

Conservation of Paddy Varieties



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Innovation Brief : This septuagenarian farmer from Southern Karnataka has grown and conserved around 154 varieties of paddy that includes traditional and hybrid varieties. He has cultivated paddy in an estimated 42 small plots of his field without use of chemical manure or pesticides. Even his son Parmeshwar Rao, an electrical engineer has now quit his job at a renowned firm to join him in this endeavor.

Detail : Shri B.K. Deva Rao has dedicated five acres of his agricultural land in Mittabagilu village of coastal Karnataka for conserving different varieties of paddy. A septuagenarian, Shri Deva Rao is proud that he grows paddy on 42 small plots without using any chemical manure and sprays. Among his collections are traditional and hybrid varieties.

The varieties he preserves have grown over a period of three-and-a-half decades to 154. Shri Deva Rao cultivates paddy in two seasons. About 125 to 130 varieties are cultivated in summer months of May-June and the rest, about 25 to 30 varieties are sown in the second season of October. In this way he manages to conserve all varieties every year.

Till 1979, Mr. Deva Rao grew 40 varieties of paddy. It was from then that he started using chemical fertilizers till 1988 as the government introduced hybrid varieties. As the focus shifted to hybrid varieties, traditional ones were neglected by most farmers. During this time, he observed that the soil had turned hard due to the use of chemical fertilizers.

He then decided to switch to natural farming and, after 2000, started collecting varieties that he had lost from other places. Some names of rice varieties that he has preserved are "Kulenji pille," large and strong, and "samunga," the best for making flattened rice, "Meese Bhatta", "Kalame", "Atikaya", "Raja Kayame", "Suggi Kayame", "Tonnur", "Navara", "Gandhasale", "Aden Kelte", "Gidda Bhatta" and "Shasthitka."

Apart from paddy they grow around 40 varieties of vegetables, 80 different local varieties of mango and 50 varieties of jack fruit.

Their family has also preserved old machine used by their ancestors in farming that date back to more than fifty years. The family has also set up a gohar gas unit.

Awardee's background :

Shri Deva Rao is 71 years old born on 31st May 1945. He attended school till the 11th Standard. He has been engaged in farming since age of 18 years. He is father to 7 children. His eldest son, B.K. Parameshwar Rao, an electrical engineer also quit the company BHEL at Bengaluru to take up farming. He has 3 daughters and one other son. Of his sons expired around 11 years ago due to heart ailment. Shri Deva Rao has received around 18 awards and from various organisations for his commendable efforts.

