

Chia and Quinoa Super foods – alternate crops for Tobacco

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Mysuru, October 02:- On the occasion of Dasara festivities, Aahaara Mela at Scouts and Guides Grounds in Mysuru was a huge successful event. Coinciding with the Mela, the Organising Committee consisting of nominated members, officials of Food and Civil Supplies Department led by its Dy. Director K Rameshwarappa and Food Safety and Security Authority officials had organised various competitions for all sections of the society including college students, public, senior citizens and prizes were given away with certificates; well known citizens and subject experts acted as judges.

One such event – Competition for Senior Citizens for preparation of dishes from millets – was very interesting with 8 pairs of elderly competitors and a surprise pair of men Vasanthkumar Mysoremath, Anti-Tobacco Activist and B N Madappa, former tobacco grower who has given up cultivating tobacco, both farmers from H D Kote. They had come prepared with all the ingredients required for preparing ‘Chia Millet Kraklers’ (Chia *Nippittu*) and they won the third prize for their entry.

Speaking on the occasion, Vasanthkumar Mysoremath explained that their main intention was to propagate Chia, Quinoa and Teff like millets in Karnataka as alternate food crops to tobacco, the killer weed. Mysoremath was all praise for Scientists of Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysuru for having developed and introduced Chia and Quinoa millets, the Mexican superfoods and staple food of many Afro-Asian countries to the farmers of tobacco belt of Mysuru taluks who have given up growing tobacco and taken up cultivating in a big way. Their participation in the food preparation competition was to create awareness in the minds of Mysureans that Chia and Quinoa are future food crops that have excellent potential to supplement the much needed proteins and a host of other vitamins for the well being of pregnant women and children. He said that there is a false notion that no other crop can be grown once tobacco is cultivated, which is wrong, and cited success stories of how the State Horticulture Department has demonstrated various methods of enriching the soil within the shortest time and grown alternate crops like banana, papaya, rose.



He also cited how farmers are now convinced and have also become acutely aware that there is no future for tobacco since it is being drastically phased out by the year 2020 as per India's agreement with FCTC protocol sponsored by UN/WHO. Horticulture Department have formed clusters of farmers and are helping them to get the needed help and earn equal or much more income than tobacco.

Mysoremath also appreciated Shri Kurubur Shanthakumar, President of Sugarcane Growers Association and also Raithamitra Agriculture Produce Company Limited that has an agreement with CFTRI to propagate Chia, Quinoa and

Teff and also buy-back arrangement.

Farmer Madappa explained how growing tobacco was injurious to health even to the growers and how he recouped his health by stopping tobacco cultivation. He said he was one of the earliest farmers who, with the help of CFTRI, took up cultivation of robust superfood Chia crop as alternate to tobacco and was very happy that he has earned more money than tobacco and said that his success story has spurred hundreds of other farmers who have now started cultivating Chia and Quinoa and given up tobacco farming.

Madappa also praised Kurubur Shanthakumar for his far sight and for having formed Raitha Mithra Agriculture Produce Company for helping more than 700 members to market their produces with assured incomes. His tying up with CFTRI also helped tobacco farmers to give up the killer crop tobacco and to help themselves with better and assured income than tobacco.

Jamuna won the first prize, Jayanti Pai, Second and Vasanthkumar Mysoremath and B N Madappa, farmers won the third prize and certificates.