



MAKAAM
MahaKisan

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PRESS RELEASE

Women Farmers from 18 States Demand Recognition, Empowerment and Support as Farmers

**Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh
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Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM) –Forum for Women Farmers’ Rights--in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Government of Andhra Pradesh organised a three-day National Convention of Women Farmers. The convention, held from 17 to 19 March 2016 in Agriculture College, Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh, was attended by 500 women farmers from 18 states in India.

Participants in the convention ratified the **Bapatla Declaration** resolving to collectively produce sufficient grains and pulses for their own needs first and address demands within their households and communities, and create and secure sustainable livelihoods. They resolved to resist development that is based on unsustainable use of natural resources and denies us the right to secure livelihoods and access to our natural resources. They reaffirmed their right to the use of commons. Women farmers demanded the state to address their issues to sustain and promote agricultural growth and food security. They demanded restructuring of state policies around basic livelihood resources and their use to ensure that rural women’s livelihoods are comprehensively ensured so that food security, income security, social protection (including healthcare, insurance, childcare services and pension) as well as bodily integrity are all protected.

Maneka Gandhi, Union Minister, Ministry of Women and Child Development, in her message to the convention said, “Ideologically, my thoughts and my spirit are with you. I am one of the foremost proponents of organic agriculture in the country and I believe that this will bring great strength to women farmers. I would like the organisation to make a list of what your problems are, send it to me and I promise you I will take it up with all the other ministries concerned.”

Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Chairperson, National Commission for Women (NCW), in her keynote address in the inaugural plenary of the three-day convention, said “The National Commission for Women (NCW) will be undertaking an ambitious project of training elected women grassroots leaders at the Panchayat on issues of good governance – planning, implementation, addressing the needs of their stakeholders. Issues women farmers face will be included in such trainings. The NCW will work closely with Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM) to draft a plan for women farmers, which will be presented to the Government of India.”

Addressing the women farmers, Subhalakshmi Nandi, Programme Specialist, Women Economic Empowerment, UN Women Office for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, said, “Internationally a promise has been made that by 2030, Sustainable Development Goals will be achieved. Some strategies have been made for these. Women farmers and their rights have been discussed in them. Global norms have been established, and within them gender equality and right to livelihood are core principles. In South Asia, it is important to bring together women’s groups and movements and also come together with the labour movement and workers movement internationally.”

All over India, an overwhelming majority of female rural workers are engaged in agriculture in various capacities. While it is apparent that women farmers are central to agriculture in India, and agriculture is central to most rural households’ livelihoods, yet women farmers remain invisible and unsupported, despite their significant contribution to farming and food security. It is to address this lack of identity, visibility, support, rights and entitlements to women farmers despite their significant contribution as the backbone of farming in India as acknowledged by the National Policy For Farmers (2007) that a national alliance, called Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM), was created in 2014--15 to give voice to the issues and concerns of women farmers in India.

The National Convention of Women Farmers was held to build solidarity among women farmers from various states, to render their contribution visible, create awareness of schemes and programmes and strengthen their identity as farmers. It is hoped that through the participation of various government functionaries and officials, the Convention can build women farmers’ understanding and awareness on several government schemes, including social security and entitlements. The Convention provided an opportunity to share evidences from recent research on the status of women farmers in different states of India, and to raise relevant issues with concerned state and central government agencies and departments for strengthening/revisiting existing policies, programmes and budgets along with innovative ideas to benefit women farmers.

MAKAAM

MAKAAM or Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (Forum for Women Farmers’ Rights) was created in April 2014 as a nationwide alliance of networks, campaigns, movements, organisations, people’s collectives and individuals who advocate for the Right to Livelihoods of women farmers, particularly dalits, adivasis, single women, differently-abled and displaced. It is guided by principles of feminism and sustainability for economic, environmental and social justice. MAKAAM strives to ensure women’s identity as farmers, and that their rights over resources (including land and other natural resources) are realised. The mission of MAKAAM is to visibilise women farmers, especially smallholder marginalised women, with a development vision led by social justice, plurality of knowledge systems and sustainability driven by ecological approaches. It endeavours to create and secure rights over productive livelihood resources (land in particular) as well as entitlements over a variety of support systems, with equal participation of women in decision-making in various institutions, starting family upwards, to ensure empowered, self-reliant and sustainable women’s livelihoods. MAKAAM works through state-level networks, supported by Regional Facilitation Teams and a broad-based National Facilitation Team.

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