

NATIONAL SEED SAVERS MEET

EMPOWERING FARMERS & COMMUNITIES CONSERVING HERITAGE SEEDS,
REVIVING SEED DIVERSITY AND PROMOTING SEED SELF-RELIANCE



Himalayan Jewels! (Colourful bean varieties from Uttarakhand)

NEW DELHI, 6 & 7 MARCH, 2014

The Organizers:

Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA)

www.kisanswaraj.in

Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI)

www.ofai.org

Sahaja Samrudha

www.sahajasamrudha.org

Save Our Rice Campaign

www.save-our-rice.net



Introduction

Seed is the ‘ecological cornerstone’ and ‘evolutionary blueprint’ that has sustained human civilizations for millennia. This invaluable resource which embodies farmers’ knowledge and wisdom, and also is the most critical resource for farm livelihoods is now threatened by the reckless steps of the Indian government in the last 10-15 years in sanctioning Genetically Modified (GM) crops or their field trials; recognizing IPRs and over seeds and life forms; promoting external dependency of farm communities in the name of Seed Replacement Rates (SRR); creating unsustainable and risky monocultures in the name of increased productivity and offering to hand over our immense biodiversity of native germplasm (plant genetic information) to private multinational companies and research institutes for commercial interests and potential bio-piracy. Such steps alienate/compromise our own farmers’ rights to freely select, save and share their seeds, and engage in plant breeding activities. They are an invitation to food insecurity and the loss of our sovereignty and millennia-old self-reliance in seeds and agriculture.

To gain more clarity and to devise effective implementation strategies and collective modalities through community stewardship – for meeting the challenges to our food security, seed sovereignty and the health of consumers, farmers and the environment – a two-day National Seed Savers’ Meet was held at the International Youth Hostel, New Delhi, on 6th and 7th March, 2014. This was jointly organized by Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA), Sahaja Samrudha, Save Our Rice Campaign, and Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI).

Among other objectives, **the primary aim of the two-day meeting was to work towards establishment of a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial relationship through a collaborative network of seed savers, breeders and farmers, and individuals and organizations facilitating such work.**

Objectives

The main objective was to assess the need for a national level network of seed savers, breeders and representatives of farming communities which are working towards seed diversity revival and seed self-reliance, to create such a mechanism if the participants agreed to the same, and to set out some agenda and institutional mechanisms for such a network to move forward on its work.

The two-day workshop was attended by 80 participants from 15 states, a unique and first-of-its-kind gathering.

Day 1: March 6, 2014

The meeting began with the observation of two minutes of silence in the memory of Dr Nammalvar, who passed away on December 30th 2013. His invaluable contributions and his worldview towards organic farming was recalled with great respect.

The first session on the 6th of March was entirely taken up with self-introductions by the 80 participants, including the work done by each.



The post-lunch session began with the distribution of blank cards to each individual farmer or group for noting: (1) their name/s, contact details; and (2) various crops and the number of varieties of each crop conserved by the farmer/group. This was followed by an open session in which farmers were requested to voice their concerns related to their seed saving and sharing work.

Kavitha Kuruganti and Krishna Prasad welcomed all the participants, and mentioned that this 2-day gathering is unique and unprecedented, because the rich wealth of India's seed diversity is acknowledged, valued, preserved and spread by mostly this set of people in the meeting along with others like them who are not present in this gathering, while the value of this is unacknowledged by the world. These seed savers bring a wealth of knowledge and skills with them and the work that they are doing is not just for themselves but for humankind, including future generations. They shared that some of the seed savers participating in the 2-day workshop have taken up the arduous task of saving seed and breeding good seed at their own personal expense, without waiting for any government support to be lent to them. Despite a variety of constraints, they are trying to do their seed conservation and breeding work with as much precision and rigor as they can. For the first time, this workshop is centered on an effort to create a national network of all those farmers and groups which are into seed conservation, seed breeding and establishment of seed banks so that with collective and collaborative efforts, seed diversity revival and seed self reliance can be achieved. The meeting seeks to touch upon both the 'creative' and 'constructive' aspects of seed conservation as well as the political aspects related to seeds sovereignty at a time when profit-hungry corporations are taking over this critical resource.

