

Farmers may reduce castor acreage to have better price at harvest

India is the world's largest producer of castor and its derivatives contributing to almost 65 per cent share. Gujarat, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh are the major castor growing states in India. In Gujarat, castor occupied about 7.70 lakh ha area in 2015-16 and production was estimated about 14.40 lakh tonnes as against 7.15 lakh ha area and 14.56 lakh tonnes production in 2014-15.

Last year in India castor occupied about 11.10 lakh ha area and production is estimated about 17.75 lakh tonnes (Third Advance Estimates dt. 9-5-2016) as against 18.70 lakh tonnes in 2014-15 from an area of 10.89 lakh ha. The castor oil and its fractions export increased from 5.06 lakh tonnes in 2014-15 to 5.43 lakh tonnes in 2015-16. Domestic consumption was expected about 1.70 lakh tonnes in 2015-16. This needed to crush about 15.50 lakh tonnes of castor seeds. However, castor price which was ruling around Rs. 740 per 20 kg in December, 2015 decreased to about Rs. 610 per 20 kg in February, 2016 due to some trading problems in future contracts. Currently castor price is ruling around Rs. 620 per 20 kg in various markets of Gujarat. The carry over stock of 2015-16 is expected around 4.5 lakh tonnes and this year the possibility of normal to good monsoon may increase productivity. Hence in future there are less to recover the price much more. Hence, Farmers may reduce area under castor cultivation at least by 10 per cent to have better price in ensuing season.

To make the farmers aware of the future trend in farm harvest price of castor, Department of Agricultural Economics, Junagadh Agricultural University, Junagadh, analysed the historical monthly price data of castor collected from Patan Regulated Market. The econometric analysis of castor price revealed that the **prices of castor during February to April, 2017 may remain in the range of Rs. 660 to 760 per 20 kg (3300 – 3800 Rs/qrtl) during harvesting period.** Hence, farmers are suggested to take sowing decision at their own convenience keeping above price level in view.