Traditional varieties of rice pushed under carpet, says Agri expert

Mysore, Apr 5, 2012, DHNS:
Debal Deb has conserved around 700 species of rice.

Government spends millions of dollars on developing one variety of rice where as thousands of traditional varieties are pushed under the carpet, said Agricultural scientist Debal Deb.

He was addressing media persons after releasing a documentary 'Agricultural scientist ‘Pearls of wisdom’, narrating stories of farmers and agricultural scientists involved in conserving native varieties of rice.

"There are farmers who have conserved traditional varieties of rices out of own interest, which is not encouraged nor recognised by Government. Amazing varieties of rice have been developed by farmers long ago.

"But regrettably, it is called backward science. Farming innovations of traditional kind is termed to be unscientific. Various myths encircle traditional farming since years," he said.

Government spends uselessly in billions to develop a single variety of rice rich in iron, but there are more than six thousand of traditional varieties of rice which are rich in nutrients and therapeutic.

There are also rice varieties which are flood and draught resistant, which cannot be found in hybrid variety, said Deb.

"India has farmers who have been following traditional methods of farming and conserved thousands of rice varieties which is being harnessed by multi national seed companies.

" Farmers are losing power over seeds in present days. Control over preserving seeds should be retained with farmers and never be transferred to MNCs," he added.

Government has to take into notice the importance of traditional varieties and encourage cultivation of those. There were no scientists to work on rice grains in yester years.

It was farmers who developed and conserved wide range of rice. "Varieties kept in dark should be recognised by Government which upholds our heritage," he said.
Debal Deb himself has conserved around 700 species of rice and collected scientific documentation and characterisation of the species.

He has even found out a variety of rice which can be grown up to 19 feet with 18 feet of water. There is no such innovation in hybrid.

He presented a slide show on varieties of rice. 'Jugal' is a variety of rice with double grain and 'Sateen' is triple grained.

Many varieties like 'Salem sanna, 'sanna jeera', 'Mysoru mallige' and other nutrient rich and of other importances.

Director of Sahaja Samruddha Savayyuva Kridhikara Balaga G Krishna Prasad said, farmers are neglected and are paid no respect.

Government issues funds for mutts and not for benefit of farmers following organic and traditional methods.

Farmers N M Shankar Guru and Srinivas were present.