

Global recognition for Odisha tribals' traditional green farming

By Our correspondent

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Bhubaneswar (Odisha) : Prime Minister Manmohan Singh applauded the tribal community of Koraput for being chosen by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation for recognition under its Globally Important Agricultural Heritage sites programme.

Muduli, along with Chandra Pradhani, another member of her Porja tribe, were felicitated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the 99th Indian Science Congress here for practising the 'Koraput Traditional Agricultural System'.

A decade ago, Ralila Muduli, a tribal woman from Odisha's Koraput district, was struggling to feed her family of six. But then she was introduced to a nature friendly farming system which not only changed her condition but also got her tribe UN recognition.

The system practised by the community has been chosen by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) under its Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Sites programme.

According to Muduli, 40, it all started after the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation -- run by eminent agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan -- introduced them to organic farming.

"Earlier, we were using a large amount of chemical fertiliser for farming. But then we shifted to organic methods. We used cowdung for manure," Muduli said.

Muduli and Pradhani inspired other people in the village to take up the system and now almost eight-nine villages are involved in the climate-friendly agriculture system.

"For preventing crops from getting infected, we prepare insecticides in a traditional manner using neem leaves and other plants found in the forest that have medicinal qualities," said Pradhani, who was ecstatic after receiving the award from the prime minister.

The tribe produces several varieties of rice, wheat and cumin seeds.

Pradhani says that this method of farming has almost quadrupled the annual yield in the last few years, while profits have risen several times.

"Now I earn Rs.1.5 lakh annually, which is enough to meet the basic needs of my family. I send my children to school and it has brought prosperity to the village," said Pradhani, who is also the village head.