

APEDA to consult stakeholders on UK's new code for basmati rice

COP CONCERNS. The code has set off a controversy with experts questioning changes in varieties, growing areas

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The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) will hold detailed discussions with the All-India Rice Exporters' Association (AIREA), major exporters, experts and other stakeholders on the new code of practice (CoP) document the UK has come out with on basmati rice.

APEDA will discuss the CoP documents and their provisions to analyse the short and long-term impact on India's basmati exports, if any.

Responding to *business-line's* report on UK's new CoP for basmati that triggered a controversy, APEDA said it was brought out by the British Retail Consortium and The Rice Association, UK, the representative organisation for the UK rice sector.

"Its main aim is to promote the interests of members in all

matters pertaining to the import, preparation, processing, packaging and marketing of rice. This has also been discussed with the Federation of European Rice Millers (FERM), AIREA and Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP)," the authority said.

Stating that CoP was not a regulatory document, it said, rather the associations had agreed with regard to basmati rice trade in the UK. AIREA, India's major association engaged in basmati exports, was involved in bringing out the CoP.

The scope of the CoP was limited to labelling of basmati rice sold in the UK and the code is voluntary. "...those choosing not to follow its provisions are required to meet the similar minimum legal requirements to ensure that their basmati rice is authentic," APEDA said.

The authority said the CoP lists varieties that are cur-



EXPORTS WON'T SUFFER. Of the 5 varieties deleted under the new code, 4 are not being cultivated in India, as per APEDA

rently approved by the Indian and Pakistani authorities. It covers most of the popular basmati varieties notified under the Indian Seeds Act, 1966, provisions. The new CoP has included certain newly-notified basmati varieties.

DELETION OF VARIETIES

On the CoP deleting five varieties grown in India, APEDA said four of them — Malviya Basmati Dhan, Pant Basmati 1, Vallabh Basmati 21 and

Vallabh Basmati 24 — were not being cultivated. Thus, exports will not be affected.

However, the deletion of Punjab Basmati in the list seemed to be an error as India had no such notified variety. "All the notified varieties having Punjab Basmati as prefix have some numeral as suffix in the varietal name like Punjab Basmati 1, 2, 3 etc and hence does not have an impact on Indian basmati exports," it said.

On dilution of the growing area, particularly the Indo-

Gangetic Plains, APEDA said, "The document has also referred to the February 2003 publication by the Food Standards Agency as the basis for the Code with the emphasis on 'specific areas of Indo Gangetic Plains'".

On basmati geographical indication (GI) tag expert S Chandrasekaran raising questions on APEDA not being consulted over the new CoP, the authority said, "it would have been prudent on the part of the UK Association to discuss the CoP document with APEDA as owner of the basmati GI tag which is also registered in UK."

A GEOPOLITICAL ISSUE

APEDA concurred with AIREA views that the new CoP will strengthen India's hold in the UK basmati market.

Chandrasekaran said basmati GI is a geopolitical subject involving the country's boundary and sovereignty.