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EVENT REPORT | SEPTEMBER 2026



SEED AND FOOD FESTIVAL CELEBRATING

Indigenous Seeds,
Traditional Foods and
Community Knowledge

Date:
13 September 2026

Venue:
Manihori Integrated Farm,
Agoratoli, Eastern
Kaziranga Landscape,
Assam

Supported by:
WASSAN
Soil Collective Foundation



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BACKGROUND

The *Seed & Food Festival* was organised on **13 September 2026** at Manihori Integrated Farm, Agoratoli, in the Eastern Kaziranga Landscape of Assam. The festival was conceived as a community-led initiative to celebrate and map indigenous seeds, traditional foods, uncultivated food resources and the rich knowledge systems associated with them.

Across the Eastern Kaziranga Landscape, farming communities; especially Mising and Karbi Community have conserved diverse indigenous seeds, cultivated crops, wild herbs and traditional food practices through generations. These resources are deeply connected to local ecology, nutrition, culture and community identity. However, changing agricultural practices, increasing dependence on external seeds and the gradual erosion of intergenerational knowledge have created challenges for the conservation of local agrobiodiversity and food cultures.

In this context, the festival provided a platform for farmers, community members, researchers and practitioners to come together, share knowledge and recognise the relationship between seeds, food and the landscape.

Rather than being a conventional exhibition, the festival focused on **'learning by doing'**, where knowledge was shared through seed displays, food preparation, storytelling, documentation and collective participation.





OBJECTIVES OF THE FESTIVAL

THE KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE FESTIVAL WERE TO:

- Celebrate and document indigenous and locally adapted seeds maintained by farming communities.
- Explore the diversity of cultivated and uncultivated food resources available in the landscape.
- Highlight the relationship between seed diversity, food diversity, nutrition and cultural knowledge.
- Create opportunities for farmers, women, youth and traditional knowledge holders to share their experiences.
- Encourage discussions on seed conservation, food sovereignty and resilient local food systems.
- Promote greater appreciation of indigenous agricultural practices and their contribution to biodiversity and ecological resilience.



Major Activities and Participation

The festival brought together farmers, community members, researchers and practitioners to collectively explore the food and seed heritage of the Eastern Kaziranga and eastern Karbi Hills landscape.

A significant aspect of the event was the participation of the WASSAN seed team, including members from Odisha, who brought and shared approximately 50 varieties of seeds. These seeds added diversity to the community collection and created opportunities for participants to exchange knowledge about traditional crops, seed conservation and local food systems.





Farmers and community members from Agoratoli village contributed their knowledge and experiences through the cleaning, chopping and cooking, while researchers and practitioners participated in discussions and documentation activities.

THE FESTIVAL INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING MAJOR ACTIVITIES:

a. Indigenous Seed Exhibition and Knowledge Sharing

The seed exhibition provided an opportunity to display and share indigenous and locally maintained seeds. Participants discussed the importance of conserving traditional varieties and the knowledge associated with their cultivation, use and preservation.

The exchange of seeds and experiences highlighted the importance of community-based seed conservation and the role of farmers as custodians of agricultural biodiversity.

b. Food Mapping and Traditional Food Preparation

The festival also focused on identifying and documenting locally available cultivated and uncultivated food resources, including herbs, vegetables and other plants used by communities.



PREPARED RECIPES



1. **Purang Aping** - is a traditionally cooked rice of the Mising community of Assam. It is prepared by boiling *bora saul* or *joha saul* a type of glutinous or sticky rice wrapped in Tora Paat – (*Alpinia nigra* leaf).
2. **Jobora Oying** – *eg-adin* (Pork) with many wild edible herbs
3. **Pitang Oying** - a traditional chicken and rice flour (especially sticky and aromatic rices) curry from Mising community.
4. **Posola Oying** – combining tender banana (kol) stem (especially ‘Bhim kol’ and a light flavour curry/soup (Oying).
5. **Jobora** – a boiled recipe with mix wild edible herbs
6. **Pered/peret Oying** – *eg-adin* (pork) with Mati (Black lentils) Daal
7. **Porok Oying/Jhaal** – a rustic, highly comforting boiled chicken soup infused with aromatic, medicinal wild herbs
8. **No:gin Apong** – is a traditional whitish-to-yellowish rice beer
9. **Po:ro Apong** – is a traditional dark-colored fermented rice beer



All recipes belong to
mising community.



Participants engaged in food preparation, cooking and tasting activities. These interactions helped demonstrate the connection between seeds, plants, food and cultural practices. Traditional foods were presented not merely as items for consumption but as expressions of local ecological knowledge, community history and cultural identity.

c. Documentation of Food and Seed Heritage

Mapping, documentation and informal conversations formed an important part of the festival. Participants shared information about indigenous seeds, traditional foods, their local names, uses and cultural significance.

