



# Heeng Cultivation Project in India

## Why in News

Scientists at **CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (IHBT), Palampur** are on a **mission to grow heeng** (asafoetida) in the **Indian Himalayas**.

- IHBT is the only laboratory of the [Council of Scientific and Industrial Research \(CSIR\)](#) in Himachal Pradesh.

## Key Points

### ▪ Heeng:

- It is a **herbaceous plant** of the umbelliferae family. It is a **perennial plant** whose **oleo gum resin** is extracted from its **thick roots and rhizome**. The plant stores most of its nutrients inside its deep fleshy roots.
- It is **endemic to Iran and Afghanistan**, which are also the **main global suppliers of it**. It is very popular in India and is used in cooking.
- **Climatic Condition:** It thrives in dry and **cold desert conditions**. The plant can withstand a maximum temperature between 35 and 40 degree, whereas during winters, it can survive in temperatures up to minus 4 degree.
  - Regions with sandy **soil, very little moisture** and **annual rainfall of not more than 200mm** are considered conducive for heeng cultivation.
  - During extreme weather, the plant can get dormant.
- **Properties:** It has **medicinal properties**, including relief for digestive, spasmodic and stomach disorders, asthma and bronchitis.
  - The herb is used to help with painful or excessive bleeding during menstruation and premature labour.

### ▪ India's Heeng Cultivation Project:

- Heeng is **not cultivated in India**. **India imports** about 1,200 tonnes of raw heeng worth Rs. 600 crore **from Iran, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan**.
- In 2017, IHBT approached the [National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources \(NBPGR\)](#) with an **experimental project idea** to cultivate heeng in the Indian Himalayas.
- In June 2020, the **IHBT inked a Memorandum of Understanding with the agriculture ministry of Himachal Pradesh** to jointly cultivate the heeng.
  - The agriculture ministry has identified **four locations in the Lahul-Spiti valley** and has distributed heeng seeds to seven farmers in the region.
- However, the **challenge** for the scientists is that heeng **seeds remain under a prolonged dormant phase** and the rate of **seed germination is just 1%**.

[Source: IE](#)

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