

Peace or not, India & Pak first need to unite to save Basmati

Judgment On GI Tag For Prized Breed Next Week

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New Delhi: It will be a 'do or die' situation for India's Basmati, which occupies pride of place in the country's agricultural trade, when the Chennai-based Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB) next week takes a call on granting 'GI' (geographical indicator) tag to the world famous long grain aromatic variety of rice.

Chances of it getting the tag depends on whether India joins hands with Pakistan to get a joint registration by prevailing upon Madhya Pradesh to withdraw its claim of being included in the geographical area for Basmati.

If Basmati fails to get the tag, India and Pakistan will lose its exclusivity in the world market. Obviously India will be the bigger loser because it has more than 96% of the share in the exclusive geographical zone for this unique variety. Besides, the share of Basmati is also quite high in India's overall

NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION, BUT PROTECTION

> **Geographical Indication (GI) tag is used for product of a specific geographical origin**

> GI tag points to qualities or reputation of a particular product that is due to its origin

> **Traditional geographical area of Basmati cultivation:** Punjab (both in India and Pakistan), Haryana, western UP, Uttarakhnad, J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi

> GIs are also about culture, traditions, heritage and traditional practices of people and countries

> It also prevents unauthorized use (cultivation, manufacture, and marketing) of a registered GI product by other countries

> **Basmati - India/Pakistan world famous aromatic and long grain rice - has so far not got GI tag**

INDIA'S famous GIs

Banarasi silks
Darjeeling tea
Pashmina shawls
Chanderi silk
Nilgiri tea
Malabar pepper
Nagpur orange
Kancheepuram silks
Coorg coffee
Assam tea

Once a product gets GI tag, it confers it a legal protection

rice export. Roughly, Basmati contributes Rs 33,000 crore out of total Rs 40,000 crore worth of the country's annual rice export.

If India does not get the tag, there is a possibility that China may get this variety from Pakistan and go for large-scale cultivation in newly acquired big farms

in different African countries under different agreements.

"Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia are among certain east African countries where conditions are conducive for Basmati cultivation. China has acquired big farms in these and other east African countries," said an Indian sci-

entist on condition of anonymity.

Though MP had not traditionally been part of the areas that cultivate Basmati, it staked its claim for getting specific areas in 13 of its districts included in geographical areas when farmers there opted for this high-paying variety in the past few years. Pakistan, which has traditionally been cultivating Basmati in its Punjab province, opposed MP's move, forcing the matter to reach before the IPAB.

Besides MP, Rajasthan and Bihar had also staked their claim for being included in the geographical areas for Basmati. But Indian agriculture scientists claimed these two states preferred not to be parties to the dispute in larger national interest.

Sensing the urgency ahead of the crucial hearing, India's premier agriculture research institute—the Indian Agricultural Research Institute—has requested the government to join hands with Pakistan in India's interest. The issue was flagged by IARI joint director K V Prabhuduring a conference in New Delhi on October 16, where he had said, "We do not want others like China to introduce Basmati in global trade at low prices and spoil our market, which is potentially imminent."

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w/ HC DNA & Printing Section

1. P.A. Director, IARI, Delhi
2. " Joint Director (Research) "
3. " Joint Director (Extension) "
4. " Joint Director (Education) "
5. Incharge, P.P.I
6. " CATAT
7. " AKMU