



Production of Saffron and Heeng in India

Why in News

The Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (CSIR-IHBT) and the Government of Himachal Pradesh, have jointly decided **to increase the production of the two spices** namely, **Saffron and Heeng (asafoetida)**.

- Under this plan, IHBT will be introducing **new varieties of saffron and heeng from the exporting countries** and will be standardized under Indian conditions.
- IHBT is the only laboratory of the [Council of Scientific and Industrial Research \(CSIR\)](#) in Himachal Pradesh.

Key Points

▪ Saffron Production in India:

- In India, the annual demand for **Saffron spice is 100 tons per year** but its average production is about **6-7 tons per year**. Hence a large amount of Saffron is being **imported**.
- At present, about **2825 hectares of land** is under [cultivation of Saffron in Jammu and Kashmir](#).
 - Recently, the Kashmir saffron got [Geographical Indication \(GI\) tag status](#).
 - Pampore Saffron Heritage of Kashmir is one of the [Globally Important Agricultural Heritage systems \(GIAHS\) recognised sites](#) in India.
 - GIAHS recognised sites are traditional agricultural systems that represent models of sustainable agricultural production. The other two sites in India are **Kuttanad Below Sea Level Farming of Kerala and Koraput Traditional Agriculture of Odisha**.
- IHBT has also introduced its cultivation in **non-traditional areas of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand**.
- The Institute has also developed tissue-culture protocol for the production of disease-free corms.

▪ Heeng Imports in India:

- Heeng is a **perennial** plant and it produces resin from the roots after **five years of plantation**.
- It can be grown in **unutilized sloppy land of cold desert** regions.
- There is **no production** of heeng in India and currently about 1200 tons of raw heeng worth Rs 600 crore is being **imported** from **Afghanistan, Iran, and Uzbekistan**.

▪ Benefits:

- The introduction of IHBT developed crops of heeng and saffron is expected to **reduce the import** of these spices.
- It also targets to **cover a total of 750 acres** of land under these crops in the Himachal Pradesh in the **next five years** which will create livelihoods for the farmers in the state.
- CSIR-IHBT is also expected to provide transfer of innovations by means of capacity building,

skill development, impart training to state agriculture department officers and farmers, and set up seed production centres of Saffron and heeng in the state.

Way Forward

- The plan will provide technical know-how to the farmers, and set up seed production centres of Saffron and heeng, respectively, in the state. Thus it will help to create a **multi dimensional development platform** in the state.
- The reduction of imports will also help to **diversify the agricultural sector**. It will also enforce **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan in the agricultural sector**.

Source:PIB

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