Shri Natabar Sarangi, 80, from Odisha, described about his work, with the support of Jubaraj, to conserve 460 varieties of paddy. He said that while the government claims the existence of a gene bank of the kind that exists in CRRI, Cuttack (30,000 varieties), it is of no real use. He emphasized that diversity in farmers' fields is what is important. He pointed out that government gene banks, like the CRRI collection that ended up transferring its samples to IRRI also, have become the means by which big corporations are able to lay their hands on such germplasm collections and later claim ownership rights on the same. He emphatically pointed out that we should not part with our seed samples to these agencies again. When he was enticed to register his varieties with royalty promised for the same, he refused. He explained in simple terms that seed is the oxygen for farmers and their farming and without it, they will find themselves suffocated and would perish. He also shared that when some people suggest to him that he should choose some promising varieties within his collection to popularize them some more, he is opposed to such an idea – every seed has its own qualities and intrinsic value and he does not want to neglect any variety. "I have great affection for each variety", he said. He also told the impressive gathering of seed savers from across the country that they should not feel demoralized by the lack of response from fellow farmers in the villages today – "they will surely realize the worth of the seeds we are saving – in around ten years' time, they will all come to us searching for good seed", he said.

Shri Vijay Jardhari of Beej Bachao Andolan in Uttarakhand spoke next. He pointed out that soil, water, air and forests are nature's gift. He shared about the Chipko movement in 1972. Right now, their area has 50-60 paddy varieties still being grown by farmers while around 350 varieties have been collected, about 10 kinds of mandua/ragi, around 30-35 varieties of wheat out of which 10-12 are grown regularly, nearly 220 varieties of rajma, 8-10 varieties of cowpea and so on. He pointed out that till the recent past, farmers did not try to make any money out of seed, and it was a resource that was generously shared with everyone. We have to remember that we are not talking about any commodity – that a whole plant and tree exist inside a small seed and the value of the life inside is to be respected.



He also narrated the story of the man who keeps ploughing even in the middle of a long drought spell, much to the ridicule of his fellow farmers, who explains to them that he is doing this so that he does not forget how to plough! It is the same with seed, Vijay Jardhari explained. He said that we need storage units of seed to come back into every farm household, with different varieties of seed saved and stored. He pointed out that this is not just about saving seed per se, but this is about saving farming, and this is the only way to survive in the age of climate change. Exhorting the group to look for inspiring terms to use for the invaluable work being undertaken, he pointed out the difference it made to move away from a term like “*mota anaj*” (coarse millets) to “*poushtik anaj*” (nutritious food grain). He shared that since 1995, they have been participating in Nature Bazaars in Delhi through Vividhaara and have been creating awareness and popularizing traditional varieties.

Bharat Dogra, author and writer on sustainable agriculture related issues, spoke next and pointed out that organic farming is incomplete without seed conservation, since it relies on diversity-based farming. He recollected the story of the first green revolution, about Dr Richharia’s work and also presented the current picture with regard to Genetically Modified Seeds. He emphasized that our work should be focused on Decentralization, since it is not just about elections and local governance structures like Panchayats but mainly about Rural Reconstruction. While our chosen path is this, corporations, in their bid to take over seed and other resources, will seek centralization and over-centralization, he explained.

Adding to the discussions, Dr Michael Gordon Jackson, an agriculture scientist who actively participated in promoting Green Revolution, said that he regretted making that mistake. He pointed out that farmers have always been scientists and that their seed breeding was not centered around yields alone but for a variety of other parameters and preferences.

Vasant Futane and other farmers from Maharashtra narrated the situation in Vidarbha and other places, and pointed out that usage of herbicides is turning out to be a major problem. There is a belief amongst farmers that all the negative effects of herbicides go away when the chemical touches the soil! They felt that for traditional crops and varieties to be revived, it is very important to draw in urban consumers. They shared their effort with the Nagpur seed festivals.

The Madhya Pradesh group, led by Laxman Singh Munia felt that any efforts around organic farming and seed conservation also have to address the problem with labor that farmers are facing.

Nagappa Nimbegondi of Karnataka, who has been conserving traditional open pollinated cotton varieties, narrated the retracing that he undertook in his own farming. He said that he faces pestering and threats from seed companies.

Sanjay Patil observed that there is high demand for organic seeds, but producing them in large quantities without support is a challenge.

The West Bengal contingent from Save Our Rice campaign and DRCSC informed that they had undertaken the task of ‘seed-mapping’. Workshops and training in organic seed production; and selection and purification for different agro-climatic conditions were proposed. The aim was to have 1,000 seed savers in Bengal in 2-3 years. They also shared that a study to compare hybrid seeds with traditional seeds was underway.



