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70% of Maha tomato cultivation comes under drip irrigation

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Pune, March 8: Tomato growers in Maharashtra's drought-hit regions are increasingly turning towards drip irrigation as a solution. Over the last couple of years, around 70% of the state's tomato cultivation has come under the system.

According to Shartram Gadhave, president, Vegetable Growers Association of India (VGAI), although Vidarbha and Marathwada regions have been reeling under drought conditions, the plantation for summer in the state has been up to 3 lakh per hectare, the same as last year.

This is because farmers have been using the drip system, which has resulted in 20% more yield, he pointed out.

The use of mulching paper is also on the rise and special trials are being conducted on tomato by farmers in several parts of the country, he said, adding that drip irrigation is turning out to be a very effective solution as it also prevents disease.

Last year, the tomato crop was affected by *Karposid* disease and whitefly attacks. The plantation was attacked due to paucity of rains and therefore farmers have increasingly begun to use drip as a solution, Gadhave said.



billion of synergy between farmer producer companies, said that farmers in this state as well have taken to drip and there is a rise in tomato production in Gujarat.

Gadhave's association that runs a tomato auction at Narayangan near Pune says that at least 300 trucks of tomatoes arrive at the auction on a daily basis. One truck contains some 16 tonnes of the commodity. Both Nashik and Pune are command major tomato producers and see some 1,600 truckloads of arrivals on a daily basis.

Narayangan open tomato auction is an experiment to eliminate the middleman and help farmers get better prices for their produce. Over the years, the tomato auction has attracted the attention of other states as a model.

Nashik is the main supplier of tomatoes to most parts of the country. Pimpalgaon supplies tomatoes to other markets like Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Haryana. It also exports tomatoes to countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Tomatoes are cultivated by farmers in Narayangan near Pune, Nashik, Beed and Pune among other areas. The tomato season lasts from June to October every year. In Nashik, another tomato growing region, the season starts from August to September.

At Pimpalgaon in Nashik, one of the biggest markets for tomato, wholesale prices were hovering around ₹5 per kg. Gadhave, who was recently in Dular to discuss possi-

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