

Shift from soyabean to maize poses challenge to Oilseeds Mission

Maize gaining ground *(Kharif area in lakh hectare)*

	Maize		Soyabean	
	2023	2024	2023	2024
Madhya Pradesh	15.3	20.8	60.6	57.77
Rajasthan	8.62	9.49	11.26	11.34
Maharashtra	9.09	11.07	51.15	50.52
Gujarat	2.82	3.05	2.66	2.93
Karnataka	17.45	15.45	3.89	4.14

Source: Agriculture Ministry

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There was an increase in maize area this kharif season but it also seems to have an unintended impact on oilseeds area in some States. Farmers seem to be moving towards a new evolving 'cash crop' which was so far only known as a coarse cereal. However, experts feel that there needs to be proper planning of crops to make sure that the recently rolled out National Oilseeds Mission becomes a success.

Though total acreage under kharif maize was at 83.95 lakh hectares (lh) this year, a tad higher from 83.29 lh in 2023, in States like Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra maize acreage is 3-5 lh more whereas oilseeds are a tad lower from 2023 levels.

SUITABLE POLICY

"Wishing the paddy area to shift to maize is one thing but making a suitable policy is another. While the government's assured procurement of paddy at minimum support price provides a confidence to farmers of the cereal, there is no such guarantee for soyabean or other oilseed," said a former agriculture commissioner. He said the 'ethanol from maize' programme has pushed up prices of maize whereas there is no such programme for oilseeds.

Unless a "credible and transparent" procurement

policy is implemented for oilseeds, farmers are not going to be inclined to these crops, he said.

AGRI DATA

Data show that, the maize area in Madhya Pradesh during kharif 2024 increased to 20.8 lh from 15.3 lh a year ago while soyabean acreage dipped to 57.77 lh from 60.6 lh. Similarly, in Maharashtra the soyabean area dropped to 50.52 lh from 51.15 lh and the maize acreage rose to 11.07 lh from 9.09 lh. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are top two producers of soyabean in the country. In kharif maize, Madhya Pradesh is the largest producer while Maharashtra is at number three.

The Union Cabinet in October approved the National Mission on Edible Oil (Oilseeds) with an estimated cost of ₹10,103 crore to be implemented over next six years with a target to increase the production of oilseed crops to 69.7 million tonnes (mt) by 2030-31 from current 39.67 mt.

Gujarat's acreage under groundnut, which is the main oilseed crop of the largest producing State, has increased from 16.35 lh to 18.95 lh despite a marginal increase in maize area in (from 2.82 lh to 3.05 lh). The area under kharif maize in Karnataka, the second biggest grower, dipped from 17.45 lh to 15.45 lh, but its total oilseeds area rose from 7.28 lh to 8.17 lh.