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Sadhguru champions fruit cultivation along riverbanks

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AHMEDABAD: On Wednesday morning, the first milestone in the countrywide 'Rally for Rivers' was taking form, when founder of Isha foundation, Sadhguru, was informed that the Andhra Pradesh government, has agreed to encourage fruit cultivation over 50% of their agricultural land.

"This is phenomenal, and the government there will come out with a policy," said Sadhguru. Throughout the campaign, Sadhguru has been stressing the need to improve riparian tree buffer alongside rivers and encouraging farmers to shift to growing fruit trees to not only improve their economic condition but also to improve the country's nutritional standards.

"Only 4 % of our population consume fruits. Our very own tropical fruit varieties are literally missing because nobody grows them. Scholars like Megasthenes and Kautaliya have noted how fruits formed a large part of Indian diet," Sadhguru said.

He added, "Through our campaign, I want my country to return to those times when fruits formed at least 30% of our diets."

For this, the spiritual guru feels that a robust comprehensive national policy should be in place. "I have approached Karnataka, AP and Tamil Nadu governments for at least one acre land in each village to grow five varieties of fruits. Children below 15 years can then be allowed to pluck and eat these fruits within the farm. This will drastically improve nutrition in children," said Sadhguru.

He later added, "Our idea is to form a policy which allows a large number of Farmer Produce Organisations (FPOs) form a board in each state, which will be conglomeration of farmers who will pool in land. Say 1,000 farmers can pool together 10,000 acres to grow fruit trees."

"The policy protects a farmer's ownership of land. The farmers decide what fruits they will grow, and the industry will invest in modern drip irrigation systems, fertilizers and farm inputs and the government encourage larger gestation period of 10 to 12 years for investors interested in this," Sadhguru said. "Within 50km of such cultivation the government should ensure cold storage and other value-added services. Only then will farmers be encouraged to shift to fruit cultivation. I want the industry to invest in our farmers," he added.