Amid increasing legume demand, India looks to transgenic varieties to increase production

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

The Modi government is banking on transgenic variety of pulses to increase production, particularly of arhar and chana that form the mainstay of proteins for vegetarians.

Prices of pulses had hit the roof last year, prompting the government to increase the minimum support price, promote cultivation in irrigated areas and create buffer stock to enable market intervention in case of spike in rates.

The government is now looking at newer varieties of pulses developed by scientists at the Indian Institute of Pulses Research, Kanpur that can be cultivated over shorter durations.

“The thrust of the scientists is on development of hybrids in pigeonpea, transgenics against pod borer in chickpea and pigeonpea… to make pulse cultivation in the country more productive and remunerative,” a senior official said.

Pulses production has been on the rise since 2010 and had peaked in 2013-14 at 19.78 million tonnes. However, it still falls short of the demand by nearly three to four million tonnes, forcing the country to fall back on imports.

The new versions of pulses being developed at the Kanpur-based institute include reduction of crop duration of moongbean from 75 to 55 days, lentil from 140 to 120 days and chickpea from 135 to 100 days.

It has also developed wilt-resistant varieties in chickpea, development of early maturing varieties in pigeonpea suitable for multiple cropping and green seeded variety of field pea for diversified food uses.

Read full, original post: Govt banking on transgenic pulses to fill protein gap