Ammaji, AP, pointed out that people ask about the economic returns on traditional crops and varieties. But the sale value on crops like millets is poor, while there is growing need of money! The challenge is thus to re-popularize our traditional foods and restore the conservative aspects of our culture like our relations with seeds. There is also urgent need to tap and document the knowledge of old farmers before it is irretrievably lost.

Jaiprakash Singh, accomplished farmer-breeder from UP, demanded that village planning must be in the village, not in the air-conditioned offices of the Planning Commission. He urged the government to allocate funds to villages on a per capita basis. Let the gram sabha then decide how to spend the money within the village.

Saroj Mohanty from Odisha pointed to the increasingly rapid alienation of land, water, forests and seeds from farmers. Such corporatization of everything calls for determined *sangharsh* or resistance. For a parallel constructive agenda, he felt there is need for individual/collective initiatives undertaken with courage, without external support. The project mode functioning of NGOs tends to be shallow and inevitably collapses. Any dependence created on funded NGOs usurps people's power and self-reliance. Sangharsh and Nirmaan must go hand in hand. It is also urgent to encourage and train the next young generation of seed savers in an apprenticeship mode.

Deepjyoti Sonu and Sahil of Farm2Food shared about their work on promoting organic farming in Assam, especially with school children. The school kitchen gardens are integrated with the mid-day meal scheme so that safe, diverse, nutritious food is available for children, even as they imbibe conservation values right from their childhood.

The work of Save Our Rice was shared by Sreedevi Lakshmi Kutti as well as other farmers from Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. The beeline for traditional seeds that is made during the 2-day festival every year during the month of May was narrated and participants were exhorted to create growing movements like the kind seen in Mr Jayaraman's area of work.

Sibaprasad Sahu shared about their conservation work and how Deshi Beehan Parab is organized each year at the block level. Others who shared their work include: Dadaji Khobragade, Deepak Bardi, Subhash Kamdi, Anil Borkar, Tejubhai Patel, Subhangshu Dey, Babulal Dahiya, Assadud Zaman, Mohini Bisht, Harinder Singh Lodhiyal, Amarjit Sharma, Subhash Kamli, K Krishnamurthy, Sudama, Suryakumar, Jaideep Burman, Bishnu, Prakash Mondal, Pompa etc.

Others who were present in the workshop also shared their work briefly – Jacob Nellithanam, Bharat Mansata, Shamika Mone, Ashish Gupta, Ananthoo Sayanan, Praveen Narasingamurthy, Shubhda Pandhare, Afsar Jafri etc. Dr Debal Deb of VRIHI and Deepika Kundaji of Pebble Garden also joined the workshop after the formal round of introductions.

There was a call to create more diversity centers functioning as *beejmatas* or seed mothers. Deepika stressed that maximizing the spread of seeds through wide sharing and decentralized planting is the best bet for their conservation. A small group was created to brainstorm some more on the organizational issues of a national seed savers' network, if it was to be formed and present the group's ideas to the larger group the next day.



Day 2: March 7, 2014

Strengthening work through National Seed Savers' Network

The second day's deliberations on **March 7** directed attention to future planning and collaboration. There was consensus on the need for a national seed savers platform.

After much discussion, it was decided to name the newly created platform as **Bharat Beej Swaraj Manch/ India Seed Sovereignty Alliance.**

It was proposed that on the 'Board' of this network would be Natabar Sarangi, Jaiprakash Singh, Vijay Jardhari, Bishnu, Syed Ghani Khan, Jayaraman, Sabarmati, Deepika Kundaji, Vasant Futane, Mohini Bisht, Ammaji and a few others (upto 15 persons, keeping in mind good gender and regional balance). Krishna Prasad will be the Convenor of the network, with Sanjay Patil and Soumik Banerjee as the Co-Convenors.

The following would be the broad scope of work, on the constructive and creative front:

- * The network would focus on exchange of seeds – this would be based on trust, though keeping a record of who gives what to whom and when; it was felt that follow-up of such seed exchange was certainly needed.
- * It was decided that focusing on purity of seed varieties was important and capacity building effort towards the same has to be taken up.
- * A national catalogue of seed savers and groups along with the varieties conserved has to be created.
- * Each participant must go back and take responsibility for his/her own region in mapping out more people outside this meeting who need to be drawn in, and actively seeking them out.
- * Exposure visits for cross-learning have to be organized across the network.
- * Seed savers' exhibitions and diversity festivals have to be organized at state level too. It was suggested that these be organized with local responsibility and supported by the national network.
- * Training and Resource Centres around Seed have to be set up.

