

# Govt plans to procure more maize to ramp up production of ethanol

By [Zia Haq](#) , New Delhi

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Cricket

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India has drawn up plans to divert more maize to make ethanol for the country's ethanol blending programme and ramp up output nearly 10 times in five years, three officials said on Monday.

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Maize, or corn, the third most-grown cereal, has emerged as a strategically important commercial crop in the country because of its use in making ethanol, which is blended with petrol (HT)

The Union government has also signed off on a scheme to procure maize at federally fixed minimum support prices (MSP) and supply it to distilleries, as part of a strategy to meet India's biofuels needs.

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Maize, or corn, the third most-grown cereal, has emerged as a strategically important commercial crop in the country because of its use in making ethanol, which is blended with petrol. It is also an important poultry feed.

The country aims to lessen the use of sugarcane-based ethanol over the years and utilise more maize grown in a sustainable way for which the Union government has approved new research projects worth ₹24.51 crore, according to documents seen by HT.

Mixing of petrol with ethanol, which is made from molasses, a byproduct of sugar, is a high-priority national programme to help lessen the amount of oil India imports. Ethanol can also be produced from rice and maize. On June 5, 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the advancing of the target year for 20% ethanol-blending in petrol by to 2025.

The Union government has set aside ₹15.46 crore for the state-run Indian Institute of Maize Research (IIMR) to increase corn production in the catchment areas of ethanol industries, food secretary Sanjeev Chopra told HT. The IIMR will disseminate best-management practices and hybrids in 15 catchment areas in 78 districts of 16 states.

Scientists from IIMR have also been mandated to step up research for climate-resilient high-starch maize hybrids by financial year 2025-26, for which ₹5.32 crore has been earmarked. Another ₹3.73 crore has been set aside for scaling up silage or the maize feed value chain, according to the documents.

The agriculture ministry has set a target to raise corn production by 10 million tonnes over the next five years as demand for ethanol production grows, besides higher demand from the poultry industry, a second official said, requesting anonymity. Maize

output in 2022-23 was estimated to be 34.6 million tonnes compared to 33.7 million tonnes in the previous year.


Scientists at the IIMR are trying out new experiments to make high-yielding seeds that can raise productivity by a wide margin, according to Hanuman Sahay Jat, the maize institute's director.

Two state-backed food agencies, NAFED and NCCF, apart from primary agricultural cooperative societies, will be involved in purchasing corn from farmers. The procured maize will be offered to distilleries at MSP plus market taxes, while all incidental costs will be borne by the food department, the food secretary said.

Procurement refers to the government's purchases of food commodities at MSP — a floor price set to stave off distress sales by farmers. The minimum rate for maize for 2023-24 stands ₹2,090 a quintal.

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Zia Haq reports on public policy, economy and agriculture. Particularly interested in development economics and growth theories.

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