

FSSAI scuttles move to sell 'blended basmati rice'

REGULATORY MOVE. Decision will protect purity of rice and prevent dilution

Subramani Ra Mancombu
Chennai

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has scuttled efforts to introduce "blended Basmati rice" for sale in the country by deciding not to accede to a proposal that has been in the works since 2017.

"The FSSAI decision basically will protect the purity of basmati and not allow any dilution, given the geographical indication (GI) tag for it," said S Chandrasekaran, a trade analyst and author of "Basmati Rice: The Natural History Geographical Indication".

TO BENEFIT FARMERS

The decision, notified on October 31, will benefit farmers to get more returns, while consumers will gain by getting to eat "pure basmati". Right now, domestic consumers pay more for basmati with prices ranging



SAFEGUARDING MEASURE. Blended variety will affect the reputation of basmati globally

between ₹100 and ₹250 a kg.

In the global market, Indian basmati rice 2 per cent broken is quoted at \$1,500 a tonne, data from the Thai Rice Exporters' Association showed.

FSSAI said it had sought feedback if the blended basmati category should be omit-

ted or allow 30 per cent blending. The other argument against the blended basmati sale is that the purity of seeds used by growers is 98 per cent. Thailand's premium Jasmine rice is marketed with 98.5 per cent purity, while Saudi Arabia and the UK do not allow bas-

mati rice to be sold with not more than 7 per cent of other varieties mixed in it.

The decision will also regulate the basmati market, which has a demand of about 4 million tonnes (mt) for exports and 1.5 mt in the domestic market.