Much attention was given to the subject of training and discipline in seed conservation and selection, and seed purity was stressed. It was proposed that Dr Debal Deb would undertake such training for which farmers would have to make 3 committed visits – at the time of sowing, midway through the crop cycle, and at harvest.

On the Advocacy Agenda for the network, some discussions were initiated around the Biological Diversity Act (BDA) and the PPVFRA. Jacob Nellithanam explained about these laws and how they are embedded in an IPR framework wherein exploitation of bio-resources is facilitated. In the BDA, though there is a clause on Biodiversity Conservation Gardens, this is required to be registered and accredited. Going beyond "ownership" laws, in the Seeds Bill of the government too, there are restrictive clauses and clauses that are stacked against farmers. This discussion had to be cut short, to have an interactive session with officials from PPVFRA.



Interactive Session with PPVFRA Officials

Officials from the PPVFRA were invited by Jacob Nellithanam to interact with the seed saving farmers and talk about the Authority, its mandate and the Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights Act (PPVFRA). Dr Ravi Prakash, Registrar, and Dr D.S. Mishra, Jt Registrar, Farmers' Rights, Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFRA), New Delhi obliged by coming over to the venue, and joining the meeting. Dr Ravi Prakash first made a brief presentation on the Act and the Authority's work. Dr Prakash stated at the outset that the PPVFRA was compliant to the WTO agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and was created as India's *sui generis* system under TRIPS.

Following were the highlights of the talk: The Government officials outlined the history of the PPVFR Act in the context of the WTO- TRIPS; and the requirement of conserving bio resources and protecting farmers' rights over such resources. They clarified that this is different from the UPOV system followed in other countries like in Europe. Under this law, it is not just breeders who are recognized and protected for their breeders' rights, but farmers too. Farmers are recognized as plant breeders under the Act. The officials talked about the National Gene Fund mechanism, and the Awards given away for conservation efforts (Community level, individual level and as "donors of genes"). They explained that farmers' rights also included compensation upon losses incurred in cultivation of any registered varieties due to fault in seed quality (from the national gene fund and not from the company concerned), that Essentially Derived Varieties require farmers' authorization, that 'innocent infringement' is protected, that benefit-sharing is facilitated through the National Gene Fund etc.

Dr Prakash encouraged farmers to register their varieties with them so that the farmers can retain their rights over such varieties and prevent biopiracy by others. Registration is a legal process by which a farmer or a breeder gets enforceable rights over his/her variety and anyone who wants to use the variety has to do it with due authorization/consent without which they can be proceeded against legally – this then secures exclusive marketing rights to the registrant. The officials explained that registration of farmers' varieties has been simplified in terms of technical procedures as well as financial resources to be spent. Further, KVKs and others have been tasked with the facilitation of registration. They explained that farmers can continue to produce, distribute, exchange, save, resow and sell registered varieties as well as unregistered varieties, as long as they are unbranded in the case of registered varieties.

The PPVFRA has about 800-900 varieties of crops registered with them by farmers since its inception.

Interaction with Seed Savers

Question from audience: Who made the law? Who did the government/ NBPGR ask? Did farmers ask for this?

Ans: This law to register varieties is consequent to the WTO/ TRIPS requirement. Without such a TRIPS-compliant law, India will not be able to access seeds from elsewhere. We have made it *sui generis* so that while complying with WTO/ TRIPS requirements, it is favorable to farmers as well. Through this route, the farmer's seed is safer and nobody can steal it and misuse the material.



Question/comment from audience: The first responsibility of the state is to be the trustee of the people and to allow free access of resources to all. What is the protection for traditional varieties? What protection is being given to commons? Why encourage private property in seeds?

Ans: No restrictions have been placed on farmers in respect of these varieties; they can continue to produce and distribute their unregistered traditional varieties. They are also free to use, exchange, save, resow registered varieties. But they can't create a brand out of varieties registered by others to sell them in the market.

