

242cr trees to be planted under Cauvery project

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NEW DELHI: "If economy and ecology doesn't go together, the ecology will go to hell," said Sadhguru of Isha Foundation ahead of launch of a rally under 'Cauvery Calling' - an ongoing campaign to revitalise the Cauvery river in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka through a massive plantation exercise and bringing farmers on board for switching over to agro-forestry.



"Land is in the hands of farmers. Unless you make it a lucrative process for them, there is really no solution," said Sadhguru while noting that he has actually been "officiating a marriage between economy and ecology" through people's support.

During the rally, Sadhguru himself will ride a motorbike along with 25 other riders across the entire length of the river Cauvery. The rally will be flagged off at Talacauvery in Karnataka on September 3 and go all the way to Thiruvavur and culminate in Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu on September 18.

Idea behind the rally is to raise awareness about urgency to revitalise the forest-fed river Cauvery. There will be several largescale public events and meetings at major cities and nearly a thousand of farmer engagement programmes along the way.

This will be followed by action on the ground by supporting farmers to plant 242 crore trees in next 12 years, and thereby touch the lives of over 84 million people in Cauvery Basin in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Underlining that merely planting trees by individuals, institutions or government is not a solution, Sadhguru said, "Not that this has no effect. But, this is not a solution. It's like for cancer you put a bandaid...There is huge population pressure on land. If you just talk about saving the world, saving the rivers, it's not going to work." He, therefore, emphasised on involving farmers and make them part of the solution where farmers can get benefited by earning more and in the process help the ecology of the Cauvery Basin thrive.

The Isha Foundation has, during the ongoing 'Cauvery Calling' campaign, been asking farmers to convert at least one-third of their farmland into agro-forestry, which will not only revitalise the river and groundwater and restore soil health, but will also enhance their income 3-8 times in 5-7 years.

"This is a tried-and-tested model since we have already been working with 69,760 farmers for over a decade now," said Sadhguru.

Full report on www.toi.in

In a month long farmer outreach programme, which was started on July 31, the Foundation has touched 2.7 lakh farmers in over 6,500 villages in Cauvery Basin. Over 46% of those farmers have already signed up for agro-forestry - a practice of growing conventional crops with fruits and timber trees in the same farm. On a question whether the switch to agro-forestry won't affect the farmers' income in initial years, Sadhguru said the Isha Foundation had already worked out a subsidy plan by calculating farmers' existing income and submitted it to the government.

He believes that the government's support in initial years would definitely help farmers switch over to planting high-value trees so that they can benefit economically in next 5-7 years. "The best thing is when problems are staring at our face, solutions are also staring at our face. The question is do we have the wisdom and courage to choose the solution or just go on quarrelling about the problems," said Sadhguru.

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