

Farm to fork: A consumer-farmer compact shows the way

Author - K V Kurmanath, Published on - 20.6.2018

Breaking new ground A group of 100 consumers has decided to invest in small holdings of women farmers in Telangana ahead of the crop season. In return, they will get a share of the produce - iStock

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Buying millets or organic farm produce directly from farmers is not something new, but a group of millet-loving, organic food enthusiasts has gone a step further.

The group of 100 consumers has decided to invest in small holdings of women farmers in Telangana ahead of the crop season. In return, they will get a share of the produce. The members can also visit the fields and see their investments at work.

To begin with, each of the 100 members will invest up to ₹10,000 an acre in farms organised under the Deccan Development Society (DDS), a non-governmental organisation working with women small-holder farmers in Telangana.

In return, the members will get a basket of millets, pulses and oilseeds from the farmers proportionate to the investments. They can select from a huge list of 30 crops to suit their needs.

While it helps farmers to secure interest-free financial support, the group members get millets and pulses directly from the farm gate.

Qualitative benefit

The ConFarm or Consumer–Farmer Compact, formed recently, signed a formal agreement with farmers last week. Some of them visited the fields near Pasthapur in Zaheerabad before signing the 'Compact' agreements with the farmers.

"We have some backyard farming and we know the difference in quality between the things that we grow and the things we get in the market," Neelima, a homemaker and a ConFarm member, told

BusinessLine

. "On the other hand, the small farmers are not getting remunerative prices. It has been a difficult proposition. We thought we should do something for them," she says. For Neelima, it is a win-win situation. "We expect it (the deal) to substitute our (grain) purchases for a few months," she says.

The DDS is working with about 5,000 women farmers who predominantly grow millets in the dryland farms of Zaheerabad, about 100 km from Hyderabad.

Green drive

DDS Director PV Satheesh said that this effort was a step forward in the Disha Consumer Movement, a voluntary organisation that promotes awareness on healthy food and the environment. "Besides getting authentic organic food, they are going to contribute to soil health and environment," he said.

The farmers getting the investments have promised to the ConFarm members healthy crops grown on their farms and have assured the consumer group of a diverse variety of produce.

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