

Indigenous Seed Festival at Thadpatra, Dindori M.P.



In the Baigachak region of Dindori district, the National Institute of Women, Child and Youth Development (NIWCYD) and Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH) collaborated to organize an indigenous seed mela.

The event was graced by the presence of Ms. Abhilash Chourasia Deputy Director Deptt. Of Farmer Welfare and Agriculture Development, Dr. Neha Dhuria – Assistant Director of ATMA project, Ms. Meena Parte - District Program Manager of SRLM, Dr. PL Ambulkar Sr scientist Krishi Vigyan Kendra of Dindori. The primary objective of this program is to raise awareness among the community about the importance of preserving their indigenous millet seed. Additionally, the program aims to promote the use of organic fertilizer to enhance the production of these seeds and reduce the risk of their extinction.

EVENT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



The ceremony commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp in honor of Maa Saraswati by all the esteemed guests. This was followed by the traditional welcome of the guests with tilak, flower bouquets, and biran mala, which were prepared by the Baiga women.

One of the highlights of the event was the presence of our special guest, Ujiaro Bai, who is a representative of Millet Farmers from the Dindori region. Her presence added a significant value to the occasion.

During the event, Mr. Balwant Rahangdale provided a concise overview of the various initiatives undertaken by NIWCYD in the Baigachak region. These initiatives included the provision of drinking water, land development, forest conservation, as well as efforts to enhance millet and Baigani arhar production.

Following the introduction, our champion farmers took the stage to share their valuable experiences in the fields of cultivation, production, storage, and conservation of millets. Their insights and expertise were truly inspiring to all those in attendance.

Ujiaro Bai has shared her experience of promoting millets and encouraging farmers to preserve their indigenous varieties. She has also provided guidance on the proper functioning of a millet seed bank.



Previously, Mukkaddam Shri Sugrib Singh, who operated our millet seed bank, shared his own experience. He explained the challenges he faced in collecting indigenous seeds at the local level. Despite these difficulties, he managed to collect a small amount of seeds and distributed them to a few farmers. He requested them to return the seeds in a 1:2 ratio. This practice has continued, and the seed bank now sustains itself by trading with farmers.



Imrat Dhurbey, a successful farmer from Mehandwani, shared his experience of switching from broadcasting to line sowing of kutki. He highlighted how line sowing has reduced his seed rate and increased amount of production in the same land. Additionally, he used organic fertilizer prepared by farmers' group in his millet cultivation. This inspired other farmers to adopt improved cultivation methods and organic fertilizer application. Imrat also trained other farmers in these practices.



Mrs. Rekha Pandram, Secretary Tejaswini Nari Chetna Mahila Sangh, Mehandwani shared her journey from being homemaker to becoming businesswomen. They now provide cookies and namkeen to Aanganwadi children on a regular basis. Furthermore, they have started marketing their products to dealers across India.

Recently, the Sangh signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Karanjiya Millets FPO to process the procured millets into millet rice and other value-added products. Mrs. Pandram emphasized the selfless contributions of millets and their desire to conserve and sustain this tradition for future generations.

Mr. Ramveer Singh Rajput has shared outlining the goals of the Miracle Millet Project, which is being implemented by NIWCYD in collaboration with Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH) for the next four years. The primary objective of the program is to boost millet production, expand the cultivation area for millets, and promote millet consumption across all age groups. Achieving these goals will require the conservation of local millet varieties and the adoption of improved methods to enhance millet production. In addition, NIWCYD is planning to organize an awareness fair to encourage farmers and mothers to incorporate kodo and kutki into their daily diets.

Representatives from the District Departments of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, SRLM, and Krishi Anusandhan Kendra have also provided their valuable insights for future endeavors. This collaboration has instilled confidence in farmers, who can now continue cultivating millets as their ancestors have done for generations.

STALL DETAILS

Stall Visit was conducted by DDA, ADA of Deptt. Of Agriculture, Sr. scientist of KVK, DPM & BPM SRLM. Farmers of surrounding 15 villages were encouraged to visit the stalls in order to support the project's objective of boosting millet production and promoting millet consumption in the daily diet. Following are the stalls we have showcased:

1. Indigenous Millet Seeds: Different varieties of millet seeds, including kodo (Badi, chhoti), kutki (Kaali, Bhadeli, Dongar), ragi, jwar, and bajra, were on display at the stall. The farmers exhibited the seeds from the seed bank and presented them to the visitors. This display has inspired other farmers to conserve and propagate the indigenous seeds found in their area.



2. Other crop & vegetable seeds: Other crops include paddy varieties such as Gurmuthia dhan, laal dhan, Gondaful dhan, Anjali dhan, Sarsari dhan, Newari dhan, and Lalta dhan. Additionally, they have also stored Baigani arhar, Wheat, Pulses (16 varieties), Oil seeds (8 varieties), Maize (white, yellow, and red), and pumpkin (4 varieties) showcased by women farmers of Samnapur region which has been stored in their own seed bank operating since last 3 years.



3. Indigenous Farm implement: Different types of traditional farming tools used by indigenous communities include various on-farm and off-farm implements. These implements consist of a bullock-drawn wooden plough, bakhar, spade, wooden leveller, sickle, winnowing fan, winnower (shoop), sieve (chhanni), indigenous hand mill, tokri, payeli, husk lever (dhenki), and many more.



4. FPO millet based products: Karanjiya Millets FPO has presented their assortment of millet-based products. The products exhibited by the FPO BOD at the stalls included kodo rice, kutki rice, ragi, ragi flour, kodo cookies, kutki cookies, kutki namkeen, and various others. To promote millet consumption at the local level, farmers, particularly women, were encouraged to incorporate millets into their daily diet. Consequently, three farmers have purchased kutki rice from the FPO by exchanging it with raw kutki, while others have expressed a demand for 27 kg of millet rice in Thadpathra village. In response to Mr. Ramveer Singh Rajput's request, the district agriculture department has agreed to establish a mini processing unit in the village in near future.



5. Bio Inputs: The bio inputs prepared by farmers from Kharagwara, Mehandwani, have been showcased by one of our champion farmer, Imrat Dhurbey. Fertilizers showcased (Soya Tonic, Humic Acid – Kanda pani, Amrit Pani, Patti Arc) in the stall has been well explained by Imrat ji delivering his own experience in applying the same fertilizer in his own kutki cultivated land this season.

The farmers have expressed keen interest in adopting these fertilizers to enhance soil health and improve soil nutrition levels. In reply of which Imrat ji has explained the required doses, time and method of application for each fertilizer.



The saila dance group performed their tribal dance with the song sung by bai. The event concluded with a closing remark from Mr. Ramveer Singh Rajput, where he outlined the various initiatives that will be undertaken in the next five years. This was followed by the distribution of millet hampers to the guests and the champion farmers. After the event, all the participants were treated to a delicious millet lunch.



