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Survey: land in Malnad has turned barren owing to ginger cultivation

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Fertile lands in Malnad districts of the State have turned barren owing to the extensive cultivation of ginger and the use of poisonous pesticides and chemical fertilizers, according to a survey conducted by Vriksha laksha Andolana, a non-governmental organisation headed by Anant Hegde Asisara, former chairman of the Western Ghats Task Force.

Addressing presspersons here on Sunday, Mr. Asisara and T.V. Ramachandra, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, said ginger was being cultivated on nearly one lakh acres of land in Kodagu, Hassan, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada and Chikmagalur.

“Several acres have been converted into barren lands owing to the extensive and unscientific use of chemicals and pesticides for the crop,” they said.

Polluted water bodies

Quoting a survey titled ‘Ginger Cultivation in Malnad: Barren Land Formation and Poisoning of Water Resources due to Massive use of Pesticides’, Mr. Hegde said that lakes, wells and streams were polluted following the release of poisonous chemicals into the water bodies.

“Rivers Varada, Kumudvati, Tunga and Bhadra are being polluted because of uncontrolled, ill-advised farming,” the study said.

However, the agricultural or science universities have not studied the effect of intense inorganic farming. Intensive use of pesticide has threatened the floral and fauna in the Western Ghats.

The State Biodiversity Board and the departments of Forest, Environment and Wildlife should act swiftly to save fertile lands of Malnad region, the study said.

IISc study

Another study conducted by Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, on the status of forests in Chikmagalur district, said that encroachment of forest land (22,055.59 hectares) and conversion to agricultural land was the principal cause of degradation of forests.

It said that Tarikere taluk had the highest number of encroachments (26.41 per cent), followed by N.R. Pura (25.3 p.c.), Kadur (15.19 p.c.), Chikmagalur (11.27 p.c.), Mudigere (9.2 p.c.), Koppa (8.17 p.c.), and Sringeri (4.4 p.c.).

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Hegde said that he had urged Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda to hold a meeting with officials to control the extensive use of pesticides for ginger crop.

The crop was being cultivated on nearly one lakh acres of land in six districts

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