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## NEWS

# Biohappiness key to future, says Swaminathan

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The father of the Green Revolution in Asia and World Food Prize winner, M.S. Swaminathan, has launched a book on 'biohappiness'.

*In Search of Biohappiness* maintains that true, long-term wellbeing can only be achieved by harnessing biodiversity to work for people in sustainable and equitable ways.

"Biohappiness arises from the conversion of bioresources into jobs and income in an environmentally sustainable and socially equitable manner," according to Swaminathan's definition.

Speaking at the launch of his book today (25 May), at the headquarters of the non-governmental organisation Bioversity International, in Italy, he highlighted the paradox that the poorest people often live in the areas with the richest biodiversity.

One solution is to ensure that biodiversity research is more closely linked to human wellbeing — happiness — and is used to lift people out of poverty, he told *SciDev.Net* after the launch.

Global targets on biodiversity conservation keep failing and new meetings, empty speeches, reports and new, unattainable targets "go on endlessly", Swaminathan said.

Instead, there should be more programmes similar to those he has overseen in India. There, local people have used biodiversity to lift themselves out of poverty, for example by protecting medicinal plants and rice varieties.

They achieved biohappiness, and the idea is slowly starting to influence policymakers, he claimed.

The wider use of agricultural biodiversity, which builds the more resilient farming systems needed to cope with climate change, has global potential for improving nutrition and increasing incomes, he argues in his book.

Biodiversity ought to allow local communities to prosper but, to do this, it is essential to "reverse the paradigm" in which biodiversity is exploited for the financial interests of outsiders.



Swaminathan: 'We must think about the human being behind biodiversity'  
Flickr/World Economic Forum

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"We must think about the human being behind biodiversity — not only worship biodiversity for biodiversity's sake."

It is important to change the mindset of people in urban areas, and of policymakers, to appreciate this, he added.

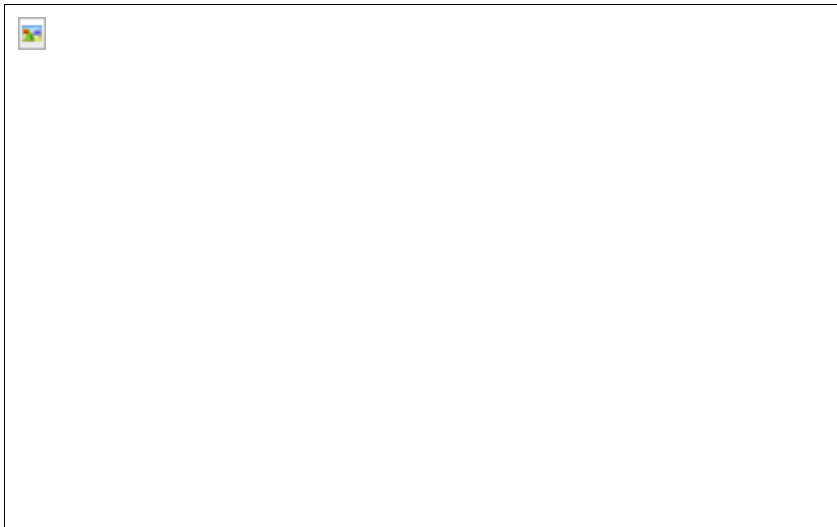
Meanwhile, researchers, donor agencies, NGOs and civil societies should form partnerships with local people that are on an equal footing and recognise their needs and human dignity.

Swaminathan highlighted the importance of traditional knowledge and the wisdom built up by generations of women, who are often the driving force behind the conservation and use of agricultural biodiversity.

Swaminathan, who sits on several food security and Millennium Development Goal committees, received the first World Food Prize in 1987 for bringing high-yielding wheat and rice varieties to India's farmers. *TIME* magazine has called him one of the 20 most influential Asians of the 20th century.

Emile Frison, director-general of Bioversity International, said: "Unless this wake-up call is heard and acted upon, we risk moving towards a tsunami of biosadness".

See below for a Bioversity International video of the book launch:



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<http://www.scidev.net/en/news/biohappiness-key-to-future-says-swaminathan.html>

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