

News monitored for: Pepsi - Brands

IPL TREAT


Pepsi's natural fun for potato farmers

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For 56-year old Subrata Ghosh from village Garbeta in Bengal's Medinipur district, it was a dream come true on Saturday. Ghosh, who has been a contract potato farmer for PepsiCo India for the last nine years, was invited to the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Saturday to watch the Indian Premier League match between Kolkata Knight Riders and the Chennai Super Kings.

"I have always yearned to watch a match at Eden Gardens. I am very happy and excited to be here today," Ghosh said, his face glowing with joy. A hundred farmers across the country have been invited by PepsiCo India, the title sponsor of the IPL, to watch some matches. Of those invited, nearly half are from Bengal.

Under the "collaborative farming" arrangement with PepsiCo, potato farmers sow the "Atlanta" and "Chipsona" varieties — commonly called Pepsi Alu — that are used to make Frito-Lay branded products. The company works



Potato farmers from across the State outside Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

with over 24,000 farmers across nine States. Of these, 12,000 farmers are from Bengal, the largest procurement region for PepsiCo.

ASSURED RETURNS

The extreme volatility in potato prices over the last three years seems to have convinced an increasingly large number of growers in the State of the advantage of steady returns through contract farming over the elusive windfall of relying on the market.

"I have been growing the Pepsi potatoes for the past seven years. Though I may not make huge profits, they give a steady return, unlike the usual variety (Jyoti) that is subject to lot of price fluctuations," said

Dilip Sardar, a 32-year-old farmer from Burdwan. According to Jaideep Bhatia, vice-president, Agronomy, PepsiCo India, sponsoring farmers to IPL matches was a way of rewarding their commitment and hard work.

The company plans to scale up the share of contract farming. Contract, or "collaborative", farming accounts for nearly half the company's total requirement. The rest is met through open market purchases.

"As soon as there is an improvement in seed availability, we'd like to increase the share of collaborative farming," Bhatia said.

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