

PepsiCo plans citrus farming foray

...ties up with retail chain majors to supply fruits and vegetables

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After the scripting success in contract farming ventures for basmati rice, chilli, tomato, potato, and peanuts, PepsiCo India is all agog about its citrus farming venture. "Punjab has the potential to become a global force in citrus like Brazil and China," said Sanjeev Chadha, CEO, PepsiCo India in Jalandhar. Under its contract farming initiatives, the company has developed a world class nursery spanning 25 acres in Jallowal

By 2008, it would have a capacity to grow 4 million saplings annually enabling laying of 35,000 acres of citrus orchards. What's more, farmers can choose from 16 rootstock varieties and 32 citrus scion varieties. However, the plans for the current fiscal are to utilise 10,000 acres for citrus farming.

Agri-business remains a key focus area for the company, as outlined by Indra Nooyi, president and CEO, PepsiCo, the company is looking at expanding its portfolio of products in the 'convenience foods and beverages' segment, Chadha told *FE*. After handling various assignments in Asia Pacific for PepsiCo, Chadha took up his assignment as CEO for PepsiCo India. Talking to *FE*, he sounded very optimistic about the country and said that the company wants to be a part of the Indian growth story. Going ahead, it plans to supply to the retail chain majors and is mulling tie-ups in that direction to expand its contract farming initiatives across other states.

Giving details about its various contract farming ventures, Amit K Bose, EVP-Exports, PepsiCo revealed to *FE* that the company will grow non-basmati rice and corn for the first time in Batala this year for its



brand 'Kurkure', and scale up its basmati production to 20,000 acres which it exports to Middle-East, Europe and the US.

"We plan to enter into contract farming of pomegranate

The company is looking at reducing water consumption to increase acreage by 40% per acre

and blue berries in Punjab and also encourage more farmers to grow paddy using its 'direct seeding' technique."

Also, it is looking at achieving acreage of 500 acres for re-

ducing water consumption by 40% per acre and production costs by over Rs 1,000 per acre," said Bose.

As for the citrus, Dr G S Kahlon, GM, agri-program, Pepsi foods informed that PepsiCo is conducting field trials across seven locations in Punjab at Hoshiarpur, Khanaura, Jallowal, Abohar, Lesriwal and Rozari for testing the imported varieties of citrus, primarily sweet orange, mandarin, grape fruit, lime and lemons, would be suitable for Indian conditions.