

Odisha farmers' mango mania: Yeh Dil Mange More!

Mother Dairy's Safal mulls expansion of its footprint in Odisha to inculcate good farming practices; to double farmer's outreach to 2000 in the State

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DHENKANAL/BHUBANESWAR
(ODISHA)

In a bid to improve the farmers' income in Odisha, Mother Dairy Fruit and Vegetable Pvt Ltd, a fully-owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), is planning to expand its footprint in Odisha to inculcate good farming practices through Safal for significantly increasing their income and provide them with access to national markets including Delhi, a move to fulfill the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream for doubling their income by 2022.

Safal, the horticulture brand of Mother Dairy, having stores in New Delhi, Bengaluru and Bhubaneswar, will also double its farmer's outreach to 2000 from around 1000 at present for procuring fruits and vegetables in seven districts of Odisha to ensure 'fair value' for their produce, according to a top official of Mother Dairy.

As mango has been the most popular produce among all other fruits and vegetables, for the last 4 years, Safal has been actively procuring leading

varieties of mangoes such as Langra, Amrapali, Dushehry and Malika from the districts of Mayurbhanj and Dhenkanal through farmer bodies. Today, it has an established mango sourcing base in six districts and is also exploring the districts of Angul and Ganjam for increasing its sourcing base.

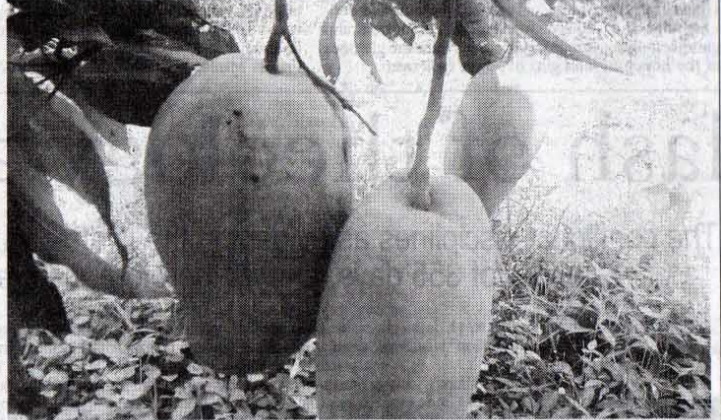
"Our aim is to strengthen our farmer connect to enhance fruit and vegetable procurement from Odisha. We have associated over 7 lakhs of farmers in our network all over India and we are planning to connect to 2000 farmers in our network from around 1,000 at present in this region. Presently, Mother Dairy already has a farmer base of over 975 in the state," said Dr Saugata Mitra, Director of Mother Dairy.

"Our strategy is two-fold. While we scale to get the best of produce from Odisha to sell at our outlets nationwide, farmers are cornerstone for the success of our plans and NDDB will contribute with all its might to the national goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022 declared by Modi," said Dilip Rath, Chairman, NDDB.

Since the beginning of Safal's procurement network in Odisha, the horticulture brand has conducted 18 sessions with farmers as part of its agronomic intervention initiatives. "Safal's sessions with state-of-the-art training of procuring, packaging and marketing helped us to a great extent for which we were able to export around



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A mango weighing over 2kg was spotted in an orchard of a farmer in Dhenkanal district of Odisha

Pioneer Photo

150-200 tonnes of mango to Delhi. We have also got good prices as we hit our produce first in the Delhi-NCR market before Andhra and UP mangoes which are supposed to reach by May end or early June," said a successful mango farmer, Dr Ghanashyam Padhi, who started this profession after quitting CEO position from Mahindra Consultancy 12 years ago.

Safal also plans to double the procurement of mangoes from Odisha this season to 150 tonnes from 75 tonnes at present. "In addition, we plan to open 16 new Safal stores in Odisha in this year as well," said Mitra, adding that the company has 11 Safal stores in

Bhubaneswar and six in Sambalpur town.

As far as pricing benefit to the farmers is concerned, NDDB aims that farmers should get satisfactory market prices for their produce, especially for mangoes. "We hope farmers will get ₹75 per kg this year, a significant rise in pricing ₹53 per kg in 2016 and ₹55 per kg in 2017," claimed the NDDB chief.

The Horticulture Department of Odisha has taken several initiatives to start procuring mangoes from farmers for sale in New Delhi by creating different marketing as well procuring hubs in the state. The department had sold 32 tonnes of mangoes last year

while the district produced more than 30,000 tonnes. This year, the district will produce not more than 15,000 tonnes due to climate change. "Now-a-days, good quality mangoes are not produced in the district to export outside Odisha. A mango weighing more than 200 gm is fit for supply to Delhi markets and a farmer gets ₹20-25 per kg. However, this time farmers will get ₹35 at Krushak Bazaar," an official said.

Apart from mangoes, Safal also procures watermelon, brinjal, cucumber, okra, karela, onion, cabbage, leafy vegetables, etc. from six districts of Mayurbhanj, Dhenkanal, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Sambalpur and Deogarh.