



A Tribute to the First Entrepreneur of Hybrid Seed Industry in India **Dr B.R. Barwale**

The Indian Society of Plant Genetic Resources (ISPGR) pays its sincere homage to **Dr Badrinarayan Ramulal Barwale**, on his sudden demise on July 24, 2017 at the age of 86. As the Founder Chairman of Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company Pvt. Ltd (**Mahyco**), he was widely regarded as **Father of Seed Industry in India**. He devoted his life for the upliftment of Indian farmers and was instrumental in literally transforming the face of Indian agriculture during the last six decades. Since the earliest days of Indian independence, this private farmer and entrepreneur led the way in privatizing the development and distribution of high-yielding varieties and hybrid seeds. In the process, he helped India achieve that which is fundamental to freedom - food security.

Dr Barwale was born into a small agricultural family in Hingoli / Jalna (Maharashtra) in 1931. Shortly after his 17th birthday, the region became part of the independent Indian republic, faced with the problem of how to feed its people. At that time, most family farms operated on few acres of land, incomes were small, debts were high, and yields often failed to suffice even for the household that produced them. Dr Barwale founded the Mahyco in 1964 to expand sales and production of his seeds across the country. Mahyco initiated its own research programme in 1966 to test new hybrids suitable for India, the quality of which drew the attention of the government.

While other private enterprises were marketing to wealthier farmers, Dr Barwale hoped to encourage food production and the agricultural industry by targeting



small-scale farmers. He was also extensively involved in training other developing countries' seed growers to build strong private seed industries. It was a joint venture of Monsanto and Mahyco that introduced Bt cotton technology to India.

Dr Barwale received many accolades for his achievements and entrepreneurship, including the prestigious **World Food Prize** (1998), Indian government's **Padma Bhushan** Award (2001), an honorary **Doctorate in Science** from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (2002), and the First **National Award for Bio-tech Product Commercialization** (2003). The latest (November 6, 2016) feather in his cap was honour bestowed upon him by the **Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi**, in recognition of his enormous contributions towards agrobiodiversity and food security. This happened during the **1st International Agrobiodiversity Congress**, an event proudly co-hosted by the ISPGR.



In fact, Dr Barwale had a very close association with the cause of plant genetic resources in general, and ISPGR in particular. This arose from his great friendship with Late Padma Shri Dr Harbhajan Singh, referred to as the Indian Vavilov and Father of PGR in India. Dr Harbhajan had helped in providing seeds of many promising vegetables to Dr Barwale during his early days of establishment. Their close collaboration was very crucial in the future endeavours of Dr Barwale. So much was Dr Barwale's affection for Dr Harbhajan Singh, that he donated to ISPGR (through Mahyco) the corpus fund for instituting the prestigious '**Dr Harbhajan Singh Memorial Award**'. The ISPGR family remains forever indebted to Dr B.R. Barwale his great interest and affection, and pays heartfelt tributes to this great visionary, entrepreneur, agriculturist and philanthropist on his sad demise. May his soul rest in peace.