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## **ANTHROPOLOGY SNIPPET-372**



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## Tribal women farmers train to be 'nutrition entrepreneurs' to contribute to healthier community diets



The hands that farm the fields and cook the family meals are now taking on bigger ventures by running small businesses that contribute to healthier community diets. To take on the role of 'nutrition entrepreneurs' tribal women farmers in Telangana, India, were trained to procure local farm produce, prepare nutritious ready-to-cook/eat products, finance their venture, maintain accounts, supply their products to childcare centers (*anganwadis*) and market the rest through a co-operative.

Brimming with a newfound confidence, the women farmers say they now know how to run their own businesses. “In addition to learning some nutritious recipes, I have learnt about quality control, food safety management systems and FSSAI certification, book keeping, business planning and how to market what I make,” says Rukum Bai, a farmer from Utnoor who was part of the group that learned to process pigeonpea *dal*, prepare groundnut bar (*chikki*) and a ‘Nutri-mix’ comprising of sorghum, millets and pulses. In this region, farmers grow pigeonpea, sorghum and groundnut intercropped with cotton.

The training was inaugurated by Dr Christina Z Chongthu, IAS, Commissioner of Tribal Welfare and Managing Director, Tribal Cooperative Finance Corporation Ltd (TRICOR), Government of Telangana. She briefed the participants of the support extended by the government to tribal farmers, especially women, and encouraged them to make the units self-sustainable in the long run.

Dr Anthony Whitbread, Research Program Director – Innovation Systems for the Drylands, ICRISAT, said the trainings will usher in a big change as they equip the local farming community to take charge of their produce, process it and market it without depending on external service providers.

This is the first out of 2 trainings to be conducted as part of an initiative to enhance the incomes of tribal farmers by establishing small business enterprises in tribal areas and linking them to markets, said Dr Saikat Datta Mazumdar, COO, NutriPlus Knowledge Program. He said that ICRISAT is a Center of Excellence for Tribal Development, recognized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

During the training, officials from the Tribal Welfare department, TRICOR and Girijan Cooperative Corporation interacted with the participants and explained about the initiative. Under this initiative, Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP)-ICRISAT shall set up and hand-hold eight processing units in Utnoor,

Bhadrachalam and Eturnagaram Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) areas through women-lead Joint Liability Groups (JLGs). Ninety percent of the cost for setting up the processing facility will be met through subsidies i.e. 60% from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 30% by ITDAs and 10% will be borne by the JLGs.

A total of 39 women tribal farmers, who are members of JLGs from ITDA-Utnoor and ITDA-Eturnagaram participated. Training material in Telugu on “Technical and quality manual for the production of nutritious food products-Giri Poshana” was released and distributed to the participants.

AIP organized the 3-day training program on processing, marketing and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) business management from 23-25 September at ICRISAT. The second program, which will train 50 women tribal farmers, will be held at ICRISAT