

News monitored for: Pepsi - Corporate

## Bengal becomes big agri resource for Pepsico

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** West Bengal is slowly becoming the sourcing hub of agro inputs for Pepsico India. Although the US multinational started collaborative farming much later in Bengal, but the number of farmers working for Pepsi in the state is catching up with states like Punjab. Jaideep Bhatia, head (agronomy), Pepsico, said the farmer base of Pepsi in Bengal has almost doubled in the last three years.

"In West Bengal, we are presently working with over 12,000 farmers. In 2010, our farmer base in the state was 6,500," he said. The figure is almost 50% of the total farmer base of Pepsico India. Pepsi is working with over 24,000 farmers across nine states. It has collaborative farming in Bengal's eight districts. PepsiCo was the first corporate to introduce collaborative farming of process-grade potatoes in India in 2004-05. "Our long-term partnership with farmers is evident in over 90% farmer retention ratio," he added.

Bhatia claimed that working with PepsiCo allows farmers to de-risk their crop against market fluctuations, ensuring consistent income to them on year-on-year basis. Additionally, supply of high-quality plantation materials, offering advanced plant protection programme and facilitation of soft loans, crop/weather risk insurance have consistently delivered superior returns to them. "Association with PepsiCo India has not only raised the incomes of small and marginal farmers, but also boosted their social stature," he added.

Anjan Sarkar, a potato farmer from Jalpaiguri, who has a contract with Pepsico, said supply to the FMCG giant from the district has gone up 10 times in the last two years. "Last year, only 30-35 tonne was supplied to Pepsi, this year it should be 1,000 tonne."

Basudeb Singh Roy of Bankura is happy with the 'profitable' deal with the US major and wants to use more of his land for Pepsi.

Meanwhile, Pepsico has invited 50 farmers from Bengal to watch IPL matches in Eden on April 20 and 24. It will be a part of Pepsi's initiative to invite 100 farmers to watch IPL across India.