

Govt allows ethanol extraction for blending from foodgrains, too

With maize, jawar, bajra in blended petrol programme, farmers' income may get a boost

OUR BUREAU

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The Centre has extended the ambit of the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme to extract the fuel from surplus quantities of maize, jawar, bajra and fruit/vegetable waste.

This decision was taken on Monday, and will be applicable for procurement for the ethanol supply year 2018-19.

Till now, only excess sugarcane production was allowed to be converted into ethanol for procurement under the fuel blending programme.

Additional income

An official statement said the decision will benefit farmers by enabling them to make additional money from surplus production and broaden the sources for producing ethanol for the EBP programme.

"The National Policy on Bio-fuels 2018 has empowered the National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) to allow conversion of surplus quantities of foodgrains for production of ethanol during an agricultural crop year when there is projected oversupply of foodgrains as anticipated by the Ministry of Agriculture and

Farmers Welfare," the statement said.

EBP programme

According to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the Department of Agriculture, Co-operation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW), under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, has provided the projection of surplus quantities of foodgrains for production of ethanol under the EBP programme for the ethanol supply year 2018-2019 (December 1, 2018 to November 30, 2019).

"The matter was taken up during the first meeting of the NBCC on November 14, which

has approved the procurement of ethanol produced from surplus quantities of maize, jawar and bajra, as projected by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, for the

EBP programme for the ethanol supply year 2018-2019," the statement said.

Target for OMCs

"The NBCC has also approved the proposal to produce ethanol from other feedstock such as fruit and vegetable wastes for the EBP programme," the statement added.

Earlier this year, the Centre came out with a modified biofuels policy which incentivised sugar mills that tap 'B-heavy' molasses and cane juice to produce ethanol



India's ethanol gameplan

- Centre has set a target of 10% ethanol blending in petrol by 2022, leading to forex savings of ₹12,000 crore a year
- There was 3.5% blending in 2016-17 sugar season and 4% in 2015-16
- Nationwide average for ethanol blending stood at 4.02% as on Oct 1
- The latest proposal will allow ethanol production from surplus quantities of maize, jawar and bajra, as well as other feedstock such as fruit and vegetable wastes
- Ethanol blending in petrol has risen from 38 crore litres in supply year 2013-14 to an estimated 141 crore litres in 2017-18

Under the EBP programme, the Centre has asked the oil marketing companies (OMCs) to target 10 per cent blending of ethanol with petrol by 2022. However, there is a major shortfall in the availability of ethanol as sugar mills currently tap only 'C-heavy' molasses for ethanol production.

According to data compiled by the Indian Sugar Mills Association, the nationwide average for ethanol blending stood at 4.02 per cent as on October 1.

Modified policy

Keeping this in mind, the government earlier this year came

out with a modified biofuels policy which incentivised sugar mills that tap 'B-heavy' molasses and cane juice for producing ethanol.

This, the government hoped, would also address the issue of the glut in sugar production in the country in bumper sugarcane production years.

Globally, it has been recognised that using ethanol can reduce oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions.

However, pure ethanol is not sold alone. It is mixed with fuel such as petrol in various concentrations, making it a transitional fuel.