

For farmers, jeera smells of money

Production, Exports Up Owing To Demand From Perfume Makers

Himanshu Kaushik | TNN

Ahmedabad: In the last two years, the state's cumin farmers have become richer by Rs 739.5 crore. Cumin production in the state has increased nearly threefold since the financial year 2010-11.

According to officials at Agriculture Produce Market Committee at Unjha, in 2010-11, production was 4.90 lakh quintals which went up to 7.99 lakh quintals the next year and by 2012-13 it touched a record 11.13 lakh quintals. Officials say the increase has

CUMIN BOUNTY

brought down prices at the Unjha Agriculture Produce Market Committee. The cumin prices which were as high as Rs 18,500 a quintal have now fallen to Rs 12,000 per quintal in 2012-13.

Sources said that in monetary terms, income at the APMC was Rs 596.23 crore in 2010-2011 and has grown to Rs 1,335.73 crore.

This is because exports have increased by at least 20%. Simultaneously, yield per hectare has also gone up. Yields which were around 2,000 kg per hectare are now at over 2,400 kg a hectare. According to APMC officials exports have increased because of greater demand not only from foreign markets but also as there is an increase in demand from perfume companies.

Officials said research has proved

that the predominant compound in cumin, cuminaldehyde, accounts for up to 40% of the seed's oil content. Aldehydes are rich in naturally-occurring oxygen compounds and they are used in perfume industry.

Agriculture officials said parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat grow jeera or cumin almost exclusively. Banaskantha and Mehsana in Gujarat, and Barmer, Jalore, Jodhpur and Nagaur in Rajasthan are the major jeera producing areas. The two states together account for more than 95% of the country's cumin production. Gujarat contributes around 85% of the total production. Other jeera producing states are West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab.

Chairman of APMC at Unjha Gaurang Patel says, "Indian researchers have found that cumin had valuable anti-cancer properties and was hence was used extensively by pharma companies. The larger part of cumin seed from Gujarat is exported to Bangladesh, Brazil, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, UAE, UK, US among other countries. Jeera powder from here is largely exported to UK and the US. Of late we have noted that demand is increasing for cumin seeds and exports registered a growth of about 20%."

Sitaram Patel, president of Unjha Traders Association said that there was an obvious increase in demand abroad and hence production was increasing too. The new cumin seed, Gujarat-4, which is being pushed into the market has increased yields to over 2,500 kg per hectare. He said with better irrigation facilities have also led to an increase in the area of under cumin farming which has resulted in a bumper crop.

Wheat bowl Bhal turns to cumin crop for profit

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Ahmedabad: Bhal, the region around Dholera, south of Ahmedabad was known for the quality of its wheat. Of late, farmers in the region have given up their traditional unirrigated 'Bhaliya' wheat rabi crop and are replacing it with cumin. The high price cumin has begun to fetch has been an incentive for farmers to leave their traditional wheat crop.

The price of the wheat was about Rs 1,200 to Rs 1,500 per quintal, while cumin fetches between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 per quintal. While cumin produced about 2,400 kg per hectare, the unirrigated wheat crop yield was only about 1,000 kg per hectare.

The change in cropping has come about because of the availability of irrigation. The presence of farm ponds (khet talavdis) in the area has led to the shift. Bhupat Rathod, a resident of Ghogha village says, "Not just individual farm ponds, but the village has collectively constructed a pond recently which is for irrigation only. Farmers have their own ponds use excess water which flows in from in the nearby areas. This water is diverted to farm ponds which are also used for irrigation."

Rathod says, he has about 25 to 30 bighas of irrigated land and he has started growing cumin for the past year. "I decided to experiment and found success. This year too I will be grow cumin. He said that the yield per bigha was around 200 kg which was a good yield compared to wheat which was only 100 kg."

Devraj Baraiya, a resident of Jhankharia village says, "I have around 50 bighas of land, and my farm pond is usually adequate to meet the



A khet talavdi or farm pond at a Bhal village

irrigation requirements for cumin. Sometimes when I do need more water, farm ponds of nearby fields which are not used are rented out for about Rs 50,000."

Ranchod Baria, a resident of Kamal Talav village says, "One farmer experimented with cumin and was successful. I too tried it and found good profit in it." He said that he has about 100 bighas and has three ponds and these are enough to irrigate cumin with. The ponds are three to four feet deep and also have an embankment height of 4 feet above the ground. This has been done prevent salinity ingress."

Gaurang Patel, chairman of Unjha Agriculture Produce Market Committee says "For the past couple of years we are getting a good quantity of cumin from the Bhal area. Earlier, farmers use to grow wheat, but for the past couple of years, they are sowing cumin. If there is a good monsoon, we get nearly 2.5 lakh bags of cumin from the area. Each bag is 60 kg," he said.