

WOONG BIHAR, JHARKHAND, UP TO BOOST OUTPUT

Govt Nudges 3 States to Produce Pulses, Offers MSP with no Bar

Move aimed at raising pulses cultivation, reducing import dependence

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New Delhi: The Centre is working systematically with farmers in Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh for the first time to sow kharif pulses such as tur, urad and moong even before sowing for the season starts, with a promise to procure an unlimited quantity of their produce at the minimum support price (MSP). The objective is to increase the cultivation of pulses and reduce import dependence, said a senior official.

However, the government has not set a production target, according to the official, who did not wish to be identified.

In 2022-23, Uttar Pradesh produced about 2.85 million tonnes of pulses, Jharkhand produced 761,000 tonnes and Bihar produced 450,000 tonnes, according to agriculture and farmers welfare ministry data. Until now, the Centre has not been procuring pulses from these states, said the official.

The consumer affairs ministry,

which manages the prices of pulses, has appointed the National Co-operative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd. (NCCF) as the chief nodal agency for the programme.

"We are also working with the Ministry of Cooperation to utilise their network of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) for this," the official said.

PACS are the grassroots level arms of the short-term co-operative credit structure, which counts individual farmers, artisans and members of other weaker sections of society as shareholders. The government has been working on expanding the ambit of these credit societies.

Higher prices of several pulses have been a cause of concern for the government for several months despite several measures to keep prices under check. Though the inflation in pulses declined marginally to 17.71% in March from 18.9% in February, tur saw a price rise of 33.54% due to lower production.

The NCCF, apart from procuring pulses, will distribute high quality pulses seeds to farmers to encoura-

ge them to sow legumes.

The Centre has already started a "whisper campaign" on the ground level in these states, according to people in the know. However, after the general election results are announced in June, it will launch full-scale campaigns to persuade farmers to come onboard.

The consumer affairs ministry is also working with the state governments in order to make the effort more effective.

Last year the government had placed three varieties of pulses – tur, urad and masoor (lentils) – under zero-duty import duty regime till March 2024, and the deadline was later extended till March 2025. In early December 2023, the Centre also allowed duty-free imports of yellow peas until March 2024, and later extended it till April, as part of efforts to cool the prices of pulses.

India's total output of pulses in the 2022-23 crop year was 26.05 million tonnes. However, consumption is estimated at about 28 million tonnes annually and is growing steadily with the increase in purchasing po-