

Attappady makes the most of millet

7 value-added products made of the crop, reintroduced in the region last year

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Hardly a year after reintroducing millet farming among tribespeople in Attappady, the Agriculture Department is launching seven value-added products using surplus stock from the community to retail across the State. The products, including a finger millet-based energy drink and a little millet-based 'puttu' flour, would be launched at Agali on Saturday in the presence of Ministers A.K. Balan and V.S. Sunil Kumar.

Department officials hope they can bring out more value-added products during the next harvest in September, in which they expect a yield of 50 tonnes. Now, millet is cultivated in 485 ha with the involvement of 40 tribal hamlets.

How it started

"We have regained our millet cultivation tradition,"



Ragi being harvested at Moolakomb in Attappady.

said tribal village chieftain Ponnann of Thekkuvatta in Pudur grama panchayat. Though he has five acres of land, Ponnann had not cultivated millet for years because of adverse climate, poor irrigation, and lack of governmental patronage.

"During a visit to Attappady last year, Mr. Sunil Kumar persuaded me to return to millet cultivation, saying

that it was the only solution to the declining cereal diversity of the region. The yield was comparatively good during the first harvest," said Ponnann.

The Millet Village Project was initiated by the Agriculture Department last year to resolve the region's nutrition-related concerns and ensure a steady supply to buyers. It is now

preparing for the third phase of cultivation.

"The yield was comparatively less in the first season because of drought. The second season had no such risks.

The third phase will be based on the feedback from the first two attempts," said B. Suresh, special officer of the project.

After distributing the harvest among the tribal families, numbering 905, the department will process the surplus millets to market across the State. The benefits will go back to the tribespeople.

"We will ensure a Statewide network retailing tribal food items from Attappady. There is a strong demand among the public for millets," said Mr. Suresh.

Officials said the project had helped revive some of the rare millet varieties which had disappeared from the tribal menu.