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# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

## **Nitin Gadkari says it's tough to restructure the loans of the sugar industry**

Gadkari said that he is trying to get flexi fuel policy as it is not possible to produce ethanol from B-heavy molasses in India unless sugar prices decline to a very low level.

Even as the sugarcane industry has been demanding restructuring of the Rs 6000 crore soft loan, union transport minister Nitin Gadkari said that it will be tough as financial institutions are not ready. Instead, he advised sugar mills to increase their revenues by exporting innovative by products.

"We will try. But it is tough," said Gadkari while speaking at the International Sugarcane Value Chain – vision 2015 conference at the Vasantdada Sugar Institute (VSI), Pune.

The sugar industry is upset with the various regulations like indirect cap on retail price of sugar, sugarcane price fixation, removal of tax exemptions on ethanol imposed by the government.

Gadkari said that he is trying to get flexi fuel policy as it is not possible to produce ethanol from B-heavy molasses in India unless sugar prices decline to a very low level. "The industry should think about manufacturing bio-chemical and bio-plastic from ethanol. Bio-plastic has been becoming mandatory in the developing world," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that his priority would be using "zadi ka tel over the khadi ka tel" (bio-fuel over imported crude oil) to save the foreign exchange India has to spend on importing oil. He had pointed out that the production and consumption of ethanol had gone up by three times in 2015-16.

However, former union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar pointed out that in 2016-17, the participation of sugar mills in ethanol tenders has reduced by 50%. He said that the Prime Minister has invited him to Delhi to find away on ethanol and other issues.

### **Tea production in India increases by 18.74 per cent**

Bought Leaf factory (BLF) sector in North India increased by 25.73% and in South India by 6.37%. On All India, the BLF sector increased by 22.75%

The estimate tea production during the month of September stood at 184.60 million kgs, an increase of 29.14 million kgs (18.74%) over the corresponding period, due to favourable ambient temperature as well as sufficient and good distribution of rainfall.

North India production increased by 27.48 M.Kgs (20.06%) while South India increased by 1.66 M.Kgs (8.97%). Production in Assam increased by 12.26 M.Kgs while West Bengal increased by 14.42 M.kgs. Tamil Nadu increased by 0.37 M.Kgs., while Kerala increased by 1.50 M.Kgs.

Estate production in North India increased by 17.60% while in South India it increased by 10.77%. On All India, the estate production increased by 16.89%.

Bought Leaf factory (BLF) sector in North India increased by 25.73% and in South India by 6.37%. On All India, the BLF sector increased by 22.75%

The estimated tea production during 2016-17 (Apr-Sep) is arrived at 795.89 M.Kgs., as against 795.86 M.Kgs of corresponding period. Production in North India is at 681.54 M.Kgs., an increase of 15.71 M.Kgs while South India production is at 114.35 M.Kgs., a decline of 15.68 M.Kgs. The estate factory production in North India increased by 1.57% while it declined by 9.51% in South India, thereby all India decline of 0.04%. BLF production in North India increased by 4.07%, while it declined by 15.78% in South India, thereby a marginal increase of 0.09% on All India.

## **Farmers run out of cash in middle of sowing season**

His brother has travelled from their Hansi village to Hissar to stand in queue at the Corporation Bank to withdraw money.

NEW DELHI: Prem covers his face as he sets the line of paddy stubble on fire. While half the field is ready for sowing, it is his turn to get the other half ready.

His brother has travelled from their Hansi village to Hissar to stand in queue at the Corporation Bank BSE -0.22 % to withdraw money. The brothers do not have enough to sow their next crop of wheat.

ET travelled on NH9 from New Delhi to Sirsa, Haryana's paddy and cotton-rich belt, and found PM Narendra Modi's sudden announcement has hit the agrarian economy hard. The most common lament of the farmers was the timing of demonetisation – the crucial harvest time.

The small farmer first harvests and then gets the field ready for the next sowing cycle. He then sells his crop and from that money he buys seeds, fertilisers and pesticides to start sowing.

The government's demonetisation has caught the farmer at different stages of this cycle. On top of this is the decline in cash inflow. "It is the busiest time for farmers. They have a very small window for sowing wheat," says Bhupesh Mehta, who has large agricultural holdings in Sirsa.

"When they want to be in their fields, they are standing in queues of banks."

The announcement has spawned innovative ways of business in villages. Puran, another farmer in Francy village, says, "The village strongman is already promising Rs 800 in new notes for Rs 1,000 of old currency. This is being used by people who do not have the time for queues. There are no ATMs in our villages and we anyways have to go to the banks in towns. That is an expense many are not willing to take. So it is better to take this hit and save some precious time for harvesting."

## **Technology to soon play big role in agriculture: PM Narendra Modi**

"We have a requirement of pulses. Can we think about pulses in addition to sugar? There is an assured market for pulses," Modi added.

PUNE: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said technology will very soon play an important role in developing agricultural pattern in the country.

He was addressing the inaugural session of an international conference on sugarcane value chain in Pune.

"We are talking about sugar; but let's think about bamboo also and how research will help our farmers," said Modi.

He said global economy cannot be ignored when one is looking at the sugar industry.

"We have a requirement of pulses. Can we think about pulses in addition to sugar? There is an assured market for pulses," he added.