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Maha to begin procurement of pulses, soybean at MSP from October 16

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WITH THE PRICES of soybean and pulses ruling below minimum support prices (MSP), procurement of these commodities at MSP under the Centre's price support scheme (PSS) will begin from October 16 in Maharashtra by NAFED.

Sadabhau Khot, Maharashtra's minister of state for agriculture, said that the government has begun registration of farmers for the PSS, which is being done by NAFED from October 3. Around 83 centres have been established across the state and farmers are being issued tokens with likely dates on which they need to bring their produce to the mandis, he said.

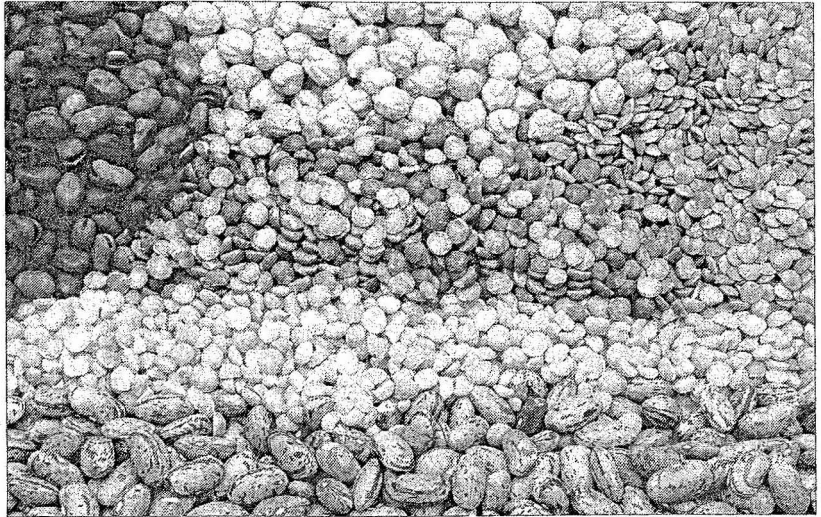
Khot said that the state government has been given permission for the purchase of 10 lakh quintal of soybean, 3.70 lakh quintal of urad and 3,47,500 quintal of moong. The MSP of soybean is ₹3,050 per quintal, urad ₹7,400 per quintal and moong ₹5,575 per quintal.

Usually in the festive season, prices of pulses increase. But this year, the trend has reversed and prices of the Kharif crops, mainly pulses, oilseeds, and cereals are seen below the MSP. Prices of green gram, black gram, and soybean prices are the most affected. The huge carryover stock, lack of demand and the hangover of demonetisation are considered to be the main reasons for the fall in prices.

NAFED has already begun procurement of pulses mainly green gram from Karnataka and Telangana. The agency is expected to start procurement in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan at the earliest.

The government of Maharashtra had sent its top officials to the Centre for the procurement of these commodities.

Hukumchand Kalantry, president, Latur Dal Millers Association and a major pulse trader based out of Latur— a key pulse grow-



ing region in the state— had said that the recent rains had arrived when these pulses were being harvested, causing damage. "Most states including Rajasthan have begun harvesting moong and urad at the same time, causing a glut in the market. Moreover, the rains caused damage because of which farmers cannot hold onto his crop," he said.

Currently, the crop harvest season has begun in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Moong is selling at a minimum rate of ₹3,900 per quintal and a maximum of ₹5,200 per quintal while urad is selling at a minimum of ₹4,200 per quintal and a maximum of ₹4,300 per quintal. The MSP of moong is at ₹5,575 per quintal and MSP of urad is at ₹5,450 per quintal.

A senior official from the agriculture department in Maharashtra said that the government has set parameters of 12% moisture content for the procurement of these pulses. At present, the produce being brought to the market has moisture content levels of 14-16%, resulting in lower rates.

Bimal Kothari, vice chairman, India Pulses and Grains Association (IPGA), said that the government's move will encourage farmers to grow more pulses as has been done in the case of rice and wheat.

The pulses output could drop to 87.1 lakh tonne from the record 94.2 lakh tonne, mainly due to lower prices and patchy monsoon rains and good production. Among different oilseeds, the output of soybeans is set for a dip of around 11.5% compared to last year. The government has also removed export restrictions on the export of pulses.

Pravin Dongre, chairman, IPGA, had earlier said that the removal of export restrictions on urad, tur and moong is a welcome step that has the potential of benefiting the entire value chain beginning with the farmer. "It will correct price distortions, offer support to pulses selling below MSP and revitalise the milling industry. We believe this step will improve the returns to farmers and potentially open up greater investments in the sector," he had said.