



PRESS RELEASE

Inauguration of Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) initiative to create awareness and promote Millets and Backyard Kitchen Gardens among students, farmers and Biodiversity Management Committee Members, at **10 am** on Friday **April 28, 2023**, at **M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai.**

Hon'ble Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, Consumer Protection and Price Control, Government of Tamil Nadu, **Thiru R Sakkarapani**, inaugurated the LiFE initiative and delivering the inaugural address highlighted the Government of Tamil Nadu's initiatives to ensure food and nutritional security by introducing two kgs of finger millet (Ragi) in the Public Distribution System (PDS) from May 2023, to all ration card holders in Nilgiris and Dharmapuri districts. He noted that since millet production is low in Tamil Nadu, consumption has also declined, but the Government is taking steps to introduce millets in the diets of the people. "School children across Tamil Nadu will now benefit from the breakfast scheme from June 3rd," he announced, and "We will now plan to include at least one millet-based meal per week in ICDS, mid-day meal and breakfast scheme."

Shri Achalender Reddy IFS (Retd), Chairperson – National Biodiversity Authority, Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Government of India, stated nutritional facts about millets and pseudo millets, and highlighted that biological conservation is essential to prevent not just biodiversity loss, but also to protect food species (especially millets) from disappearing in India.

Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson MSSRF, spoke about the undernutrition and obesity problem, as well as non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, etc., on the increase among urban and rural populations in India. Laying emphasis on eating balanced diets, she said that a recent survey by National Institute of Nutrition, showed that only around 10% of Indians eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. "The problem of inadequate diets is not only with the poor, but also with the middle and upper classes of society, and therefore massive programmes on food and nutrition awareness is required to bring about behaviour change."

Other delegates who spoke on the occasion were: **Dr J Radhakrishnan**, Additional Chief Secretary, Co-operation, Food and Consumer Protection Department, Government of Tamil Nadu; **Dr B Balaji** IFS., Secretary – National Biodiversity Authority, Chennai; and **Dr Shekar Kumar Niraj** IFS., PCCF and Secretary, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board.

Dr GN Hariharan, Executive Director – MSSRF, welcomed the gathering, while **Dr Oliver King**, Director Biodiversity - MSSRF, presented research work on millets undertaken by MSSRF in Kolli Hills, Tamil Nadu.