

Pineapple growers worried over fall in production ahead of Ramadan

Rising mercury levels make it too hot as farmers look to rains for succour

Rising mercury levels across Kerala is brewing trouble for pineapple growers when they are gearing up to cater to the upcountry demand for the upcoming Ramadan fasting beginning March.

Pineapple is an integral fruit in Ramadan fasting and especially, Vazhakulam pineapple, finds good markets in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra where its demand multiplies during festival season. At the same time, Delhi and Jaipur markets go for green varieties.

The surging temperature since January recording more than 36 degree across the growing regions has hit pineapple production in a big way, witnessing a 30 per cent drop. Farmers are now at the mercy of rain gods to get a couple of showers that would boost production in order to meet the Ramadan demand.

Needs to double

Baby John, president of Pineapple Growers Association Keralam, said the production has declined to around 1,000 tonnes per day because of the soaring temperature and it has to be increased to a daily figure of 2,000 tonnes to meet the festival demand.

He said farmers are incurring additional costs due to water scarcity in growing regions for irrigating farmlands and applying protective measures such as coconut leaves, and green nets to cover the crop. The additional costs are to the tune of ₹15,000-20,000 per acre, which is posing a major concern. The scorching heat will affect the quality, size and weight of the fruit, thereby impacting its prices.

The production drop has boosted pineapple prices where the green varieties are ruling at ₹36 per kg, while the fruit is fetching ₹33.

To a question, he said the ongoing farmers' strike in North India has so far not disrupted pineapple movement to upcountry markets from Kerala. He went on to add that the ensuing Lok Sabha polls would push up demand for the fruit in many markets as the elections are slated to be held in the peak summer season.