

'Make farming technology easier for small farmers'

Five Padma Awardees Share Their Farming Experiments

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Kochi: "Farmers are the best scientists and they do experiments with the crops despite challenges and do not shirk from trying out new methods even if it fails the first time. However, what the present day requires is that the scientific community make farming technology friendly for small farmers. The focus should be on agro-ecology," said Padma Shri winner Kumari Sabarmatee from Odisha.

AGRI SCIENCE CONGRESS

"Tiki apa", as she is popularly known, successfully demonstrated on how a land can be regenerated ecologically, and said that the stigma associated with small farmers when they come out stating their experiments on their farm has to be addressed. "There is a need to have more women-friendly farming methods as they spend a lot of time in farms and



Jipson Sikhera

(From left) Padma Shri winners Batakrushna Sahoo from Odisha, Chandrasekhar Singh and Seth Pal Singh from UP, Cheruvayal Raman from Kerala and Sabarmatee Tiki from Odisha after their felicitation at the 16th Agriculture Congress, in Kochi on Thursday

yet the equipment are not women-friendly," she added during an interaction organized during a farmer-scientist interface session held as part of the 16th agricultural science congress in Kochi on Thursday.

Along with her, four other Padma awardees — Cheruvayal Raman from Wayanad, Batakrushna Sahoo from Odisha, Seth Pal Singh and Chandrasekhar Singh from Uttar Pra-

des — spoke of their farming experiments. Raman's principle of free distribution of seeds was widely accepted among the farmers who came from 17 states and Union territories.

Most spoke of the hardships in getting loans. "There's no social dignity for a farmer when he approaches government offices and financial institutions. We are treated with suspicion," said a woman farmer.

The farmers also spoke of post-harvest issues, including procurement and marketing, lack of adequate agri-equipment and needs for value-added products to counter the losses caused by excess production. Farmers from Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Lakshadweep were present.

Problems of disease outbreaks in coconut trees were raised by farmers from Kerala while others raised the issues faced by farmer producer companies which were set up before 2020. Sanjay Patil from Goa spoke of promoting natural farming as a means to prevent farmer suicides. "Inorganic farmers should shift to organic while organic farmers should move to natural farming," he said.

The agricultural congress will conclude on Friday.