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Reject Bt brinjal, say farmers

Staff Reporter

Coimbatore: Southern Indian Co-ordination Committee of Farmers' Movement (SICCFM) has urged the Tamil Nadu government and farmers to reject Bt brinjal since it is only an attempt to take over Indian agriculture and pointed out the rejection of Bt brinjal by neighbouring States Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala.

Resolution passed

A resolution to this effect was passed at a meeting of the farmers' association representatives from Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The meeting decided that any seed that enslaves Indian farmers and poisons the food and soil are not acceptable, whether they come from agriculture universities or from multinational companies.

K. Sellamuthu, president of the Uzhavar Uzhaippalar Katchi urged the Chief Minister to take a stand against Bt brinjal and such other seeds and hoped that the Chief Minister would continue to show long-term vision in sustaining the farmers' livelihood in the State.

He urged the government to ignore the "faulty advice" of some scientists in the State. He added that the Agriculture Minister's assurance in the Assembly on the issue of Bt brinjal was incorrect and misleading.

He claimed that with regard to tests that had been performed by the university on Bt brinjal, it was not true, as the university had been allowed to dispense with even large-scale trials on the agronomic front.

On the health and environmental safety front, scores of questions still remain on the studies by students and data produced by the crop developer. Kodihalli Chandrasekhar of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha said that pesticide consumption figures being projected to rationalise the introduction of Bt brinjal were not scientific.

"It is a shame that Indian regulators, rather than being proud of our invaluable diversity in this crop and rather than putting out recommendations to conserve such unique diversity are actually negating the fact that brinjal originated in this country. Rewriting a scientific fact on its contamination possibilities or its origin or its ill-effects on our health would not fool alert Indian farmers and consumers," said P. Raveendranath, president of Kerala State Coconut Farmers Association and

Fr.George Pottakkal of INFAM.

Former legislator N.S. Palanisamy and president of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangham said: “No Bt brinjal had ever been introduced anywhere in the world.

In fact, American agencies invested their resources to develop Bt brinjal in India as well as to re-write our regulatory guidelines. Sadagopan, president of Uzhavar Periyakkam demanded that the seed firm and TNAU should immediately let the world know where their original seed material had come from.

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Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 82.35 feet on Tuesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,030 cusecs and the discharge, 7,997 cusecs.

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Short film on Bt brinjal

Staff Reporter

Celebrities pitch in to protest GM food

Focus of network is raise awareness and express concerns of farmers, consumers

“Tamil Nadu government must take note of, at least, what some other States have done”

CHENNAI: People from various walks of life, including physicians, human rights activists and farmers, came together here on Tuesday to register their protest against the introduction of Bt brinjal by launching a short film *Kathireekaaa*.

Performing artists such as Chitra Visweswaran, Priyadarshini Govind, T.M.Krishna, Vijay Siva and Chitravina N. Ravikiran addressed the gathering.

The focus of the network, Safe Food Alliance (SFA), is to raise awareness and express the concerns of farmers and consumers on the introduction of Genetically

Modified (GM) food.

Union Minister for Environment Jairam Ramesh has announced that a final decision on giving approval for Bt brinjal will be taken on February 20 after a series of consultations in seven cities.

An open discussion on GM food followed the screening of the 24-minute documentary which features film directors Vasanth and Cheran; actors Revathy and Rohini; writer Gnani; academician Sultan Ismail Ahmed; and farmer Nammalwar. Pointing out that many western countries have banned GM food, V.Suresh of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) said: "The Tamil Nadu government must take note of at least what some other States have done. Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and a few other States have already rejected the introduction of Bt brinjal."

Singer T.M.Krishna said that while manipulating nature in the name of productivity and profit, the impact must be fully understood before taking any decision.

Director Vasanth said that a series of film screenings and events will be organised over the next two weeks culminating on January 30 with a consumer event to save food from genetic contamination.

