

Covid spread in rural India: Seed manufacturers don't see drop in sales

By: FE Bureau

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Commenting on the recent initiative of the government to expand area under oilseeds by distributing high yielding seeds to farmers free of cost, Kaundinya said: "Though it is good that a minimum yield criteria has been fixed, it is equally important to take into account varieties having higher oil content. There must be a mechanism found to pay higher prices of oilseeds varieties with higher oil content."

has been no report of lower sales of seeds of agricultural crops so far.

“There is some concern from input dealers because of Covid and lock down. But situation is not alarming as supplies are happening, though not free-flowing. Farmers will never stop sowing, whatever be the situation, provided they get seeds in time,” said Ram Kaundinya, director general of Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII). There is no slowdown in demand for seeds for the upcoming kharif season, Kaundinya said.

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The seed industry has been growing at average 9% (CAGR), before the growth marginally declined to about 8% last year due to pandemic and also some shifting noticed in maize area. The vegetable seeds sales declined in last kharif season, but it picked up by rabi season as lockdown restrictions removed gradually, creating demand.

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In the turnover of seeds industry, vegetable seeds contribute maximum having 30% share, followed by cotton with about 18%, maize 13% and paddy 10%.

There is also ample availability of agricultural labour in some states due to reverse migration while there may be labour issues in western Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana. However, as farmers in the northern region use agri machinery compared to other states, there may not be an issue.

“If the Covid-19 situation starts improving and the element of fear is checked by a lower number of cases and higher vaccination, the kharif sowing operations are not likely to affect adversely,” former agriculture secretary Siraj Hussain said on Monday. Monsoon will hit northwest only in early July, by then the wave is likely to subside, Hussain said.

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Ahead of kharif sowing of crops to begin from June 1, the Centre has set a target to bring an additional 6,37,000 hectare under oilseeds cultivation this season itself, and rolled out a long-term plan to make the country self-sufficient in edible oils. Last year, oilseeds were sown in 20.82 million hectare during the kharif season and 8 million hectare in the rabi (winter) season.

From bringing additional area under oilseeds, the country's oilseeds production may go up by 1.2 million tonne (MT), enough to generate 2,44,000 tonne of edible oils through domestic processing.



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