

This farmer has a seed bank at home

Decades ago millets formed an important part of the diet of the people of the region. They not only provided nutrition but also served multiple purposes like fodder, fuel etc. With the introduction of commercial crops the people who were farmers began to grow millets.

"I remember by childhood when we depended only on millets for our meals," recalls Ishwarappa Bhatkar of Hale Yandalli village of Halebidu taluk in Shivamogga district. Like other farmers, he too took to growing commercial crops. Over time there was a drought on a few of his irrigated lands. But last year, he went to a fair and bought an organic rice. There he was exposed to packages of traditional crop and organic farming methods.

M. Jayaraman, a farmer from the Dharwad region was the centre of attraction at the fair, where he exhibited more than 100 varieties of beans and



many types of vegetables of the region, inspired by Jayaraman's efforts in crop diversification, he decided to grow traditional crops. Ishwarappa Bhatkar has set up a millet seed bank in his home. This is the first millet seed bank set up by an individual farmer in the state. This bank has 25 varieties of dwarf sorghum, 10 varieties of finger millet, 10 varieties of foxtail millet, five varieties of little millet and more than a dozen varieties of kodo millet, proso millet and pearl millet.

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