

Pakistan ‘illegally’ growing Indian basmati rice varieties, India tells EU

OPPOSES PGI TAG. Apeda provides European lab results showing Indian basmati DNA in Islamabad’s grain

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India has told the European Union that Pakistan is “illegally growing” Indian basmati varieties and has submitted proof of DNA tests done in an European lab regarding this.

“We had the DNA of Pakistan-grown basmati varieties tested in an European lab. It has shown results that they are Indian varieties grown illegally in Pakistan,” said a government official, who did not wish to be identified.

The tests were done by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda) as part of its process to oppose an application filed by Pakistan for Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) tag for its basmati rice.

VIDEO PROOF

“We have opposed Pakistan’s PGI tag application. We have provided results of the DNA tests we did in the European lab,” the official said.

Apart from this, Apeda has produced videos from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in which Pakistan farmers and traders have gone on record to say that they were growing India’s 1121 and 1509 Pusa Basmati varieties.

“We have attached the videos in our opposition to Pakistan’s application,” the official said.

India has also objected to the inclusion of its basmati growing areas, particularly Jammu and Kashmir areas such as Mirupur, Bhimber, Poonch and Bagh.

“We have told the EU that Pakistan’s claim for the PGI tag questions India’s sovereignty as it includes our areas,” the official said.

INDIA’S PLEA

businessline, in its report on February 25, 2024, reported that there were several inconsistencies in Pakistan’s application for the GI tag, besides conflicts with India’s application for GI tag for its basmati rice. India sought GI tag for Indian basmati varieties in July 2018, while



VITAL TIMELINE. India sought GI tag for its basmati varieties in July 2018 while Pakistan filed for such a status only on February 23, 2024

Pakistan filed for such a status on February 23, 2024.

However, the EU re-published the Pakistan application tag on April 30 under Article 49 (5) of regulation (EU). Per this, the earlier publication of Islamabad’s application by the EU stood repealed.

“The EU’s response to India’s application has not been good. It seems to be indirectly encouraging

Pakistan,” said the official.

Pakistan has run into problems already with its application for basmati GI Tag as the EU has accepted Italy’s opposition for such a recognition. Besides this, the EU and India are engaged in bilateral talks to provide GI tags for one another’s products.

According to S Chandrasekaran, a GI expert who has written the book

“Basmati Rice: The Natural History Geographical Indication”, the publication of India’s application for GI tag by the EU did not mention that basmati is grown in Pakistan.

JOINT APPLICATION

On the other hand, the publication of Pakistan basmati application says the long-grained rice is also being grown in specific areas of India. Though the Book of Specification of Basmati rice by Pakistan does not mention that India grows basmati rice, the EU has inserted the sentence,

said Chandrasekaran. The piracy issue of basmati should be a critical bargain point in India’s free trade agreement talks with the EU to protect farmers’ interests, he added.

Officials said the EU was urging India and Pakistan to jointly apply for the GI tag. However, India has rejected it since it would affect the country’s sovereignty with Indian growing regions, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, being shown along with Pakistan growing areas.