

Maharashtra govt to develop five clusters to push export of top agri products

Farmers' groups, farmers' producer companies and farmers' cooperatives will be roped in for promotion of these clusters, which will receive infrastructural and logistical investment.

In accordance with the agri-export policy of the central government, Maharashtra is all set to develop five 'export clusters' in the state. The state is going to develop these zones to promote the export of mangoes, grapes, pomegranates, onions and oranges across districts.

Maharashtra accounts for more than 50 per cent of the country's agri-export basket. The state leads in the export of mangoes, grapes, oranges, onions and a large number of other vegetables. Cotton is another important export commodity from the state, with the districts of Marathwada and Vidarbha leading in production. While the state leads in exports of agricultural products, the total export potential of the state is far from being completely tapped.

Sunil Pawar, managing director of the Maharashtra State Agricultural Marketing Board (MSAMB), said the clusters so developed will replace the earlier agri-export zones. "Various schemes aimed at increasing exports will be implemented in these clusters," he said.

"At these clusters, farmers will be trained to use inputs in order to meet the minimum residue limits (MRL), as specified by export markets," added Pawar. The MSAMB has organised a day-long workshop in Pune on Friday to promote the new agri-export policy. The districts of Solapur, Ahmednagar and Pune (pomegranates), Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri (mangoes), Nashik, Pune and Sangli (grapes), Nashik (onions), and Nagpur, Wardha and Amravati (oranges) have been identified for development of the clusters. Farmers' groups, farmers' producer companies and farmers' cooperatives will be roped in for promotion of these clusters, which will receive infrastructural and logistical investment.

Samir Pandit, CEO of Nashik-based Best Grapes, a company which specialises in the 'farm to fork' model, said attaining the quality levels





required in export markets was a major challenge for farmers. “We have seen that insecurity often makes farmers compromise on quality, which agriculturists in other countries don’t do,” he said. “In order to realise the total export potential, we should focus on the quality of the agri produce”.

Pandit, whose company deals mainly in grapes, said he has seen farmers harvesting grapes even before they were completely ripe. “Such moves are driven by insecurity... but their impact is long-term,” he said.

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