

India: Maharashtra: Over 400 Women Turn Up For AIKS's First-Ever Women Farmers' State Convention

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A total of 515 delegates participated in the convention, including 443 women and 72 men, from 15 districts across Maharashtra.

New Delhi: The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), Maharashtra, held its first-ever women farmers' state convention, a progressive step for a male-dominated field where few women are still seen in decision-making roles.

The convention was held at the Comrade Godavari Parulekar Hall in Nashik last week. It was an all-women stage, with a five-member presidium. The event was inaugurated by All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) general secretary Mariam Dhawale.

Women farmers turned up in huge numbers. A total of 515 delegates participated, including 443 women and 72 men, from 15 districts. The largest number of women farmers was from the three districts - Thane-Palghar (155), Ahmednagar (109) and Nashik (93).

The convention also comes at a time when farmers up north, in Punjab, are protesting against the Union government over their unmet demands regarding the minimum support price, or MSP, on crops.

Seema Kulkarni of Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch (Makaam) addressed the gathering, while AIKS state council member Kavita Ware placed the 17-point charter of demands. At least 21 women delegates of the AIKS - including women representing allied organisations like the AIDWA, Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU), Students' Federation of India (SFI) and Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) - also made suggestions on the charter of demands.

Notably, CITU vice president Dr D L Karad, CPI(M)'s newly re-elected MLA from Dahanu Vinod Nikole, CITU working women leaders Shubha Shamim and Anandi Avaghade, AIDWA state president Naseema Shaikh, DYFI state secretary Datta Chavan and SFI state president Somnath Nirmal were also present at the convention.

The event concluded with a speech by AIKS president Dr Ashok Dhawale. It was also decided to publish a booklet on the convention to popularise the charter of demands across rural Maharashtra, hold more district-level conventions of women farmers, and take up struggles on the issues highlighted in the charter.

Women make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce in India. However, they usually own small amounts of land and face societal oppression. Maharashtra is one of the main agricultural states in India and also has the highest number of women farmers.

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