate degree. Her family owns 3.5 acres of farming land. One day after winnowing some desi paddy (indigenous/ traditional paddy) which was bought from a neighboring family, she threw the chaff into the bog near their house; maybe there were some mature paddy seeds in that.

A few days later she found that some paddy plants had sprouted. Her family members decided to save the plants. They didn't use any chemical fertilizer or pesticides. When they harvested the paddy they calculated the output and were astonished to realize that it amounted to 2160 kgs per acre.

Without delay the Chakrabarty family took a decision to shift to desi paddy cultivation. They started with broadcasting cow dung on their paddy field from their

one milking cow. Shyamal Chakrabarty, Chandana's husband made a visit to the Agriculture Training Centre, Nadia district and collected desi paddy seeds.

The Chakrabartys were very successful and made a tidy profit from the desi paddy which they cultivated organically. Finally Mrs. Chakrabarty converted her total 3.5 acres of land into organic and indigenous paddy. This year she has cultivated seven varieties of desi paddy and has begun another experiment of trying paddy farming through SRI method and she has also become a desi seed saver in her area.

Following her success fifty farmers in Pingaleswar village have cultivated indigenous paddy this year.

Alauddin Ahamed is the state coordinator for West Bengal Save Our Rice campaign and is working with farmers to popularize indigenous paddy and organic methods of cultivation.

News

The GEAC, during its 100th meeting held on 12th May, 2010, granted permission for confined field trials for event selection on transgenic rice events (Hybrid Rice SPT maintainer events) generated using the SPT(seed production technology) by DuPont Knowledge Center, Hyderabad. DuPont is conducting field trials on GM rice in Adonahalli KVK at Doddaballapur, Bangalore Rural Dist in Karnataka.

On Nov 17th around 30 farmers belonging to Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) entered the KVK campus and destroyed the crop. The farmers swiftly moved and managed to destroy about 75% of the crop before the police arrested them and KVK has consequently decided to destroy the rest of the crop and cancel the trial. Dr. Venkata Reddy, VP, KRRS informed the media that they will not allow such open field trials as it would be a step towards surrendering our control over seeds to American multinationals and added that there are many environmental and health issues with GM rice. KRRS spokesperson said that KVK had kept the neighbouring farmers in the dark about the GE rice trials, the local Panchayat was not informed and there were also other violations. KVK officials said that they were merely facilitators for the one year project received through the dept. of biotechnology.

Editors' note: Recently there has been a resurgence of farmer attacks on GE crops around the world. These crops have not benefited farm economies and are tools for increased corporate domination over food and seed. The rampant GE rice research and field trials being conducted by various seed multinationals in India is cause for serious concern on many counts. Contamination from GE rice trails fields is a reality and it is possible that our rice varieties may also get contaminated. Introduction of GE rice is a threat to our food security and will also lead to loss of traditional seeds and loss of farmer control over seeds and make farmers completely dependent on seed companies.

Adapted from Hindu, Nov 18th, 2010 http://hindu.com/2010/11/18/stories/2010111864270600.htm and KRRS Press Release

600 MILLION DOLLAR PROJECT TO BOOST RICE YIELDS!

A global rice science partnership led by International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and its partners was launched to work on various issues related to rice. The first meeting consisting of scientists, executives, traders and policy makers from 70 countries participated in the discussions. The 600 million dollar project aims at increasing rice yields and reduces the impact of rice production on the environment. The global rice science partnership also plans to breed rice varieties that could withstand flooding and deal with threats of climate change. Donor funding for the project is expected to be 100 million dollars for the next year.

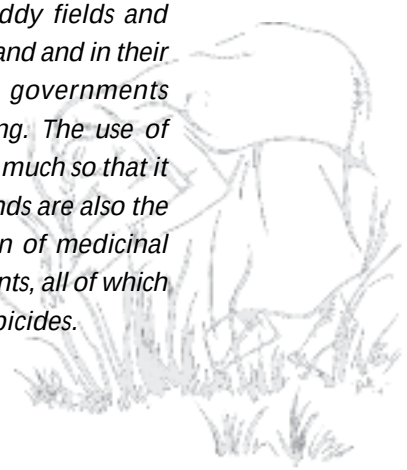
Editors' note: A 600 million dollar project involving most rice growing nation- however no farmers seem to have been present or consulted during the discussions, even though it is their life, livelihood and food security which is being discussed and planned .

Adapted from http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6A94E220101110

Roundup news!

The Argentinean government scientist Andre's Carrasco's research has resulted in his finding that glyphosate "causes malformation in frog and chicken embryos....and these findings are compatible with malformations observed in humans exposed to glyphosate during pregnancy"[1] . A study commissioned by the state of Chaco in Argentina has revealed that there has been significant increase in birth defects, miscarriages and cancers in districts where glyphosate based herbicides are used[2]. These have been recorded in the GM soy and rice fields being sprayed heavily with thousands of gallons of Roundup (glyphosate).

Editors' note: This is very worrying news for paddy farmers in India who use glyphosate based herbicides extensively and also their families live on the land or very close by. PADDY recommends that rice farmers stop spraying glyphosate on their paddy fields and revive organic paddy farming on their land and in their villages. We also recommend that governments subsidise the cost for manual weeding. The use of weedicides/herbicides is increasing, so much so that it will destroy our biodiversity. Paddy lands are also the traditional reservoirs for the collection of medicinal and many other uncultivated edible plants, all of which would become extinct with use of herbicides.



New IPR policy for IRRI

IRRI confirmed its new policy on intellectual property rights (IPR) during its meeting at Hanoi on Nov 14th, 2010. This is a significant departure from its previous policy where it said that it will not seek IPRs or any restrictions on its products or "the breeding lines, elite germplasm and parental lines of hybrid rice produced in its conventional breeding program". The old policy explicitly stated that IRRI would make its research available freely. The only exceptions were GMOs on which there were some restrictions. Now with this new policy IRRI has declared that it will seek to patent its "intellectual assets" and generate revenues from it.

Civil society and grassroots groups that have followed IRRI activities since the last 50 years are not surprised by this change. They believe that this is in line with IRRI's pro GM research agenda. However in this change of policy IRRI seems to have forgotten its role as the trustee of the rice germplasm it has collected over the years from farmers' fields from around the world.

Editor's Note: The rice germplasm has been placed with IRRI in good faith that this is for common good of the people. The change in policy is a breach of this faith and a threat to rice farmers in Asia. This is a clear indication that farmers are going to lose their control over genetic resources developed over generations.

Adapted from GRAIN, 15 December, 2010 http://www.grain.org/hybridrice/?lid=235

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[1] GM Soy– Sustainable? Responsible? (*http://www.scribd.com/doc/37770357/GM-SOY-Sustainable-Responsible*)

[2] *www.i-sis.org.uk/glyphosateCausesBirthDefects.php*

BOOK POST – PRINTED MATTER

Published for private circulation by Save our Rice Campaign, Thanal and Create

c/o Thanal, H-3, Jawahar Nagar, Kawdiar P.O., Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India - 695003
Tel/Fax: 91-471-2727150

Editorial Board: Usha S., Sridhar R., Sreedevi Lakshmikutty.
Layout: Christine Wittstock Printed at: Arsha Printers, Tvm-10 Published with support from EED