

PROMOTION OF TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AND SEEDS

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The Government has taken several measures for conservation, research, production, value addition and promotion of traditional agricultural produce and indigenous/local crop varieties in the country. These measures include:

- i. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), through the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) and its network of research institutes, undertakes exploration, collection, exchange, characterization, evaluation, conservation and documentation of indigenous germplasm.
- ii. Intellectual Property Rights are granted to traditional and farmers' varieties under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001. As on 15th July, 2026, 5346 farmer's varieties have been registered by PPV&FR Authority belonging to traditionally cultivated varieties and landraces.

National Gene Fund has been established under the PPV&FR Act, 2001, with the aim of promoting conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources, including traditional varieties. It seeks to reward and incentivize farmers and communities engaged in conservation, improvement, and preservation of plant genetic resources through benefit-sharing, awards, and recognition schemes, while also supporting capacity building activities to safeguard agro-biodiversity. So far, 45 Plant Genome Saviour Community Awards, 69 Plant Genome Saviour Farmer Reward and 88 Plant Genome Saviour Farmer Recognition have been conferred to farmer(s)/ farming communities across the country.

- iii. A component namely "Boosting Seed Production of Traditional Varieties" under the Seeds component of the National Food Security & Nutrition Mission (NFSNM) has been introduced, aimed at promoting traditional varieties of crops. Under this intervention, financial assistance is extended for seed distribution, seed production, capacity building, and the creation/development of seed banks for traditional varieties, in accordance with prescribed cost norms.
- iv. To promote the 'Vocal for Local' initiative in the food processing sector, the PM Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme adopts the One District One Product (ODOP) approach, aimed at fostering balanced regional development across all districts of the country for supporting district-specific agricultural and horticultural products, including traditional and indigenous produce. ODOPs have been approved for 726 districts across 35 States/UTs, including traditional and indigenous products e.g. Makhana, Shahi Litchi, Jardalu Mango. The PMFME Scheme provides financial, technical and business support for processing, value addition, packaging, branding and marketing of these products including traditional produce.
- v. Traditional agricultural products possessing unique geographical characteristics are also protected through registration under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and

Protection) Act, 1999, administered by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), thereby strengthening their identity, branding and market value.

- vi. In addition, traditional agricultural products are promoted through commodity-specific Boards and agencies such as the Tea Board, Coffee Board, Spices Board, APEDA and the National Medicinal Plants Board under their respective schemes for quality improvement, branding, value addition, export promotion and market development. Recently, Government has established National Makhana Board for production, processing, value addition, and marketing of makhana.
- vii. Special thrust has been given to traditional millets ("Shree Anna") through the National Food Security and Nutrition Mission, following the observance of the International Year of Millets. Indian Institute of Millets Research (ICAR-IIMR) in Hyderabad, India, serves as the designated Global Centre of Excellence on Millets for promotion of international research and development in millets.
- viii. Under Production Linked Incentive scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI), following the UN's declaration of 2023 as the "International Year of Millets", a dedicated Millet-Base Products (PLISMBP) component was added to incentivize value addition and commercialization of millets.

Government incentivizes and supports research aimed at improving indigenous/local varieties of agricultural produce and seeds. The details and steps taken are as under:

- i. ICAR-IARI is implementing 13 dedicated research projects, supported by ICAR, DBT and DST, for characterization, evaluation and utilization of indigenous germplasm, landraces and wild relatives in crops such as wheat, rice, maize, sesame, lentil, cucumber and tomato. The projects focus on agrobiodiversity, germplasm evaluation, molecular breeding, genomics and genome editing for developing improved, climate-resilient and disease-resistant crop varieties.
- ii. At ICAR-IARI, research on improving the traditional Basmati varieties has led to the development of improved Pusa Basmati rice varieties which accounts for dominant share of India's Basmati exports.
- iii. Two high yielding varieties, namely Pusa Narendra KN1 and Pusa CRD KN2 have been released targeting specific Geographical Indication areas in eastern Uttar Pradesh, promising improved yield and non-lodging trait against the traditional landrace "Kalanamak".
- iv. ICAR-NBPGR documents genetic resources, maintains inventories and brings them into the public domain, facilitating their safe and accelerated use in research and crop improvement. This enables researchers and breeders to access indigenous germplasm for varietal improvement. As on 15th July, over 1 lakh landraces/traditional varieties are conserved in the National Gene Bank.
- v. Under the joint work plan between Alliance Bioversity-CIAT and National Agricultural Research System under the aegis of ICAR, promotional activities such as documentation of over 5,000 native varieties of 25 crops and evaluation across 11 states using participatory varietal evaluation (crowdsourcing) is undertaken, resulting in the identification of nearly 300 superior traditional varieties for large-scale cultivation. Further, nearly 50 Community Seed Banks have been established across India, conserving more than 4,000 traditional varieties of over 25 crops under this plan. In addition, nutritional profiling of more than 3,000 traditional varieties supporting branding and commercialization of indigenous produce and linking it to value chains, with brands such as Native Basket, Mountain Grains, Dhartee Naturals etc. have also been undertaken.
- vi. Ministry of Food Processing Industries R&D scheme (component of the Human Resources & Institutions component of Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana) has approved 257 R&D

proposals to date – several directed at traditional/indigenous produce (millet based products, mahua, drumstick etc.)

This information was given by the Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare **SHRI RAMNATH THAKUR** in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

RC/MS

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