

Project to boost Kutch kesar's brand value

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Rajkot: Efforts have picked up to make Kutch kesar as popular as Gir kesar and make it a brand the world over in the next few years. The government of India has chosen Kutch as a cluster for development of this variety of mango fruit under its 'Horticulture Cluster Development Programme' (HCDP). The programme aims at giving a boost to horticulture across the country.

Kutch has the potential to attract Rs 200 crore investment under HCDP and this project will help establish Kutch kesar as a brand and boost the income of farmers. Work under the project started this year.

Abhilaksh Likhi, additional secretary of ministry of agriculture and farmers' welfare, visited the mango clusters in Mandvi taluka last week. This programme will address challenges of the entire value chain like pre-production, production, post-harvest management, logistics, marketing and branding.

Deputy director of horticulture in Kutch, M S Parsaniya, said: "We expect that this programme will attract investment of around Rs 200 crore in next couple of years and Rs 50 crore of that will come from the government."

Under this project, an irradiation facility will also

BENEFITS OF SCHEME

- Kutch kesar will be promoted as a brand
- Value addition will be done for variety
- Export market will be developed
- ₹200 crore investment to flow in
- There will be irradiation plant, cold storage, pack house



- Farmers will be trained in good agri practice

come up in Kutch. Farmers' produce organisation, co-operative society, marketing yard or any private party can start this facility. Now, the export of Kutch kesar is negligible but this facility will boost the export of this variety.

Efforts are also being made to start an air cargo facility in Kutch so that direct export of this mango from Kutch can happen. There is also a proposal to build a pack house and a cold room. "We aim to increase exports of Kutch kesar by 25 per cent in the next couple of years and we will create a cluster specific brand." Parsaniya said.

The farmers will also be provided training in good agricultural practice so that they get good quality fruits. The taste of Kutch kesar is slightly different from that of Gir kesar. Processing units to make pulp will come up and value addition will give more income to the farmers. Kesar mango is grown in 10,500 hectares in Kutch and the annual production is around 70,000 tonne. The-

re are around 5,000 farmers engaged in mango cultivation in Kutch.

Mehul Premjiyani, a farmer of Desalpar Vandhai village, 25 km from Bhuj, said: "This project will boost our income and establish our mango as a brand. Kutch kesar is very sweet in taste and this variety will be promoted among mango lovers. The value addition of mango and export will boost our income."

The ministry of agriculture and farmers' welfare has identified 55 horticulture clusters, of which 12 have been selected for the pilot launch of the HCDP. These 12 clusters include Shopian (J&K) and Kinnaur (Himachal Pradesh) for apple; Lucknow (UP) and Mahbubnagar (Telangana) for mango; Anantapur (Andhra) and Theni (TN) for banana; Nashik (Maharashtra) for grape; Siphahijala (Tripura) for pineapple; Solapur (Maharashtra) and Chitradurga (Karnataka) for pomegranate; and West Jaintia Hills (Meghalaya) for turmeric.