

# MSSRF sets a conservation model

Fourth edition of Wayanad Community Seed Fest begins today

STAFF REPORTER

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With the fourth edition of the Wayanad Community Seed Fest beginning on Friday, the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB) is planning to adopt key takeaways of this process to develop guidelines for establishing community seed banks.

KSBB chairman S.C. Joshi had recently revealed that the board was preparing to develop regional models for germplasm conservation based on the models set by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) here. The fest has been spearheaded by SEED CARE, the traditional farmers' network of Wayanad, and the Adivasi Vikasana Pravarthaka Samithi, a community organisation, promoted by the MSSRF.

"Wayanad's diversity in food crops and plant genetic resources is unique but, the diversity is eroding at a faster rate, thanks to the changing agrarian landscapes, social organisation of agricultural communities, and the development pressure on land. Hence, it has become difficult for farmers to conserve these varieties for a longer period of time unless there is assured economic stake in conservation



A few varieties of traditional rice seeds conserved by tribal farmers in Wayanad district.

of biodiversity through cultivation, sustainable consumption, and responsible commerce," N. Anilkumar, senior director, MSSRF, said.

"The model the MSSRF developing is this 4-C approach, where it has addressed the conservation, cultivation, consumption, and commercial dimensions of resource management," Dr. Anilkumar said.

Under the MSSRF network, around 350 traditional farmers from Wayanad and Kasaragod have conserved

over 60 varieties of paddy, 25 varieties of dioscorea, 20 varieties of banana, 85 varieties of vegetables, and many tubers and spices, he said.

"Mainstreaming agrobiodiversity in agriculture has priority as it is crucial in ensuring nutrition security and improving climate adaptability. It is important to conserve crop varieties that are resilient to extreme climatic conditions with adaptive traits to local agro-ecosystems in the situation of climate change," says V. Balak-

rishnan, Head, MSSRF.

"The programme offers a continuous process of learning from the farming community and a platform for facilitating local and higher level policy dialogues," Dr. Balakrishnan said.

"Over the past three years we could develop a model for community seed banks managed by the biodiversity management committees of grama panchayats," said T.R.Suma, scientist, MSSRF, and who coordinates the programme.

## Conservation awards announced

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Two tribal farmers have been selected for the agrobiodiversity conservation award and the ecosystem conservation award instituted by the Wayanad Adivasi Vikasana Samithi, a community organisation nurtured by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation here.

Kelu of Paramoola, a farmer of the Kurichiya tribe at Vellamunda, and Surendran of Erumad, a farmer from the Mullakuruma tribe at Erumad on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, have been selected for the agrobiodiversity conservation award and the ecosystem conservation award respectively.

The winners were selected by an award committee comprising traditional farmers, agricultural and tribal development department officers, and biodiversity experts.

M. Chandradathan, scientific advisor to the Chief Minister will present the awards at Seed fest-2018 here on Friday.