

Report

Mahatma Education Society's Pillai College of Education and Research organizes a national level seminar on Environmental Re-engineering each year with a mission to develop an environmental conscientiousness among the community and build an arm of active agents of change for a better environment.

For our seminar we each year we support the theme declared by the United Nations. This academic year 2016-17 was our Series 7 and the theme declared by UN and World Health Organization is 'The International Year of Pulses'. Pulses have been part of our diet for generations but it has gained a lot of attention and importance now as it is one of the most versatile of food groups which can help us fight food scarcity that is staring at us in the near future. The International Year of Pulses aims to raise awareness of how pulses are important for food security and the ecology. With this aspect in mind, Pillai College of Education and Research hosted this national seminar on the 22nd of October, 2016.

The seminar began with lighting of the lamp and singing of the prayer song, invoking the blessing of the Almighty. The theme of the seminar was explained its objectives were expressed. The inaugural session was followed by Session 1 on Sub-theme II: Pulses for enhancing Health and Food Security. Our expert for this session was Dr. Shivshankar Timmanpyati, Dietician, Department of Digestive Diseases and Clinical Nutrition, Tata Memorial Hospital. Dr. Shivshankar is a post graduate in Dietics and Food Service Management. He gave the participants a mix of roasted pulses to eat and then helped us fill in a questionnaire pre-session. He then discussed the importance of pulses and also clarified the difference between pulses and legumes. The statistics of pulse production and consumption in various states was also brought out. He also enlightened us about food security and the role pulses can play in mitigating the situation of food security. Dr. Shivshankar then took us on a journey through the various functions that pulses help us with on a regular basis. He opened our eyes regarding many of the myths that we have regarding pulses and its consumption. It was amazing to learn that pulses can help us in weight loss, fight cancers of the digestive system, help control menopausal symptoms, etc. He explained about how to enhance the nutritional value of the pulses by removing some of the anti nutrients present in them by germinating them, fermenting, adding them to flour, etc. Dr. Shivshankar then went on to explain how combining cereals and pulses will enhance the nutritional value by increasing the amount of amino acids. He discussed the various regional preparations and the way pulses are treated in them. There were lot of inquiries regarding the pulses and the way we consume it. He answered all

of them with enthusiasm. He helped us finish the questionnaire once again post session. The session was an eye-opener for all us and we are sure lot of answers would have changed. Our Session 2 on Sub theme – Pulses for Ecological Benefit and Economic Benefit with our guest speaker Dr. Seema Mishra, Director SIES' Indian Institute of Environment Management, Nerul. Her areas of interest include sustainable development, solid waste management, Total Water Management etc.

Dr. Seema Mishra elaborated on the importance of pulses and why the consumption of pulses is reduced. She elaborated on the historical and geographical aspects of pulse production. She spoke on the different types of pulses and the climatic conditions required for the growth of the pulses. She highlighted the ecological benefit of growing pulses as it improves soil fertility, helps in reducing green house gas emissions. Dr. Seema Mishra expressed concern at the reduction in the production and consumptions of pulses in India as compared to other countries, even the undeveloped nations. This she said has various reasons, like the climatic changes, natural and man-made disasters, hoarding of pulses by retailers increasing the prices of the pulses in the market. She highlighted some major schemes developed by the Government of India to improve the production of pulses. She also spoke about various ways in which pulses can be grown to obtain disease resistant pulses, using innovative methods of crop production and distribution. She also spoke of a business model when public-private partnership between farmers and corporate by helping with seed production, farming and distribution. Dr. Seema Mishra also answered queries of the participants regarding the pulse production and export of pulses and the problems faced. This was followed by the lunch break and lunch included sprouts as uncooked salad and also in the cooked form.

Session 3 began after the lunch break with paper presentations. There were total of around 17 papers out of which some were in absentia. The papers that were presented covered a wide range of topics related to Pulses and its deep connection with ecology, economy, our culture, nutrition and health and food security. The participants got to hear about variety of ways in which pulses can and should be an integral part of the diet. There was a lot of take away for the participants at the end of the day.

The concluding session was the valedictory session where the participants gave their views on the seminar, followed by report reading, distribution of certificates and the vote of thanks.