

SEA bats for adoption of GM oilseed crops

GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN. Association President Sanjeev Asthana favours GMOs to improve yield, narrow demand-supply gap

Our Bureau
Mangaluru

The Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) has said the adoption of genetically modified (GMO) crops could revolutionise oilseed productivity in the country.

In his letter to the members on Thursday, Sanjeev Asthana, President of SEA, said India's oilseed production is projected to grow from 35 million tonnes (mt) to 45-50 mt by 2029-30, with vegetable oil availability increasing by 5-6 mt to 15-17 mt.

However, consumption is expected to reach 28-30 mt at a 3 per cent growth rate, potentially touching 32 mt with 4 per cent growth.

The rising demand for convenience foods, including ready-to-eat and snack foods, will further increase edible oil consumption. To

address this gap, the government has launched initiatives, such as the National Oilseeds Mission and the Palm Oil Mission.

"Adoption of GMO crops such as GMO rapeseed could revolutionise oilseed productivity much like GMO cotton did in 2002. GMO adoption is vital for India's food security and should be prioritised," he said.

RAPEMEAL EXPORTS

Seeking support for the export of rapeseed meal, he said India exported 22 lakh tonnes of rapeseed meal in 2023-24, helping farmers earn better prices.

However, exports fell by 25 per cent in April-October 2024 due to uncompetitive pricing.

The association urged the government to grant a 15 per cent export incentive through higher RoDTEP (Remission of Duties and



GROWING OIL APPETITE. The rising demand for convenience foods, including ready-to-eat and snack foods, is increasing edible oil consumption

Taxes on Exported Products) rates, freight subsidies, and interest subvention.

This support will enhance

export competitiveness and ensure that domestic rapeseed prices stay above the minimum support price (MSP), thereby increasing

edible oil availability.

Stating that the government had relaxed moisture limits for soyabean procurement from 12 per cent to 15 per cent to support farmers, he said soyabean prices in the market were still below the MSP of ₹4,890 a quintal, and were trading around ₹4,200.

Full-scale procurement at MSP in key States is crucial, he said.

Additionally, reduced domestic demand for soyabean meal due to DDGS (dried distillers grain solids) substitution in feed and low international prices have further pressured the market.

Mentioning that milk prices had not decreased despite the ban imposed on the export of de-oiled ricebran in July 2023, Asthana said the ban had caused prices to plummet from ₹17,000 to ₹10,000 a tonne, harming the veget-

able oil industry.

DERIVATIVES BAN

On the ban on futures trading in certain commodities, he said the suspension of futures trading in commodities such as mustard seed, soyabean and crude palm oil since 2021 had affected price discovery mechanisms.

The association urged SEBI and the Finance Ministry to lift the suspension, emphasising that futures trading aids farmers, industry and trade without escalating prices. He said the domestic oleochemical industry faces severe challenges due to largescale imports of soap noodles at nil duty from South-East Asia.

SEA has recommended either placing these imports under the restricted items list or imposing an additional 25 per cent duty to safeguard domestic oleochemical manufacturers, he added.