

TO KEEP PULSES INFLATION UNDER CONTROL...

Duty-Free Imports of Yellow Peas may be Allowed Beyond Apr

Move comes as supply of chana is expected to be low, says an official

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New Delhi: India may allow duty-free imports of yellow peas, which are used in place of chana, beyond April to keep the pulses inflation under control as the yield of chana is expected to be low on account of a decline in acreage and lower productivity, said an official.

"Yellow pea imports are expected to help offset the anticipated shortfall in the supply of chana as the domestic crop is projected to be lower than that last year on drop in acreage and weather impacting the yields," said the official, who did not wish to be identified.

In early December 2023, the Centre 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 which had kept food inflation high for the past few months.

The Wholesale Price Index inflation in pulses was 18.48% in February, up from 16.06% in January. With the general election scheduled for April-May, the government has made several attempts to curb price rise in food items such as export restrictions, stock limits, offloading its own stocks and removal of import duties.

"The area under chana is less this year and the yield in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Karnataka is expected to be 10-12% lower this year," said Suresh Agrawal, president, All India Dal Mills Association.

The sown area under chana de-



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clined more than 5% year-on-year during the rabi season 2023-24, according to agriculture ministry data. Erratic rainfall and concerns over moisture are also expected to reduce the overall yield.

India is expected to import about a million tonnes of yellow peas by March 31 in this financial year, which could be the highest in recent times, according to government estimates.

India largely imports yellow peas from Canada and Russia.

A large consumer and grower of pulses, India meets a portion of its consumption needs through imports. The country primarily consumes chana, masur, urad, Kabuli chana and tur.

Food inflation has been ruling high for several months, with pulses being a major factor. Erratic monsoon rains in 2023 on account of EL Nino put pressure on farm output. The statistics ministry estimates farm output growth of 1.8% for this fiscal, down from 4% in 2022-23.