"Importance of Pulses"

Rajendra Raval*

*Assistant Director, Directors of food and civil supplies, Gandhinagar, Gujarat (India)

The United Nations have declared 2016 as the Year of Pulses.

Ironically, India – one of the major consumers of pulses is facing its biggest supply crunch and pricing crisis where pulses are concerned.

Prices of dals (pulses) have shot through the roof and the common man is struggling to put a square meal on the table.

India is likely to import about 5 million tonnes of pulses during April-December period of this fiscal, largely by private traders, to boost domestic supply and cool retail prices that have reached up to Rs 200 per kg.

India, the world’s largest producer of pulses, had imported about 4.5 million tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year. The country had imported 5.78 million tonnes in the entire 2015-16 fiscal to meet domestic demand.

Imports are happening. About 1.2-1.3 million tonnes of pulses have already been imported. Moreover, private traders have contracted for 3 million tonnes of pulses to be shipped between September and December.

Pravin Dongre, India Pulses and Grains Association (IPGA) Chairman

**Landed prices for imported pulses:**

- Rs 32-33 per kg for yellow peas
- Rs 92-93 for tur dal
- Rs 105-106 for urad dal
- Rs 65 for masoor
- Rs 58-60 for moong

*Pravin Dongre, India Pulses and Grains Association (IPGA) Chairman to PTI*

Importers are selling it to millers and wholesalers at very less margins, he said. On overall imports for this fiscal, Dongre said it would depend on monsoon.

If monsoon is as good as projected, domestic production will increase. Then imports will be less in the last quarter of this fiscal.

Bimal Kothari, IPGA Vice Chairman

Bimal Kothari, Vice Chairman of IPGA said that prices of pulses have gone up in the domestic market due to a fall in production on account of poor and unseasonal rains for two consecutive crop years.

Pulses production fell to 17.06 million tonnes in the 2015-16 crop year (July-June) from 17.15 million tonnes in the previous year. In 2013-14, output was over 19 million tonnes.

As a result, retail prices of pulses have shot up with Tur and urad dals selling at as high as Rs 180 per kg and Rs 198 per kg, respectively, in the retail markets. Chana dal is being sold at Rs 105 per kg, while moong and masoor at Rs 130 and Rs 110 per kg respectively.

The government recently decided to enhance the buffer stock limit of pulses to 8 lakh tonnes for making market intervention when prices firm up in retail markets. It is also importing pulses to boost domestic supply.

So far, 1.19 lakh tonnes of pulses have been procured from farmers for creating buffer stock and 46,000 tonnes have been contracted for imports.

Absence of rains in June has affected sowing of pulses across the country, with sowing of mung recording the greatest dip. This, the Indian Pulses and Grains Association (IPGA) has said, will not adversely affect kharif harvest which they say will see a bumper crop for all pulses.

Data released from the Union Ministry of Agriculture showed that till June 30, 9.29 lakh hectares (lakh Ha) of farmland in the country had seen sowing of tur, while it was 9.37 lakh Ha on June 30, 2015. Similarly sowing of urad and mung was estimated to have been done over 4.22 lakh Ha and 4.46 lakh Ha respectively.

Last year sowing of urad and mung was over 4.13 lakh Ha and 6.31 lakh Ha. The decrease in area for Mung was the highest with major mung producing states like Maharashtra reporting the biggest dips. Maharashtra, which is one of the largest pulse growing states, has reported the lowest sowing of all pulses. Figures show that till June 30, 0.92 lakh Ha had reported sowing for mung which last year it was 2.1 lakh Ha.