

# Pune NGO for women farmers wins UN Equator Prize

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SSP's farming model works by giving cultivation rights of a small piece of land to women from marginal families (file photo)

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NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18:

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), a Pune-based non-governmental organisation working among women farmers, has won this year's UN Equator Prize.

SSP is the only Indian organisation among the 15 winners that were chosen from 800-odd entries. The award recognises SSP's initiative to empower over 20,000 women farmers from the impoverished Marathwada region in Maharashtra, a release said on Monday.

Through these farmers, SSP has been promoting climate-resilient agro-ecological farming that addresses many issues relating to sustainable development, such as food security, income security and natural resource management.

The prize was received by Godavari Dange and Kamal Kumbhar, two women farmers from Osmanabad district, at the UN General Assembly meeting in New York on Sunday.

SSP's climate-resilient farming model works by giving cultivation rights of a small piece of land, which is usually half or one acre, to women from marginal families. Subsequently, they are trained in climate-friendly farming practices such as use of biofertilisers and biopesticides, preservation or exchange of locally available seeds, and diversification from single to multiple food crops that are water-efficient.

The initiative not only helped to convert 12,000 acre of dry land into bio farms, but also reduced the cost of cultivation by 40 per cent and increased the yield per acre by 25 per cent.

Last year, SSP won UNFCCC's Momentum for Change Lighthouse Activity Award **for this initiative**.

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