



**Fair Trade Alliance Kerala**

## **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & SeedFest 2016**

**-January 22-26, 2016, Kruvanchal, Kannur, Kerala-**

Fair Trade Alliance Kerala (FTAK), a small farmer collective of over 5000 farming families in the Malabar region of the Western Ghats of Kerala is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The celebrations will be held in concert with its flagship annual event – the Seed Fest. The Seed Festival, the most significant conservation event in the agrarian calendar of Kerala is in to its 5<sup>th</sup> edition.

The Decennial anniversary celebrations and the Seed Festival, *Vithulsavam-2016* will be held in the **Karuvanchal village of the Kannur district of Kerala from January 22 to 26**. Preparatory events in the run up to the decennial celebrations and seed festival have been unfolding in the hundreds of FTAK neighbourhood collectives for over a month now. These will see the involvement of 5000 farming families who will each be part of the largest *in situ* indigenous seed preservation effort in the Western Ghats of India. The *Seed Swaraj Yatra* (Seed Sovereignty Journey) will traverse through the hilly tracts of Malabar between January 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. The *yatra* will take the message of trade justice, farmers right over seeds and the need for protection and preservation of indigenous varieties of seeds to the farming hinterlands of the Western Ghats. The Decennial celebrations will trace the history of immigration to the hill tracts of Malabar more than half a century ago and place in historical context the emergence of Fair Trade Alliance Kerala, through exhibitions, light and sound show, audio visual screenings and folk art forms. The focus of the Seed festival will be on bringing on board and reintroducing the vast variety of indigenous seeds, planting material and endangered livestock varieties to the farming community.

Fair Trade Alliance Kerala (FTAK) is a small farmer organisation consisting of 5300 farming families that has made a mark in the hilly tracts of Malabar by its

pioneering efforts at fair market access for the hill produces of Kerala. The organisation has been a trendsetter in procuring from its members agricultural commodities like cashew, coffee, spices, coconut, etc. at prices that match the cost of sustainable production. Born at the peak of the agrarian crisis in Kerala, the organisation initially focused on remunerative prices and fair market access. In the course of the decade of its existence, the organisation has managed to build on this and engender sustainable farming practices. The entire membership is in to organic farming – it is by far the single largest group of organic farmers in Kerala.

Titled the Fair Trade + 3 agenda, the organisation focuses on Biodiversity, Food Security and Gender justice as its overarching themes. It has given itself the ambitious mandate to steward its homestead farms to conditions that are near akin to a tropical rain forest. The ten thousand farming families that it seeks to rally around in this effort will be net food suppliers. And it is committed to ensuring that women assert their due role and space both in the management of the homestead farming economy and in organisational governance. Fair Trade Alliance Kerala views Decennial celebrations coinciding with the Seed Festival as an event that serves to deepen the organisational commitment to these themes, evaluate its impact and plan for the future. For the larger farming community, it is an occasion to exchange and buy indigenous seeds, acquaint themselves with the seed and crop diversity of the land as well as to get introduced to and join seed conservation efforts by organisations, groups and individuals.

The focus of the decennial anniversary event will be a critical appraisal of the global fair trade praxis and how the organisation sees its future engagement with it, both in the international and domestic markets. Delegates from fraternal organisations in the global fair trade community will join and offer perspectives in this appraisal. In parallel, the seed festival will lay its focus on displaying, exchanging and preserving all sorts of seeds, planting material, indigenous livestock, medicinal plants, indigenous and wild trees etc. It will be a venue for the sharing of experiences and knowledge related to preservation and propagation of indigenous seeds. Various seminars, agro instruments expo, cultural events etc. will take place on the sidelines.

While the effort will be lead by 5300 farmer members of FTAK, it is visualized as an inclusive initiative that will be embraced by the sensitive farming community of Kerala and the rest of country.

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