

SEA RAPE- MUSTARD CONCLAVE 2018

8th July, 2018, Jaipur

Welcome Address

By

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The Solvent Extractors' Association of India

We are delighted to welcome you to the 2nd Mustard Conclave being organised in the historic city of Jaipur. We are indeed honoured at the presence of three very dynamic leaders who are spearheading our Prime Ministers vision of Doubling Farmers income. In Shri Gajendra Sekhawat Ji our Agriculture Minister we have a person who understands Agriculture like the back of his hand. He has been at the forefront of most of the initiatives which Govt.of India has taken for augmenting farmers income. We welcome Shri Sekhawatji.

We are also delighted to have Shri Ashok Dalwai amongst us and for agreeing to share his views on doubling farmers income. Shri Dalwai needs no introduction. He has been successfully leading the initiatives for improving the life of our farmers and reducing distress.

Friends we also have among us the outspoken farmer leader from Maharashtra Shri Pasha Patel. He is one of those leaders who feels if the oil industry remains healthy the farming community would automatically become healthy. His voice carries a lot of weight in decision making circles and it would not be out of place to say the increase in edible oil duties to support farmers and industry, was largely due to his efforts.

We also take this opportunity of welcoming the distinguished speakers, special invitees and delegates to this interesting Conclave.

Objectives....

Friends we had started Mustard Conclave last year essentially for the following four broad objectives.

-Promote Mustard Cultivation to reduce Indian dependence on Imported Oils. Needless, to say Mustard is high oil bearing oilseed and if given required thrust can do wonders.

-Help in improving productivity of Mustard

-Sensitise Stakeholders on the need to support technological interventions in Mustard cultivation.

-Last but not the least, promote Mustard oil as a healthy oil

Reality Check....

After one year of launching Mission Mustard we need to acknowledge the fact that success has been limited. Our Mission is still work in progress and we would need to be more focussed in our efforts if we want game changing results. Let us do a reality check on our efforts.

-We are targeting the Mustard production at 10 million tons however, last 3 years production has stagnated at around 6.5 million tons.

-We have not been very successful in our efforts at convincing Government of India on the need to start Mustard mission to give focussed attention on this Oilseed which can greatly help in reducing our increasing oil imports. As an Association we have limited resources but we have domain experts who can help Govt efforts in this direction. We once again request the dignitaries to adopt Mustard Oilseed for special attention as it can change the face of our Oilseed economy and farmers too.

-Our efforts at protecting the Mustard farmer from huge price fall have been reasonably successful. With World having huge Soya and Palm production world edible oil prices were under severe pressure and having its effect on domestic local values as well. We must congratulate the decision makers in Government that they listened to our requests and proactively increased edible oil duties substantially. Had the duties not been raised our Oilseed prices would have fallen big time and our poor farmers would have lost total interest in cultivating Oilseeds. In our efforts the support of Pasha Patelji was invaluable and we thank him wholeheartedly.

-On technological interventions, including permitting GM seeds our efforts have not borne any fruit and status quo remains. We feel price support alone will not be sufficient to increase farm incomes. Improvement in yields will go a long way in helping reduce farm distress. We are aware of the fact that GM evokes strong emotions both for and against. Our simple Suggestion is to allow our farmers to decide whether they want GM or Non-GM seed. For the consumer we may mention on labels and let them decide. We feel if farmers are to get better value for Non GM Oilseed the consumer should be able to differentiate .When everything is Non GM why should anyone pay any premium.
Minimum Support Price..

MSP in our country has done wonders in raising production of Wheat, Rice, Sugar and now Pulses as well. MSP supported production has created a situation where we have mountains of wheat, rice, Sugar and Pulses but still continue to be dependent to the extent of 70% on edible oil imports. It would not be out of place to say that our edible oil security is seriously compromised.

Why not use MSP not only as an incentive but as a disincentive as well? We feel MSP can be utilized as a tool for sending signals to farmers on what they should be producing. There is really no justification for jacking up prices of Sugar cane, Wheat and Rice and strain our scarce storage and financial resources.

Why keep producing commodities much in excess of our requirement. To expect India to export Agri commodities big time looks little farfetched with high MSP....

Why not encourage Mustard Cultivation in Punjab, Haryana through price and marketing support. If we are able to wean away 25% of Punjab ,Haryana farmers from wheat /rice cycle, it would do a world of good not only for Import substitution but also for helping maintain the steadily depleting water table in these States. Need for out of box thinking.

Further, we have lined up an array of eminent personalities as speakers and their views should help us in building consensus on way forward to reach a level of 10 million tons of mustard production. I a sure this is achievable.

The presence of movers and shakers of Agriculture in this Conclave is proof that decision makers are now serious about addressing the issue of stagnant Oilseed cultivation. From SEA we can assure that we would leave no stone unturned in our efforts for augmenting Mustard production and would always be available for supplementing Govt efforts.

All the best and thank you for your attention.

27th June, 2018