Question/comment: In India, traditional varieties are available with different communities, in different names and the registration process (which is in one person's name) excludes all the others from claiming their ownership, even though it is rightfully theirs too – this is because the Authority proceeds on a first-come-first-served basis. Thus one community is pitted against another community. Most communities are not looking to make money out of exclusive ownership rights on their varieties. They are interested in ensuring that what is rightfully theirs should not be taken away by others who claim IPRs on the same (therefore, the interest is to prevent biopiracy). How does PPVFRA improve agro biodiversity and its revival? On the other hand, what has the Authority done to prevent bio-piracy? Why doesn't the Government treat all seed accessions with the NBPGR as "prior art" protected from claims of Intellectual Property Rights and why is it that each application received at the PPVFRA is not vetted against such NBPGR accession-wise passport information to prevent bio-piracy?

Question/comment from audience: There is a process envisaged for registering varieties of common knowledge which is like prior art; that work, we hear, hasn't even been started by the authority. In fact, no registration process should have been initiated without this process having been completed first.

Ans: A task force for documentation of varieties of common knowledge has been formed, and the work will begin.

The process of registration of farmers' varieties is like this. After opening up registrations it is kept open for 5 years for farmers to come forward to register their existing varieties. Then it is closed, from that point on, only new varieties developed by farmers can be registered. The farmer can make a claim about a variety and his claim has to be endorsed by the District Agriculture Officer or the Panchayat or the University i.e. it has to be endorsed by a "responsible agency". Then he/she has to provide seeds to NBPGR for grow out tests to verify the claim about the characteristics. After successful grow out tests, (if unsuccessful, farmers can seek reasons from NBPGR, they will not pro actively inform the farmer), NBPGR will notify the variety in the gazette for 3 months. If there is a counter claim, that is examined and rightful owner established and the variety is registered.

Comment from the audience: All of this pre-supposes that farmers are aware of the law, and that they are able to fulfill the procedural requirements, all so that bio-piracy by others can be prevented!

Question: Can the PPVFRA protect against contamination? Biopiracy?

Ans: Our mandate is limited to give intellectual property rights to farmers and others over their material.

Question: But this will lead to problems, for example in the case of Gobindo Bhog, it has been grown by many communities and it has been registered in one farmer's name, so he has the right to gain from it or take decisions, where as it is the common heritage of many communities. What can be done in this situation?

Ans: The others are not being prevented from using it either – they cannot sell it under a brand name.



(There were questions on whether “brand name” has been clearly defined in the law or not and so on. There were also questions on how DUS testing takes place, whether there is transparency and rigour in the process etc. However, the session had to be concluded by Jacob Nellithanam as it was lunch time and the officials had to leave).

Conclusion: The PPVFRA law is about intellectual property rights whereas the basis of our demand is protection of common property rights over resources like Seed. The law is limited in its scope and can only ensure registration of varieties but it can't offer protection against bio-piracy or for furthering agro biodiversity. We need to decide if it is beneficial for farmers/seed savers to register their seeds under this law.

POST-LUNCH DISCUSSION ON PPVFRA REGISTRATION:

It was unanimously decided that the network will not put its efforts, nor encourage anyone to register with the PPVFR Authority. It was clear that any prevention of bio-piracy by others has to be accompanied not just by registration here, or by any other mechanism but by active surveillance in the patent offices here and elsewhere to keep a watch on applications and who is appropriating what material. Without such surveillance mechanisms, any other mechanism that seeks to prevent bio-piracy just by documentation or registration is not going to be effective.

It was however apparent that putting pressure on the Authority to implement that clause of the Act which seeks to document farmers' varieties (not registration) is useful; similarly, any work that seeks to look at NBPGR passport data as prior art, and screens IPR applications against such existing information, would be one more step in preventing bio-piracy.

It was also felt that other ways of ensuring prevention of bio-piracy should be explored, and that a People's Open Source Biodiversity Register could be initiated by the network, to establish prior art, through characterization and cataloguing.

It was agreed that ultimately, no law can prevent farmers from their apriori rights related to Seeds, if millions of farmers continue to conserve and use a diverse set of seed, whether it is registered for IPRs or not. The only way to beat back IPR-supported corporations like Monsanto is to actively practice diversity based farming, and to conserve diverse seeds to be used and exchanged.

