

## Appeal for Funds:

### IN SUPPORT OF JEEVAN SAINI AND HIS FAMILY, IN HARYANA

Shetkari Sanghatana always stands with every farmer who has been a victim of misplaced government policies or suffered due to some high-handed governmental action.

Jeevan Saini, of Ratia tehsil in Fatehabad district, Haryana, is an example of how the hand of the administration can come down heavily on a small farmer.

Shetkari Sanghata has initiated a drive among farmers and friends to support the Sainis, and offer them a compensation of Rs 50,000, for the losses and ignominy they have had to suffer.

Jeevan and his father own just about 2 acres of land, and rents another 3-5 acres from others. Last month (May 2019) their life was turned upside down when an NGO lodged a complaint with the state government identifying the half-an-acre plot, that Sainis had rented, which was alleged to be growing the unapproved Bt brinjal. (Bt Brinjal has been approved in Bangladesh since 2013)



May 20, 2019: Shetkari Sanghatana and BKU (Haryana) leaders visit Jeevan Saini at his field, where the brinjal crop was destroyed by the local administration a week ago.



The Sainis with Ajit Narde of Shetkari Sanghatana in Ratia tehsil, Fatehabad district, Haryana

The local administration collected samples from Sainis' field, and got it tested for evidence of GMOs, at the NBPGR in Delhi. The test strangely showed that while the marker and reporter genes were present in the samples, but proved negative for the Cry1Ac protein, the Bt gene that was to have given the plant a defence against the fruit and shoot borer pest.

Brinjal, along with chilli, are the two crops that consume the highest volume of pesticides among vegetables. The pest can cause loss of production ranging from 30-50%, and pesticide is one of the most significant expense for the farmers growing brinjal.

The Sainis were not aware of any GM crops. They had purchased the saplings from a roadside vendor who had promised that the plant would be largely immune to pest attack. They believed its was a new hybrid variety of brinjal, and wanted to try it out.

Following the test result, the administration sent a tractor and JCB to destroy Sainis' crop, burned it and then buried it by digging a 15-feet deep ditch on the same land. The Sainis were neither charged, nor given any piece of paper to indicate anything wrong they have done.

Meanwhile some government officials and anti-GM NGOs blared dire warnings of poison in the brinjal, and harped on the possibility of cancer.

This scare mongering was in complete contrast to the report of the GEAC to the government in 2009, that Bt brinjal was completely safe for human and animal consumption, and that its release in to the environment poses no threat.

Over the past one month, the Sainis have been vilified in the media. The family is scared, yet clueless about the exact nature of their crime if any. They have had to stop incoming calls to their mobile phone, to avoid getting pestered by media.

Shetkari Sanghatana invites all to contribute whatever they deem appropriate to the bank account mentioned below. The money will be handed over at a public programme in Fatehabad, to show solidarity with the Sainis, within the next two months.

The Sanghatana will continue to mobilise support, monetary and moral, for all farmers who are deprived of their basic rights and freedoms, because of misplaced priorities and misguided policies.

Bank details:

Account name: Sheela Sanjay Mendgule  
Bank name: State Bank of India,  
Branch: Jaysingpur, District Kolhapur  
Account No.: 31983122963  
IFSC: SBIN0011136

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Note: Donors may indicate whether they would like their name and contribution to be released to public or they would prefer to remain anonymous.