

Farmers can take decision to increase sowing area of Potato during the year 2020-21

Potato is a major food crop that is grown in over 100 countries across the world. Asia alone accounts for half of the world's potato production, with China and India accounting nearly 38% of that production. In case of potato consumption, India's domestic demand has slowly increased over the last few decades.

During 2019-20 in India, potato occupied about 21.58 lakh ha area and production was about 51.30 MT against 50.19 MT in 2018-19.

In Gujarat, the area under potato is reported 1.18 lakh ha in the year 2019-20 (Fourth Advance Estimate, Directorate of Agriculture, Gujarat) as against 1.21 lakh ha in the year 2018-19 (Revised Final Advance Estimate, Directorate of Agriculture, Gujarat). Production was estimated to be 36.65 lakh MT in the year 2019-20 as against 36.55 lakh MT in 2018-19.

In Gujarat price of potato was prevailing around Rs.1460 per quintal in October 2019 that has increased to Rs.2421 per quintal in October 2020. In January 2020 price of the potato per quintal was Rs.1531, in February Rs.1105, in March Rs.1250 and in April Rs.1573 which is higher than the previous year prices.

The pandemic and the related fears have also led to a spike in potato prices. Demand for potato, a staple for Indian kitchens, has been rising during the pandemic as the tuber can be stored longer than other vegetables. The price fluctuation, mostly towards the higher side, is likely to continue as the COVID-19 cases spike in the country and the prices are likely to remain high.

Traders in Uttar Pradesh, the largest potato producer in the country, said prices will remain firm at least till March next year. This year, the crop is down by 20 per cent than last year. This year less quantity of potato seed coupled with higher seed price, is likely to impact the potato production and the farmers' income in the country during rabi season. So, there seems to be shortage in supply.

Potato farmers faced bad times in last three consecutive years. This time they are at least being able to earn something on their produce.

Considering all these available information and traders reviews on the same, the research team of NAHEP-CAAST, IABMI, Anand Agricultural University, Anand analysed the historical monthly price data of potato collected from major market of Gujarat. The econometric analysis revealed that the prices of potato during February - March 2021 *i.e.* at harvest may remain in the range of **Rs. 230 to Rs. 350 /20 kg. (Rs. 1150 to Rs. 1750 per quintal).**

Therefore, Farmers can take their own decision to increase sowing area of potato during the year 2020-21.