The focus then shifted to issues like testing and selection of varieties for suitability to local conditions; selection criteria; genetic purity; documentation; training; finance; and avenues for collaboration. The need for strengthening relationships within the network was emphasized; also the need for simpler and cheaper gatherings at farmers' homes and fields to reduce external financial dependence and vulnerability/control. Such 'low-key' initiatives were more likely to stay out of the radar of those collecting genetic material and knowledge for commercial appropriation. It was suggested that the more active seed savers should function as network nodes.



Action Plan

| Group/State | Activity | Responsibility |
|---|--|---|
| Odisha | Varietal selection and popularization/distribution of Traditional landraces of Rice by the state department of agriculture | Debjeet/Kavitha (Initiative in collaboration with State Agri dept, Odisha) |
| Agriculture Training Centre Nadia, West Bengal | Traditional seed distribution by Govt. of WB | Dr. Anupam Paul |
| Beej Bacho Andolan, Uttarakhand | Crop bio-data | Vijay Jardhari |
| | Publication on uncultivated food | |
| | Diversity yatra for awareness | |
| | Uttarakhand Seed Savers Meet | |
| | Lobbying with Govt. Identifying women seed savers | |
| Kheti Virasat Mission, Punjab | Seed Mapping | Lakwindher Saxena |
| | Seed Saver training | |
| | Seed Festival | |
| SAMPARK, Madhya Pradesh | MP Seed savers Meet | Harish |
| | Production of 'Beej Vartha' – quarterly newsletter | |
| | Revival of desi maize | |
| | Production of crop calendar | |
| | Initiating Seed savers cooperative | |
| Pasumai Sigaram Trust, Tamil Nadu | Revival of Millets | Yoganathan |
| | Formation of Seed Savers Club | |
| | Regional Seed Festival | |
| CREATE, Pondicherry | Vegetable seed savers network | Krishna Murthy |
| Pebble Garden, Pondicherry | Traveling to West Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab for vegetable seed production training programs | Deepika Kundaji |
| | Preparation of Seed saving manual for beginners | |
| HABITAT, Uttar Pradesh | Multiplication of farmer bred varieties in large scale/establishing farmer field school in each block of UP and release of varieties | Jai Prakash Singh |
| Jan Prerana Nainital, Himachal Pradesh | Uttarkhand Seed Utsav, March 2015 | Harish Singh Ladyaal |
| | Formation of Seed saver Groups | |



Farmer Groups Participation



Beej Bachao Andolan, Uttarakhand is a peasant movement to conserve and promote valuable agro-biodiversity of himalayan region.

Sahaja Samrudha, Karnataka is a people's movement for safeguarding agro-biodiversity, building sustainable villages, and ensuring food futures in an organic way.

Sahaja Seeds, Karnataka is a farmer –owned brand that produces high quality, organically grown, traditional, open pollinated, public domain vegetable and food crop seeds. It

Save Our Rice is a people's movement to protect traditional rice culture and knowledge across India. SOR revived more than 800 rice varieties, which are in the threat of extinction. SOR is actively working in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Karnataka.

Nirman, Mandla, Madhya pradesh, is a local group, engaged in conserving agro-biodiversity, spreading environmental awareness and promoting organic farming in tribal regions.

Pebble Garden, Auroville, Pondicherry, has regenerated 6 acres of eroded wasteland into a vibrant forest. It has a fruit tree area and a small garden, with 90 hardy crop varieties for home gardening. It also runs a home-based seed exchange initiative.

Sanjeevini, Araku Valley, Andhra Pradesh, is a local group, engaged in conserving agro-biodiversity and also recipient of plant genome savior community award.

Natabar Sarangi, Odisha is an 80 year-old retired school teacher. He spends his days caring for the 350 varieties of rice that he has planted on his two hectare farm and sharing these seeds with others.



Jai Prakash Singh, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, is a well-known and acclaimed farmer-breeder of rice, wheat, pigeon pea and mustard varieties, whose seeds are popular among farmers of north India.

Vasant Futane, Amrawati, Maharashtra, is a bio-diverse organic farmer and *sarvodaya* activist since 25 years, who practices and campaigns for organic farming and seed-saving of several agricultural and horticultural crops for self-use and exchange.

Sanjay Patil, BAIF-MITTRA, Maharashtra, is a plant genome savior community award recipient, conserving hundreds of rice, millets, maize, pulses and tubers.

Paschim Srijharkali Janakalyana Sangha, Sunderbans, West Bengal is conserving salt tolerant and traditional rice varieties, vegetables and pulses.

