

Krishimela 2019

Celebrating Science with Farmers

The state agricultural universities (SAU) are organizing on a regular basis. The ICAR JSS Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) organizes a similar event every year, which is unique in many ways.

In a bid to promote all-round rural development by means of nurturing folk art and traditional institutions such as annual fairs, cultural festivals and music concerts, the Suttur Sri Mutt has been organizing annual *Jathra Mahothsava* to pay tributes to *Adi Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeshwara Bhagavatpadaru* (The Founder Pontiff of the Sri Mutt) at Suttur - a village 30 kilometers from Mysuru city.

JSS Mahavidyapeetha (JSS MVP), Mysuru, is a charitable institution (NGO) founded by the Sri Mutt. JSS MVP is striving to provide quality education to all, as it believes that education is fundamental to societal development. JSS MVP undertakes various projects and programmes in its pursuit of promoting education, health, agriculture and rural development; organizing exhibition and fairs, symposia, seminar, workshops and conferences is an integral, cross-cutting activity in rural and semi-urban areas.

ICAR JSS KVK is established by the JSS MVP during 1994. The KVK joins its host institution, JSS MVP, in the annual fair by way of organizing a large scale *Krishimela* every year, normally during the months of January - February. Apart from distinguished religious leaders many agricultural scientists, farmers, farmwomen, rural youth, political leaders, social reformers and noted academicians partake in the *Jathra*. For the KVK, it is an event organized to sensitize farmers on frontier technologies and for creating a marketplace for various stakeholders to come together and exchange information and products. It has become a very special event for farmers of the region.

The six-day event, an integral part of the *Jathra*, includes live exhibition of crops and technologies, seminars on issues of contemporary relevance in agriculture sector, including thematic exhibitions, flower shows, agri/horticultural exhibition, cattle fair, display and sale of agricultural inputs, farm implements and equipments etc. Farmers with distinct achievements are also honoured on the occasion.

The *Krishimela* was organized this year from **1 to 6 February 2019**. The *Mela* was laid out on three acres of area, including one acre of live-crop demonstration plot, one-acre Integrated Farming System (IFS) model and the agri-expo.

The *Krishimela* had the following components:

1. **One-Acre IFS Model:** The KVK has developed an IFS model over the last 10 years. The objective of the model is to demonstrate that the small and marginal farmers can grow almost everything on **one acre** to meet their annual household requirement, except salt. The model included 108 different crops and 4 allied enterprises this year.

The seasonal crops included cereals, including the exotic super foods, chia, quinoa and Teff -grown for the first time and the Indian super foods – minor millets (5 species), pulses, oilseeds, commercial crops, vegetables, medicinal plants as well as fodder crops. The perennials included silver oak, casurina and teak along the fence as source of timber; mango, sapota, banana, pomegranate, lime as sources of fruits, as also drumstick and coconut trees. In addition, the model included subsidiary enterprises such as small-scale dairy, vermicomposting and azolla units and a farm pond with fish.

2. **Horticulture crop cafeteria:** Various types of vegetables, fruits and flowers were grown on another one-acre land. The crop diversity included 60 different horticultural crops, including the different native vegetables and the exotic vegetables like lettuce, pakchoy, Chinese cabbage etc. The new addition this year was a demonstration block of GI crops of Mysuru viz., *Nanjangud Rasabale* (banana), *Mysuru Mallige* (Jasmine), *Eranagere Badane* (brinjal) and *Mysuru Chigurele* (beetle vine).
3. **Indigenous livestock breeds:** As many as 20 farmers from Mysuru, Chamarajanagar and Mandya districts brought cows, bulls, sheep and goats for display. The livestock show included cattle breeds viz., *Devani*, *Sahiwal*, *Hallikar* and *Gir*, *Jalwadi*, *Sirohi* and *Jamnapari* goat breeds, *Bandur* sheep as also the ornamental fish species.

How is this *Krishimela* different from the ones organized by SAUs?

The *Krishimela* in Suttur gets richer with religious, cultural, social and educational dimensions added by various organizations, including JSS group of institutions.

The scale of Suttur *Krishimela* may be small in comparison with the SAUs but boasts of crop and technology diversity, diversity of audience (farmers-students-agri enthusiasts from various walks of life including R & D as well religious institutions). While the SAUs have access to resources including financial and human resources, the KVK manages to put up an enormous show with a mere 10 staff and a budget less than Rs. 10 lakh.

The *Krishimela* in Suttur is organized 'outside' the normal agricultural seasons. For instance, the UAS, Dharwad organizes its *Krishimela* during Kharif whereas the UAS Bengaluru organizes during Rabi. The preparations for Suttur *Krishimela* start in the middle of winter (Sept. –Oct.) and culminate at the beginning of summer (Jan-Feb).

This duration poses enormous challenges to grow over 160 crops, live, and synchronization of fruits, vegetables to coincide with the 6 days of *Krishimela*, which is all the more challenging.

While the SAUs focus on demonstrating their experimental plots, the emphasis of the KVK in Suttur is to present an enormous diversity of crops and varieties. No other *Krishimela* can boast of as many crops as 160 in a singular event.

The KVK, being hosted by an NGO, has the advantage attracting and displaying technologies and products of public as well as private agencies whereas the SAUs concentrate largely on their own technologies.

4. **Agri Expo:** As many as 124 stalls were set up and were occupied by 86 different institutions and individuals. The Agri-Exhibition had display of an array of seeds, fertilizers, pest and disease management technologies and inputs, products and market information related to various crops, specimens and models. UAS, Bengaluru, development departments such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, fishery, sericulture, *Zilla Panchayat*, private agencies and SHGs had put up stalls to promote their respective products and services. The *Mela* included exclusive display and sale of minor millets through 20 stalls and a cooking competition where millet recipes were prepared, on the spot.
5. **Agri Seminar:** A seminar was organized on the main dais on the topic, “Doubling Farmers Income – Opportunities and Challenges’ in which four selected farmers from four different districts of Karnataka shared their experiences, while Director, ICAR ATARI (Zone XI) emphasized the significance of science in farmers’ successes.

The was an occasion that served many purposes – introducing new crops, varieties, technologies and agro products for farmers, ‘learning by doing’ for the staff of KVK, unfolding crop and biodiversity before the children, inducing interest in farming among urbanites and offering a platform for the people’s representatives and religious leaders to express their concerns and interest in farming and farmers. By this way, the KVK is building its visibility across the district and beyond. The *Mela* inspires farmers and induces confidence among them in successful and sustainable farming.

The farmers visiting sought for seeds, inputs and more information regarding various crops and received guidance from the KVK technical staff. About **three lakh** visitors witnessed the *Krishimela* and appreciated the diversity of crops, technologies, agencies and events. Thousands of students obtained practical knowledge, especially regarding many unseen and unheard-of crops. The one-acre IFS model was particularly appreciated by many visitors and the entire *Krishimela* received excellent media attention. The crops, flowers and the ‘Selfie garden’ turned out to be the special attractions to many visitors which witnessed thousands of selfie photos.