Now, a farmers’ seed company in Navalgund

Girish Pattanashetti

HUBBALLI, JULY 13, 2020 01:34 IST
UPDATED: JULY 13, 2020 01:34 IST

Karnataka

Kalmeshwara FPCL will be a certified seed producer in a first of its kind initiative in the State

Often we see farmers doubling up as seed growers for companies which in turn sell the seeds back to the farmers. For the first time in Karnataka, farmers of Navalgund in Dharwad district have come together to form a company which has now taken the first step towards mass seed production.

The story is of Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) from Navalgund, which has now initiated mass seed production by taking up seed cultivation across 50 acres, with the help of its member farmers. To facilitate the same, it has now taken the shape of Kalmeshwara Farmer Producer Company Ltd., the first FPO in Karnataka to become a Certified Seed Producer. In this experiment, the FPO is being supported by Hubballi-based Deshpande Foundation and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and with technical support and basic quality seed supply from the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dharwad.
“This is an initiative to produce good quality seeds by farmers to supply other farmers. It will also facilitate seed growers to earn more and to meet the quality seed demand even to unreached areas,” Chandrashekaraswamy M.T., Programme Manager, Deshpande Foundation told The Hindu. Unlike before, when the farmers used to store best seeds for the next sowing, today they are dependent on private seed companies and farm universities for seeds, which is not a good for the sector.

Recently, at a meeting held at UAS-Dharwad, Special Officer (Seeds) of UAS-D J.S. Hilli, Seed Production Officer Vijayakumar, Deputy Director (Seed Certification) Laxmanamurthy of KSSOCA, District Development Manager of NABARD Sheela Bandarkar, Agriculture Initiatives Director Innus Khan, and others discussed the strategic planning on seed production under the initiative. “In the pilot, green gram (variety DGGV-2) is being grown for seed production on 50 acres. Through the initiative we want to make farmers self-dependent in terms of quality seeds,” Mr. Chandrashekaraswamy said.

The Kalmeshwara FPCL has 1,034 shareholders. After purchasing certified seed from UAS Dharwad, the same was been to farmers for seed production and sowing was completed. The plan is to produce around 200 quintals of green gram seeds in the first attempt.

As per the present arrangement, scientists from UAS-D and officials of the Karnataka State Seed and Organic Certification Agency (KSSOCA) will visit the fields three to four times for assistance and guidance. Subsequently, quality testing will be done.

“Long back we used to produce seeds on our own. But gradually it stopped. Now, through our own company, we are set to produce seeds for ourselves,” 60-year-old farmer Nagappa Yavagal, who is also director of KFPCL, told The Hindu.

Initially, 17 farmers have been given foundation and breeder seeds for cultivation. Foundation seeds were sown on 30 acres and breeder seeds on 20. Manjunath Yankappa Dibbad, 53, has been getting seeds and fertilisers through the Kalmeshwara FPO for three years and is one of the shareholders. “This is the first time that I have taken up seed production which will take around 100 days. It’s our company and we are hopeful of a better price,” he said.