Sarjan Samajik Sanskrutik Sahytha Munch, Madhya Pradesh is a grassroots group actively involved in conservation of millets, rice, pulses and vegetables.

Dadaji Kobhragade, Maharashtra is a farmer breeder popular for developing HMT rice variety.

SWALA, Jharkhand is an association of self-help groups engaged in seed conservation, particularly in sunderpahari in north-eastern Jharkhand, who practice traditional bio-diverse organic farming. It is a tribal group actively involved in conservation of traditional seeds of maize, millets, rice and pulses.

Biodiversity Conservation Farm, Government of West Bengal is engaged in the conservation of crop varieties, particularly rice.

Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC), West Bengal is actively involved in promotion of bio-intensive gardens and running community seed banks.

Bhittibhumi, Sambalpur, Odisha is a network of farmers working for safeguarding farmer rights and sustaining livelihoods.

Dr. Debal Deb, West Bengal is a rice scientist, ecologist and founder of the first non-governmental indigenous rice seed bank called VRIHI in West Bengal (Presently in Odisha). He has conserved about 920 varieties of traditional folk landraces of rice using traditional as well as innovative methods.



Programme Schedule

| DAY 1: 6th March, 2014 | | |
|---|---|--|
| 10.30 am – 11.00 am | Registration | |
| 11.00 am – 12.30 pm | Seed Savers' mutual introduction. | |
| 12.30 pm – 1.30 pm | The idea of a national seed savers' network - Discussion | Moderators: Kavitha Kuruganti and Krishna Prasad |
| 1.30pm- 2.30 pm | Lunch | |
| 2.30 pm – 5.30 pm | <p>Reviving Seed Diversity and Bringing Seed Self Reliance - Constructive Work Agenda</p> <p>(Session focus on discussing how seed exchange can take place, and any protocols required for the purpose; on capacity building / exposure efforts if required; on cataloguing; on setting up community seed banks; on reaching out to other networks and farmers, etc.)</p> | Moderators: Nagesh Hegde and Bharat Mansata |
| Day 2: 7th March, 2014 | | |
| 9.00 am – 1.00pm | Advocacy agenda for the seed savers' network (access to gene banks, NBPGR prior art, open source seed system, on various schemes, state govt. level work etc.) | Moderators: Jacob Nellithanam and Debal Deb |
| 1.00 pm – 2.00 pm | Lunch | |
| 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm | Organizational agenda related to the functioning of the seed savers' network (how to carry the work forward - ad-hoc committee, resources, communication, coordination, etc.) | Moderators: Sanjay Patil and Sreedevi |
| 4.00 pm onwards | Preparation for the Biodiversity Festival | |
| Day 3-4: 8-9th March 2014 | BIODIVERSITY FESTIVAL | |



Participant Details

| Participant Name | Organization Name | State |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Mohini Bisht | Jan Prerana Sangatan, Nainital | Uttarkhand |
| Harish Singh Ladyaal | Jan Prerana Sangatan, Nainital | Uttarkhand |
| Harish Pawar | Sampark | Raipuri, Madhya Pradesh |
| Manohar Singh Rathor | Sampark | Madhya Pradesh |
| Narayana Das | Sampark | Madhya Pradesh |
| Ramlal Paridhar | Sampark | Madhya Pradesh |
| Hariom Anjena | Sampark | Madhya Pradesh |
| Babulal Dahiya | Sarjana Saamajik Sansruthik Aevam Sahikthiq Manch | Satna, Madhya Pradesh |
| Jayaprakash Singh | HABITAT JP Krishi Sodh Sanstha | Varanasi, UP |
| Mevalal | HABITAT JP Krishi Sodh Sanstha | Varanasi, UP |
| Vijay Jhardari | Beej Bacho Andolan | Uttarkhand |
| Deepak Nanaji Bardey | Swavulamban Kethi Prakalph | Maharashtra |
| Subash Bansal Ravugikamudo | | Maharashtra |
| Dadaji Ramaji Kobrageda | HMT Rice breeder | Chandrapur, Maharashtra |
| Mitrajit Dadaji Kobrageda | HMT Rice breeder | Chandrapur, Maharashtra |
| Avil borkar | Grameena Yuva Pragathik Mandal | Bandara, Maharashtra |
| Vasant Futane | Vidharbha | Amaravathi, Maharashtra |
| Ramjulal | Sampark | Madhya Pradesh |
| Ashish Gupta | OFAI | |
| Prem Singh | Vividhara | New delhi |
| Bobby Manval | Vividhara | New delhi |
| Jagpal Singh | Vividhara | New delhi |
| Anil Hegede | Hind Majdoor Saba | |
| Sudhanshu Dey | Save Our Rice | West Bengal |
| Himabindhu Mandal | Save Our Rice | West Bengal |
| Nagesh Hegde | Sahaja Samrudha | Karnataka |
| Paritosh Holder | Save Our Rice | West Bengal |
| Sibaprasad Sahu | Ahinsa Club | Odisha |
| Sanjay M Patil | BAIF, Jawahar Thane | Maharashtra |
| Afsar Jafri | Foundation Global South | New delhi |
| Deep Jyothi Sonu Bramha | Farm to Food Foundation | Assam |
| S. Boregouda | Seed Saver | Karnataka |
| Deepika Kundan | Pebble Garden Auroville | Pondicherry |
| P.Annosi | Sanjeevini | Andhra Pradesh |
| k.Panalam | Sanjeevini | Andhra Pradesh |
| K.Ramachandar | Sanjeevini | Andhra Pradesh |
| S.Mahesh | Sanjeevini | Andhra Pradesh |

