

Press Release

MSSRF Organises Awareness Meeting for Women Farmers in Dhanora on International Day of Rural Women

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Dhanora, Gadchiroli: On the occasion of the International Day of Rural Women, the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) organised an awareness meeting in Dhanora, Gadchiroli, on Thursday to inform women about the Women Farmer Certificate (WFC) and its significance in recognising women's contributions to agriculture and strengthening their access to benefits and government schemes.

The WFC is being issued under the newly passed Women Farmers' Empowerment Act. As of Thursday, Maharashtra had received over 50 lakh applications, and more than 3.43 lakh certificates had been issued. Gadchiroli had received over 90,000 applications, and more than 2,195 certificates had been issued.

Dr. R. V. Bhavani, Senior Fellow at MSSRF, said, "We need many more women to come forward and apply, and we need many more women to get the certificate. Awareness initiatives such as these can help women understand the importance of the Women Farmer Certificate and the opportunities it can unlock. We will continue organising such meetings."

The event was graced by Priti Hiralkar, District Superintendent Agriculture Officer; Laxman Sarovade, Taluka Agriculture Officer; Swapnil Ghirde, Head of the Science and Technology Resource Centre (STRC), Gondwana University; Rasika Margaye, Manager, Community Managed Resource Centre (MAVIM); Dr. Kishor Zade, Head of KVK, Gadchiroli; and other officials from the Agriculture Department, MAVIM and UMED.

MSSRF's Programme Coordinator in Gadchiroli, Mahesh Maske, and Project Associate Darshita Tumane, Communications Lead Jyoti Shelar were also present. The attendees interacted with participants and highlighted the importance of recognising women's central role in agriculture and rural livelihoods. The meeting also focused on addressing myths and misinterpretations surrounding the Women Farmer Certificate.

"The government has now opened the Gopinath Munde Shetkari Apghat Suraksha Sanugrah Anudan Yojana to women holding this certificate, and many more such benefits are expected to follow," said Priti Hiralkar, District Superintendent Agriculture Officer, urging more women in Gadchiroli to apply for the certificate.

The Women Farmers' Empowerment Act came into force in July, and the issuance of WFCs began on October 2. The certificate serves as official recognition of a woman's identity as a farmer, irrespective of land ownership.

Importantly, the Act broadens the definition of a farmer to include anyone engaged in crop cultivation, agriculture labour, animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries, agroforestry, vermiculture, mushroom cultivation and primary processing, regardless of whether one has land. MSSRF has recently started an initiative for women farmers' Empowerment in Dhanora, Gadchiroli.

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