

Traditional wisdom: farmers in Nayagarh reap benefits

Staff Reporter

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BHUBANESWAR: Hundreds of farmers in Nayagarh district are not in a hurry. They rely on seeds, which are in use in their fields for ages, rather than going for high yielding paddy and vegetable seeds available in the market.

Farmers in 27 villages of the district now claim they can manufacture farm inputs such as seeds, manure and pesticides in their own backyards.

The turnaround in agriculture is evident from the fact that about 50 traditional varieties of paddy seeds are being exchanged among these villagers for past three years.

About 1,000 farmers recently displayed some indigenous seed varieties they had preserved in 'Seed conservation and organic farming festival' held at Biruda near Nayagarh.

"Interestingly women are playing pivotal role to become self-reliant in agriculture. Female members of families are now involved in preserving indigenous seeds, preparing organic manure and pesticides. One can see revival interests on agriculture for the last couple of years," said Arundhati Jena, secretary of NIRMAN, a voluntary organisation.

Moreover, involvement of 480 families in kitchen garden initiatives ensured their food security when prices of vegetables skyrocketed in recent times, Ms. Jena said.

"We recognised the fact that every farmer is a scientist in his own sphere. Farmers' traditional wisdom often comes handy on agricultural field than the theories churned out from big agricultural universities," she said. Ms. Jena said cautious preservation of indigenous seeds and their application in agricultural fields had handed over 60 per cent more yield in the third years of the initiative, which was attracting more farmers to traditional mode.

Now farmers with the help of NIRMAN are trying to involve school children by making them aware about traditional way seed preservation and productions. Farmers under Nayagarh, Odagaon and Nuagaon blocks are now preparing to pass on their wisdom to new generation peasants