| Participant Name | Organization Name | State |
|----------------------------|---|----------------|
| Sudhama Sahu | Desichasa ochari surksha parishad | Odisha |
| Jubarj Swain | Rajendra Desichasagabesara kendra,cuttack | Odisha |
| Saroj Mohanty | Western Odisha Krushik Sangathan Samanya Samithi | Odisha |
| Shahil Akhlars Richan | Farmers Food Foundation | Assam |
| Uthaman | CREATE | Tamil Nadu |
| Nagappa.C.Nimbegondhi | Farmer | Karnataka |
| Gopikantamandal | Save Our Rice (PSJSK) | West Bengal |
| Rathna Ghosh | Save Our Rice | West Bengal |
| Pmpa Kayal | Save Our Rice | West Bengal |
| Prakash Mondali | Save Our Rice(PSJSK) | West Bengal |
| Bhishnupada Mrudha | Save Our Rice(PSJSK) | West Bengal |
| N.Praveen | Sahaja Samrudha | Karnataka |
| K.Krishnamurthy | Seed Conservar | Pondichery |
| AN.Anjaneya | Sharana Muddanna, Davanagere | Karnataka |
| Narayan baehan | DRCS | West Bengal |
| Tusharkantidas | Manual Purnabadiganta Krishi Society | |
| Joyler Borman | Manual Purnabadiganta Krishi Society | |
| Pranabendu Dun | Manual Purnabadiganta Krishi Society | |
| Syed Ghani Khan | Save Our Rice | Karnataka |
| Shankara.H Langati | Sahaja Samrudha | Karnataka |
| Ketreahalli Kallappa | Sahaja Samrudha | Karnataka |
| BM. Sumangala | Bellary | Karnataka |
| M. Rechanna | Chamarajanagara | Karnataka |
| Amarjit Sharma | Kheti Virat Mission,punjab | Punjab |
| Laxmindhar Saxena | Kheti Virat Mission,punjab | Punjab |
| Surendrapaul Singh Chouhan | Sampark | Madhya Pradesh |
| Lokendar Singh Rathire | Sampark | Madhya Pradesh |
| Tejupaul Patel | Sampark | Madhya Pradesh |
| Sreedevi.L | Thanal | Kerala |
| Shamika Mone | OFAI | Maharashtra |
| Koushik Hone | DRCS | West Bengal |
| Debnarayan Naik | DRCS | West Bengal |
| S.Loganathan | PSVF-Trust | Tamilnadu |
| S.Mahrajan | PSNFI-Thamilanadu | Tamilnadu |
| K.Senthil Kumar | Create, Tamilanadu | Tamilnadu |
| Chidambaraih.B.R | | Karnataka |
| Dr.Debal Deb | Basudha | Odisha |
| Dr.Anupam Paul | ATC, Nadia | West Bengal |
| G. Krishnaprasad | Sahaja Samrudha | Karnataka |
| Kavitha Kuruganti | ASHA | Bangalore |
| Hamiamar | Save Our Rice | West Bengal |