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To
The Editor,

Date: 6-12-2014

Sir,

I request that the following matter may kindly be published in your esteemed daily:

Sunflower Prices to be Stable during Harvest

Sunflower oil is becoming the fourth most vegetable oil used for cooking in the world. Ukraine is the world's largest producer of sunflower oil and India is the major importer. Russia, European Union, Argentina and China are the other major producing countries.

According to Solvent Extractors Association (SEA), in 2013-14 the country's annual vegetable oil demand of 60 per cent is met by import of 17-18 million tonnes. As per the edible oil estimates, (Nov, 2013 – Oct, 2014) import of sunflower oil was 1.3 million tonnes and it is expected to increase by 1.4 million tonnes in 2014-15.

As per the Ministry of Agriculture, the total sunflower cultivation area of India in 2013-14 was reduced to 2.50 lakh hectare compared with last 5 years average of 7.43 lakh hectare. According to first Advance Estimate, sunflower seed production in Kharif (2014-15) was 1.29 lakh tonnes and it was 1.53 lakh tonnes in Kharif 2013-14. The demand for sunflower oil in India has increased in recent years due to growing health consciousness and high income level. Sunflower oil consumption in South India is around 70 per cent and the production is only 5 per cent. Sunflower oil cake is used for poultry feed.

The major producers of sunflower are Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu Andhra Pradesh and Telungana. Karur, Trichirapalli, Dindigul, Thoothukudi, Dharmapuri, Namakkal and Tiruppur districts are the major producers of sunflower seeds in Tamil Nadu accounting for 79 per cent of area and 80 per cent of the total sunflower production in the

State. The productivity of sunflower in Tamil Nadu is 1.81 tonnes / ha which is higher than the national average of 0.64 tonnes / ha.

Sunflower is raised in two seasons' viz. Karthigai pattam (October - November) and Chitrai pattam (April - May). Major hybrids grown in Tamil Nadu are Sunbred variety which fetch high price due to high oil content. Currently the price of the sunflower seeds is around Rs.3200 per quintal in Vellakoil market.

To facilitate farmers in taking a sowing decision of sunflower seeds, Back office of Agro Marketing Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre (AMI & BPC) in the Centre for Agricultural Rural Development Studies (CARDS), of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University analyzed the past 13 years price data of sunflower seed prevailed in Vellakoil regulated market. The econometric analysis and traders survey results revealed that the price of sunflower seed will hover around Rs.3300 - 3500 per quintal during harvest of February, 2015. Hence farmers are recommended to take sowing decision based on the price.

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