

Biodiversity, Sustainable Agriculture and Tribal Farmers

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ABSTRACT The importance of biodiversity is being increasingly realized in recent times. This is done more so in the context of sustainable development. Sustainable Development, from a resource use point of view, has two facets – the biological and the socio-cultural. What is argued in this paper is that Sustainable Development is possible only when objective conditions are created for optimum conservation of biological resources and socio-cultural practices in such a process of conservation. To understand this interactive process the case of the Irula, a Scheduled Tribe farming community, of the Nilgiris in Tamilnadu is presented. It is shown through this case study that with the increasing market-pressure the Irula have changed their traditional patterns of cultivating the local cultivators to the commercial crops. The traditional cropping pattern involved a variety crops. The traditional cropping pattern involved a variety of local cultivators which contributed to the gene pool of agricultural crops and now which are almost extinct. This process has also affected the food security of the Irula since most of the extinct local cultivators were basically the staple food-crops.