The process created opportunities for intergenerational learning and encouraged conversations around the need to preserve knowledge that is often transmitted orally within families and communities.



d. Community Interaction and Knowledge Exchange

The festival created a space for farmers, community members, researchers and practitioners to interact and learn from one another. Discussions focused on the importance of indigenous seeds, traditional food systems, biodiversity conservation and the need to strengthen community-led approaches to sustaining local agricultural and ecological systems.



KEY LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

- The festival demonstrated that seeds and food are closely connected to the ecological, cultural and social life of a landscape.
- The exchange of seeds and knowledge reinforced the importance of maintaining locally adapted crop varieties and strengthening community-based seed conservation initiatives. The participation of different organisations and communities also created opportunities for future collaboration and learning.
- The festival helped draw attention to the diversity of cultivated and uncultivated food resources that exist within local landscapes and the importance of documenting them before associated knowledge is lost.
- One of the key learnings from the event was that indigenous seeds and traditional foods are not merely agricultural resources; they are living repositories of ecological knowledge, nutrition, culture and community identity. The festival also highlighted the importance of involving women, farmers, youth and traditional knowledge holders in efforts to conserve food and seed heritage.



WAY FORWARD

The Seed & Food Festival provided a foundation for future community-led initiatives on seed conservation, food systems and agroecology in the Eastern Kaziranga Landscape. As a follow-up to the event, efforts can be undertaken to compile the information collected on indigenous seeds, uncultivated herbs and traditional food resources. This documentation can contribute to developing a preliminary community inventory of local agrobiodiversity and food heritage.

The information and experiences gathered during the festival may also be used to develop a media article and other knowledge materials highlighting the relationship between indigenous food systems, biodiversity and landscape resilience.

Future initiatives at Manihori Integrated Farm can build on this experience by creating spaces for continued seed exchange, food documentation, intergenerational learning and community-based conservation.





SCHEDULE



1st Seed and Food Festival

"A Celebration of Agroecological heritage and Community Resilience"



13th of September, 2026

**Venue: Manihori
Integrated Farm, Agoratoli
Kaziranga**

Highlights of the Event

**Seed and Food Exhibitions | Celebration of Biodiversity
Heritage | Collective Cooking | Knowledge Circle**



1st Seed and Food Festival
"A Celebration of Agroecological heritage and Community Resilience"

Manihori Integrated Farm Showcase



Details Schedule of the Day:

- 9:00 – 9:20 AM Arrival and Gathering at Manihori
- 9:20 – 9:40 AM Opening Remarks and Welcome note -- Monuhar Pegu – Co-founder of Manihori Integrated Farm & WASSAN, Deepankar Gohain – Founder of Soil Collective Foundation
- 10:30 – 10:40 AM Special Address on Gastronomy:- Surajit Borpatra Gohain – Co-Founder of Soil Collective Foundation, Pharmacist, Community Worker

Parallel Sessions

- 9:40 – 11:30 AM Recipes mapping | Group Discussion | Learning Circle | wild herbs cleaning and chopping:- Muguri Kardong, Tarawati Patgiri and Sarumai Kutum – Expert in wild herbs and its use
- 10:00 – 12:00 PM Purang Apin (Tupula Bhaat):- Nuni Pegu – Traditional food chef
- 10:00 – 12:00 PM Local Chicken with wild herbs soup:- Torawati Patgiri – Traditional food chef
- 10:00 – 1:30 PM Mati Daal with Pork, Fish, Rice etc:- Horuti Pegu, Putali Pegu, Nuni Pegu – Traditional Chef
- 11:30 – 12:00 PM 1st round of Apong with Green veg:- Rumi Regon Doley, Moromi Kutum,
- 12:00 – 12:30 PM Special Address on Traditional Food System and its importance:- Gulapi Pegu, Muguri Kardong – through local folk song
- 1:00 – 1:30 PM 2nd Round Apong with Jaal (Soup):- Pramila Pegu, Rekha Pegu, Rekha Kutum – Women group
- 2:00 – 3:00 PM Food:- Collectively
- 3:00 – 3:10 PM Vote of Thanks and group picture:- Monuhar Pegu, Chandan Kutum
- 3:15 PM – Onward Crop Diversity Block (Paddy) visit:- Hemanta Pegu – Founder of Manihori Integrated Farm



Conclusion

The Seed & Food Festival at Manihori Integrated Farm was an effort to bring attention to the rich food and seed heritage of the Eastern Kaziranga Landscape. Through collective participation, seed exchange, food preparation, mapping and knowledge sharing, the festival created a space to celebrate the diversity of local food systems and the communities that sustain them.

The event reaffirmed the importance of recognising indigenous knowledge and agricultural practices as essential components of biodiversity conservation, food sovereignty and ecological resilience. The festival was not simply a celebration of seeds and food; it was a celebration of the living knowledge, relationships and cultural practices that sustain communities and landscapes.

