

Regional workshop on food sovereignty held



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Guwahati: “My home is where my food is grown” was the talking point of two days regional workshop on Food Sovereignty concluded in Guwahati which was held on October 26 to 27 and organized by Caritas India at Silver Jubilee Memorial Conference Hall of Northeast Diocesan Social Service Societies, Guwahati. Altogether 76 participants of 16 partner organisations from all seven states participated. 16 farmers stalls were installed by 16 partner organisations to showcase their organic farm produce as well as wild edibles under the FARM NE banner.

Dr. Rituraj Phukan was the Chief Guest to grace the occasion along with Dr. Pranab Bujarbarua, Assistant Professor, Department of Botany, Jusmita Borah, Environment Expert, Assam Inland Water Transport Project, Govt of Assam and Mrinal Gohain, Regional Manager ActionAid, Fr. Dr. Sabastian, Director NEDSSS Guwahati. To accompany the honorable guest speakers, Rev Dr Jolly Puthenpura Assistant Executive Director, Devi Kalyani Pattnaik Chief Operations Lead, Pradipta Chand Lead-Climate Adaptive Agriculture and Food Sovereignty along with the Northeast Regional Caritas India team members were among them.

While sharing on the food and climate crisis, Dr Rituraj Pukhan raised concern over the present food habits by quoting a song “My home is where my food is grown” which drew the attention of the participants that we are not eating what we are growing. While sharing his message, he emphasizes the importance of local seasonal food including wild edibles and encourages people to grow their own food. Growing your own food helps to maintain good health by reducing food miles, food waste and external dependency on the market for inputs. He showed the comparison of summer temperature from 1936 to 2021 and showed that the last 7 years were the hottest years.

Rev Dr Jolly Puthenpura shared the current national situation in the context of food and farm biodiversity, where smallholder farmers are among the most vulnerable groups to climate change. They have been hit hardest by climate change considering their small and fragmented landholdings. Scaling-up for resilience and adaptation through smallholder led integrated farming systems, Caritas India has initiated adaptive models considering different agro-ecological climatic conditions of the region in consultation with the relevant regional research stations to ensure smallholder's production, income, nutrition, resilience, and farmers control in the face of climate threats. Facilitating Agriculture and Regeneration Measures (FARM) is one of those flagship programmes of Caritas India, which is being implemented in 7 states with 12,365 small and marginal farm families. FARM has been able to create a remarkable impact on the lives of small farm families where smallholders are taking the lead in creating sustainable models of agricultural development by enhancing their incomes.

Sharing about the Caritas India's initiative under the climate adaptive agriculture and food sovereignty theme, Pradipta Kishor Chand has presented three evidence-based models on climate resilient agriculture, community managed food and nutrition and a small-scale value chain of small-farm-agri-food. He shared the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of smallholder owned models experimented with in smallholder adaptive farming and biodiversity networks.

Dr. Pranab Bujarbarua emphasized the promotion of local farm biodiversity by diversifying small farms with maximum local varieties inclusive of cereals, pulses, oil seeds and vegetables to invite pollinators and predators for better farm production. While speaking on this, he also stressed on the wild edibles and leaves having great nutritional values and specific characteristics to be used as bio-pest repellents which are natural and no harm to the local biodiversity. Dr. Jusmita Borah, giving her presentation on resilient communities made participants think about how our resources are going to become extinct.

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