

Detailed Explanation (Simplified)

This article discusses the importance and roles of Commodity Boards in India. These Boards are autonomous organizations under the government, mainly managed by the Ministry of Commerce. Their primary responsibilities are supporting the production, development, and marketing of specific agricultural products.

Current Commodity Boards

Until recently, India had five major Commodity Boards:

1. **Tea Board**
2. **Coffee Board**
3. **Rubber Board**
4. **Spices Board**
5. **Tobacco Board**

Two new boards have recently been added:

- **Turmeric Board** (inaugurated by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal in January 2024 in Nizamabad, Telangana)
- **Makhana Board** (announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the budget speech, proposed for Bihar)

Key Roles of Commodity Boards

1. **Facilitating finance:** Providing financial assistance to farmers.
2. **Export promotion:** Assisting growers in participating in trade fairs and promoting exports.
3. **Boosting output and farmer incomes:** Supporting production and ensuring fair prices for small producers.
4. **Branding and marketing:** Creating awareness and building a brand for the commodities.

Turmeric Board Highlights

- Turmeric is known as the "Golden Spice."
- The Board aims to increase turmeric production and boost farmer incomes.
- Focus on turmeric-producing states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra.
- Plans for research and development, value addition, and export promotion.
- It will educate farmers about medicinal properties, yield improvement, and supply chain enhancements.

Makhana Board Highlights

- Makhana (also called gorgon nut) is an aquatic plant product classified as a dry fruit.
- Bihar contributes **85%** of India's gorgon nut production.
- Ideal environmental conditions for makhana cultivation include:

- Water depth: **0.45 to 1.2 meters**
- Temperature range: **20°C to 35°C**
- Humidity: **50% to 90%**
- Annual rainfall: **100 to 250 cm**

Challenges:

- Most ponds and wetlands used for makhana cultivation are owned by wealthy landowners.
- Fishermen communities, particularly **80,000 families in nine districts of Bihar**, are the primary cultivators.
- Expertise is required for proper cultivation and processing.

Key Roles of the Makhana Board:

- Supporting traders and farmers.
- Encouraging scientific research and technology adoption.
- Marketing and branding makhana products.
- Ensuring fair pricing for producers.

Concerns with Commodity Boards

- There are concerns about political motivations behind the creation of these boards:
 - The Turmeric Board was announced before the Telangana elections.
 - The Makhana Board was proposed when Bihar was preparing for elections.
- **Stakeholder Representation:**
Many boards are currently dominated by public representatives instead of real stakeholders like farmers and planters.

Expert Opinions

- **Hemant Bangur (Chairman, Indian Tea Association):**
Boards must focus not only on marketing but also on ensuring high-quality production and fair prices for small producers.
- **Indu Shekhar Singh (ICAR Makhana Expert):**
Efforts are ongoing to develop specialized boats for makhana cultivation to attract more cultivators.

Salient Points

1. **Seven Commodity Boards in India:** Five traditional ones plus newly added Turmeric and Makhana Boards.
2. **Main Roles:** Finance facilitation, export promotion, branding, and ensuring farmer income growth.
3. **Political Concerns:** Boards often announced during election seasons.
4. **Stakeholder Representation:** Calls for better involvement of real stakeholders like farmers.
5. **Makhana Facts:** Bihar produces **85%** of India's makhana, supporting **80,000**

families.

6. **Challenges in Makhana Cultivation:** Expertise required; most cultivation done by the fishermen community on lands owned by the wealthy.

This detailed yet simple summary captures all key points without missing essential facts.