

Grape exports to Europe set to beat last year's figure

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India has exported around 85,000 tonne grapes to Europe this season till date and is likely to cross last year's shipment of 1.08 lakh tonne , exporters said. Last year, the country had exported more than 1.08 lakh tonne grapes to Europe, thanks to the favourable weather and good crop. Jagannath Khapre, president, All India Grape Exporters Association (AIGEA), said that the country could either better last year's exports or come close to it by the end of the season which is likely to last for another couple of weeks. However, the country has not been able to crack the issue of stricter residue monitoring plan norms by several countries. Like Europe, countries that import grapes from India, including China, Indonesia and Russia, have decided to issue stricter Residue Monitoring Plan (RMP) norms to the country . India has been trying to make inroads into new export markets such as China, Russia, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.However, these countries have now decided to come up with norms for Indian grapes, which may affect the export prospects of India this season. A couple of years ago, the EU had agreed to retain the residue levels of chlormequat chloride (CCL), a plant growth regulator, at 0.05 ppm (parts per million) for two years.

In August the same year, EU had proposed to change the pesticide residue levels in grapes to 0.01 ppm causing unrest among Indian exporters. The relaxation by EU remains valid for the coming season as well. Khapre said that the approvals from the rest of the world are likely to come in by June by which time the season would be over. Bangladesh however continues to remain a good market and India may have exported some 35000-40000 tonne there so far. Indian grape exporters have been unhappy with the increasing import duties imposed by Bangladesh on Indian grapes. Last year India exported around 15,000 tonne to Bangladesh, senior officials from the Maharashtra Horticulture Department said. According to the official, although Bangladesh has been imposing import duties, this time the taxes have become high to the tune of Rs 55 per kg and therefore grape growers and exporters have approached the Centre seeking intervention from the government to ensure that these do not rise further. Khapre lamented that since other countries including China, Canada, Russia were not included in Grapenet, it is difficult to ascertain the exact tonnage of exports to these nations. “ We have been demanding the inclusion of other nations along with Europe to Grapenet so that there is a daily

update of export on the site,” he said. Officials said that the 35,000 vineyards have been registered under Grapenet. Feasibility reports will be prepared for other nations as well so that grapes from India do not face any residue related issues. Senior officials from the Maharashtra Horticulture Department admitted that although there were some initial hurdles in exports because of changed MRL norms, some of the countries agreed to concessions and around 50,000 tonne was exported to other nations. These nations have lesser laboratories unlike Europe which has some 2000 laboratories to issue MRL certificates, the official said. Around 1 lakh tonne is expected to be in Europe, which continues to remain the biggest export market for India, horticulture officials said.

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