

4th Plant Genome Savior Community Awards & Recognition on 21 May, 2012

PRESS RELEASE

Considering our national requirements and also to fulfil our international commitments under the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India enacted the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act in 2001 for the protection of plant varieties, the rights of farmers and plant breeders and to encourage the development of new plant varieties. The Act is unique in the world for reasons that it provides rights to farmers to register farmers' varieties, extends benefit sharing and accords recognition to farmers for conserving their agro biodiversity.

The Govt. of India has established Gene Fund for supporting the activities of conservation and preservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Plant Genome Saviour Community Awards have been instituted under the gene fund to provide due recognition and support the persons engaged in such activities.

On the eve of International day for Biological Diversity, the Chief Guest Hon'ble Dr. Charan Das Mahant, Ministers for State for Agriculture & Food Processing Industries distributed Plant Genome Savior Community Awards and Recognition Certificates for the year 2010-11 were distributed by Prof. M. S. Swaminathan, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) to the communities of farmers, farmers and tribal people in the presence of galaxy of guests from India and abroad, Chairperson, PPV& FR Authority, Senior officers of the Ministry of Agriculture, farmers, scientists from Indian Council of Agricultural Research, State Agricultural Universities and Members of the Authority, were present in the function held on 21st May, 2012 at 5:00 PM at A.P. Shinde Symposium Hall, NASC Complex, DPS Marg, Opposite Todapur Village, New Delhi.

The Plant Genome Savior Community Award was awarded to the following farming communities:

- 1) Shyamsunder Sister Nivedita Sangha, Burdwan, West Bengal for developmental services to rural and agricultural sector including conservation and preservation of traditional rice varieties.
- 2) Pokkali Rice Farming Community, Ernakulam, Kerala: for system of organic farming for sustainable system of growth of rice in low saline phase. Pokkali variety selected and conserved by farmers is inherently tolerant to salinity and submergence
- 3) Wayanad District Development Action Council, Wayanad, Kerala engaged in overall development of the tribal communities of Wayanad and adjoining districts in Malabar Agro-biodiversity hot-spot of India has conserved traditional landraces of rice and encouraged traditional agricultural system. The conservation efforts of the Council not only promoted bio-diversity, indigenous and cultural diversity but also played an important role in enhancing the food and nutritional security.
- 4) Tamil Nadu Hill Banana Growers' Federation, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu working in the Pulney hills in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu which is the home of famous Virupakshi Hill Banana. The community revived this banana as it is tolerant to the bunchy-top virus disease with their conservation and preservation.

The award carries Rs. 10.00 lakhs in cash, Citation and a memento to the representatives of the above farmers' community. Prof Swaminathan also distributed Plant Genome Savior Recognition Certificates (2010-11) to seven farmers and farmers' institution for their contributions in the conservation of Plant Genetic Resources of economic plants, their improvement and making available for development of new plant varieties.

Dr. Mahant also launched e-filing of the application for registration under this Act. This facility will help the stakeholders to file their application from any town and corner of the world. An exhibition was also inaugurated by him showcasing the activities of the PPV&FR Authority, DUS Centres and the plant materials conserved by farmers and their communities.

Prof. M. S. Swaminathan was of the view that this is a great moment that the farming community of the country have been honoured for their dedicated and selfless services since time immemorial for the conservation of agro-biodiversity, traditional varieties and landraces.

Dr. P. L. Gautam thanked to all the dignitaries for gracious presence on the occasion and for their motivation and encouragement that the Govt. of India is committed to safeguard their rights.

With the enactment of the Protection of Plant varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 the country joined the group of developed countries in regards to protection of plant varieties. In addition our Act captures the essential features of International Conventions/Treaties like Convention of Biological Diversity, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources & International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV).