

# Focused government policies can make India self-reliant in edible oils

IANS| Updated: Oct 16, 2017

NEW DELHI: With the right kind of policy initiatives by the government, the country can not only become self-reliant in terms of production but even export some of its indigenous edible oils like mustard oil.

The total production of edible oil in the country is about nine million metric tonnes (MT) while the domestic requirement is around 25 million MT.

The gap between demand and supply is being met through imports, which amounted to approximately Rs 68,000 crore in 2015-16. Palm oil currently contributes 70 per cent of vegetable oil imports and is one of the cheapest due to high productivity per hectare.



"India needs to learn from countries like Malaysia and Italy, who have managed to sell their edible oil worldwide, which in return has contributed to their economy. What palm oil is for Malaysia, olive oil for Italy and soya oil for the US, mustard oil can indeed be for India," Vivek Puri, Managing Director of Puri Oil Mills told IANS.

"Mustard oil has some unique properties that no other edible oil has," Puri added.

The Malaysian government launched a full-scale development plan wherein the farmer became the focus, and the entire farming community was organised as cooperatives.

Every farmer undertaking oil palm cultivation is provided with technology and extension services and the entire farming activities are supervised by experts and agricultural scientists.

The Malaysian Palm Oil Promotion Council has been very effective in promoting palm oil.

In 2016, the export value of palm oil and palm-based products from Malaysia to India was 3.13 million tonnes valued at around at \$2 billion, said Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong, Minister for Plantation Industries & Commodities, at an event in Mumbai on September 14.

"With proper government support, the area under mustard cultivation can be expanded significantly, vastly increasing the availability of mustard oil and bringing imports down. In fact, mustard oil, which has been a traditional Indian oilBSE 0.19 % for thousands of years, aligns perfectly with the government's 'Make in India' initiative," said Pragya Gupta, Senior Scientist with Mustard Research Promotion Consortium (MRPC), a New Delhi-based non-profit.

To meet the acute shortage of economical edible oil, the government is promoting palm oil which has come under the lens of health experts for its high saturated fat content.

"Instead of promoting less healthy oils like palm oil, the National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil

Palm should actively support mustard oil and other indigenous edible oils, not just as an agricultural intervention but also as a public health measure," Gupta said.

According to a study published in the journal The BMJ late last year, consuming high amounts of saturated fatty acids -- found in red meat, dairy fat, butter, lard, and palm oil -- may increase risk of coronary heart disease.

Health experts also suggest that palm oil has higher saturated fat content than mustard oil. Palm oil can, therefore, easily increase bad cholesterol and lead to risk of heart diseases whereas mustard oil contains about 60 per cent monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA), 21 per cent polyunsaturated fats (PUFA) and about 12 per cent saturated fats that can help prevent heart diseases.

"Mustard oil contains a substance called glucosinolate which is known for its anti-carcinogenic properties. The phytonutrients provide protection against colorectal and gastrointestinal cancers," J.B. Sharma, Senior Consultant, Medical Oncology, Action Cancer Hospital, New Delhi told IANS.

"It also protects against breast cancer by reducing an enzyme activity within the breast, thereby decreases estrogen production," Neha Pathania, Senior Dietitian, Paras Hospitals, Gurugram, added.

**Source:** <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/focused-government-policies-can-make-india-self-reliant-in-edible-oils/articleshow/61106201.cms>