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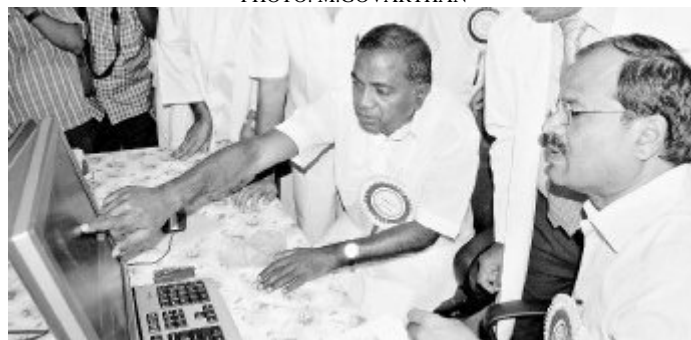
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Turmeric market complex issue to be sorted out soon

Staff Reporter

Traders to contribute Rs. 1 crore; panel to speak to Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister

PHOTO: M.GOVARTHAN



Spot Assessment: Kovai Thangam, Chairman, Tamil Nadu Assembly Petitions Committee, reviewing development works in Erode on Tuesday. Collector R. Sudalaikannan (right) is in the picture. —

ERODE: Imbroglio surrounding the setting up of a turmeric market complex will soon be resolved, Kovai Thangam, chairman, Tamil Nadu Assembly Petitions Committee, has said.

"The Committee members along with district officials held a discussion on Monday

with traders representatives and others concerned for the establishment of the market complex and the impasse would soon end,” he told reporters at the end of the review meeting he conducted at the Collectorate here on Tuesday.

“It had been decided that of the estimated cost of Rs. 4 crore, the traders would contribute Rs. 1 crore, MLAs and MPs from the district would chip in with a like sum and for the rest Government help would be sought.”

Mr. Thangam said the Committee would take up the issue with the Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi and Deputy Chief Minister M.K. Stalin for the funds.

To a question on pollution problem in Erode, the Chairman said no quick-fix solution could be found the long-standing issue and as a first step the Committee had asked Collector R. Sudalaikannan to convene a meeting with all stakeholders to decide the further course of action.

“In a weeks time the Collector will convene the meeting, in which MLAs and other peoples’ representatives will also be present. This will be the first step to solve the issue.”

Regarding his visit to the Government Hospital here he said the Committee, following representations, had ordered for the construction of toilet complex, the funds for which would come from the Collector and Erode MLA.

He asked the Collector to look into the issue of waste disposal at the Hospital. The Collector would look into the issue and submit a report within 15 days. In response to another question on denial of access to road for the Dalit residents of Kallakavundanpalayam village, he said a Revenue Department official had been asked to study the issue and he would report to the Committee in the next 24 hours. Thereafter, further action would be taken, he assured.

Mr. Thangam also had a word of appreciation for Mr. Sudalaikannan for executing works the Committee had suggested. The works amount to Rs. 21.44 crore.

MLAs N. Subramanian, K. Nedunchezian, P. Dilli Babu and others were present on the occasion.

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Water level

MADURAI: Water level in the Periyar dam on Tuesday stood at 116.20 feet (136 feet) with an inflow of 273 cusecs and a discharge of 875 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 52.99 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 544 cusecs and a discharge

of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 3,186 mcft.

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DECCAN
Chronicle *On The Web*

Actors, musicians protest Bt brinjal

By By Our Correspondent
Jan 20 2010

Jan. 19: The opposition to Bt brinjal in the state has intensified with leading Kollywood stars including Khushboo, Revathi, Nasser and Carnatic musicians such as T.M. Krishna joining the campaign.

Though the state agriculture minister, Mr Veerapandi S. Arumugam, is battling for the genetically modified Bt brinjal and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University is conducting field trials, farmers' groups and food security campaigners are all against it.

They are building up the campaign by roping in celebrities. A documentary film on the issue was also released on Tuesday.

In a meeting organised by Safe Food Alliance here, separate posters with Khushboo, Revathi, Nasser, Rohini, and directors Cheran and Vasanth saying no to Bt brinjal were released.

A 24-minute documentary film on the adverse impact of Bt brinjal, directed by debutant Deepa, was released by classical dancer Chitra Visweswaran.

Carnatic musicians T.M. Krishna, Sangeetha Sivakumar, Vijay Siva, Neyveli Santhanagopalan, and Chitravina N. Ravikiran have expressed their solidarity with the movement.

The campaigners, however, are upset that they could not get an audience with the chief minister, Mr M. Karunanidhi, to explain the "disastrous impact" of GM foods on future generations.

"The agriculture minister's pro-GM food pronouncements are worrying," said an SFA coordinator. "We were happy to see the opposition by AIADMK, CPI (M), PMK and the CPI members."

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