

Business Standard

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Millet body seeks higher subsidy

BS Reporter / Chennai/ Hyderabad June 23, 2011, 0:37 IST

The Millet Network of India (MINI) has sought an increase in subsidy to Rs 10,000 an acre for farmers as against the state government's decision to provide Rs 5,000 per acre.

"Maize is a commercial and industrial crop. Of the total production in India, only 35 per cent goes for human consumption and rest is used for poultry feed, production of starch, dextrose, corn syrup, corn oil and ethanol production. The potential of maize to produce biofuel is attracting the state to provide such an incentive," said PV Satheesh, national convener, MINI.

The cultivation area has doubled over the last decade from 452,000 hectare to 856,000 ha while the production has increased four times to 42,20,000 tonne from 14,72,000 tonne.

However, the production area has reduced in the last decade. Jowar fields have reduced to 289,000 ha from 736,000 ha. Sajja (bajra and pearl millet) has shrunk more than 50 per cent to 58,000 ha, from 117,000 ha.

"This has become a major concern for the food security of the poor, as a number of poor and marginal farmers are likely to switch to maize cultivation lured by the aggressive support of the state," he added.

As millets such as jowar, bajra, ragi, foxtail millet, little millet, and kodo millet not only require less water to grow but are also super cereals with more nutrients than other foodgrain. It also helps in climate control.

Over the last few years, millet prices have also increased. The price of foxtail millet has increased four-fold to Rs 2,400, from Rs 600 four years ago, kharif millet increased to Rs 2,200 from Rs 700 and rabi sorghum to Rs 3,000 from Rs 1,200.

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