

Theme Objectives:

- ❖ Safe-guarding the rights of farmers, adivasis, pastoralists, hill folk, forest-dwellers, fisher folk and future generations
- ❖ Promoting and supporting holistic & bio-diverse ecological agriculture and forestry for local needs & health
- ❖ Conserving & regenerating natural wealth, sustainable livelihoods & traditional knowledge
- ❖ Adopting a people's manifesto for biodiversity as a collective, open source heritage, free of private IPRs and reclaiming farmers' crop varieties from institutional germplasm banks
- ❖ Local, regional, national & global networking for policy correction & collaboration

Features:

- ❖ Display and exchange of several thousand seed varieties of crops & plants
- ❖ Diverse indigenous breeds of livestock/fauna
- ❖ Posters, photographs, books, ecological products, traditional arts & crafts
- ❖ Interaction with farmers, seed savers, indigenous peoples & activists
- ❖ Presentations, discussions, seminars, film shows, song, music & dance
- ❖ Sale of indigenous, organic foods – to eat or take away

Organization: Collaborative & transparent, voluntarily shared responsibilities & expenses

Registration: Events and 60 exhibition stalls – on a first come, first served basis

Contacts for registration/information:

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We warmly invite you to the
People's Biodiversity Festival
'Unity for Diversity'



In festive celebration of our rich biodiversity of crops, flora, fauna, and vibrant bio-cultural heritage, and our united resolve to protect it!

October 13 to 16, 2012, 11.00 am to 7.30 pm
at Exhibition Grounds, Nampalli, Hyderabad

All are welcome, please join us!



Why are we celebrating the 'People's Biodiversity Festival' to coincide with the CBD gathering at Hyderabad?

This is the UN Decade of Biodiversity. Two decades ago, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) called for: (1) its conservation; (2) its sustainable use; and (3) the fair and equitable sharing of its benefits. This year, the CBD meets in October at Hyderabad to review its record of non-achievement. But there seems little hope from the official government delegates to revitalize this once promising international treaty, unless strongly pressured by people.

The CBD has already bent backwards to accommodate the interests of big industry & capital, at the cost of the basic needs of people. By yielding to Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) on life forms and plant varieties, it has allowed the carving of private slices of the 'genetic pie', undermining sustainability & equity. The 'access' to our germplasm and the 'benefits' accruing from it are largely cornered by MNCs.

Recently, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) offered MNCs 400,000 varieties of germplasm, including drought-tolerant rice, terminal heat tolerant wheat and salinity-tolerant crop varieties, naturally adapted to different geographies. The Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) framework of CBD provides a cover for such a 'gene and knowledge bazaar'. Free sharing between communities has declined.

The agri-business MNCs promote unsustainable monocultures of Genetically Modified (GM) crops and commercial hybrids, grown intensively with high inputs of increasingly expensive and scarce fossil energy, chemicals and water – leaving a trail of toxicity and greenhouse gases. Instead, we need bio-diverse, ecological farming with locally evolved or adapted, open-pollinated seeds, providing sustainable and wholesome yields.

The CBD will bring together thousands of people from all nations. This is the time to press upon the world and our own people, that our biodiversity and related knowledge can best be conserved as a 'collective commons',

governed by the ethic of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' – the earth is one family. The narrow market view - to carve out slices of Intellectual Property Rights over our genetic wealth - will preside over its demise, not conservation. While some plan to protest the privatization of biodiversity at the CBD, such fragmented initiatives have low impact. Our hope lies in adopting a strong, united platform at a separate gathering in Hyderabad, coinciding with the CBD.

To protect our genetic and ecological commons – held in trust for mutual sharing and for future generations – we need an 'Open-source Heritage Registry' of our agro/biodiversity & related knowledge, free from exclusionary IPRs. We also assert farmers' rights of facilitated access to our many thousands of crop varieties in national & international germplasm banks, originally collected from our own farmlands, and having evolved through the innovations, adaptations & selections of many generations of our farmers.

The onslaught of reckless urban-industrial expansion – including forest mining, big dams, and polluting/hazardous power plants – seizing and destroying our bio-heritage commons, violates the rights of millions of farmers and indigenous peoples, undermining their sustainable livelihoods and survival. Great violence is also unleashed on birds, bees, earthworms, fish, and myriad other life forms.

The 'People's Biodiversity Festival' is thus an appeal for a united front, reflecting our shared concerns; and to lay the foundation for cooperation and sharing of our seed wealth and related knowledge – for inclusive, ecological self-reliance in harmony with nature; and for public policy correction towards such purpose. But alongside the challenges is the celebration of all that we are still so fortunate to have. Thus, the People's Biodiversity Festival will be vibrantly festive and colourful, with irrepressible energy.

**“ Let us celebrate the infinite imagination of nature.
Let us live and let live ! ”**

