

India sets quality standards for global potato trade

NEW DELHI: Quality standards proposed by India will apply to global trade in potatoes. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, an international food standards body established jointly by the Food and Agriculture organization and the World Health Organization, has approved these standards at a session in Mexico. India's Agriculture commissioner, SK Malhotra, who chaired the global working group for development of standards for potato, told ET over the phone from Mexico that standard and quality guidelines for potato would contribute to the safety, quality and fairness of this international food trade. "Apart from protecting health of consumers from substandard food products, these standards are recognised as the reference food standards in any WTO dispute settlement under various agreements," he said. The standard guidelines cover all the commercial varieties of potatoes, considering shape, skin colour and flesh colour. "The shape varies from spherical to ovoid and oblong, elongated; the skin colour from white through yellow to tan and the flesh colour from white to yellow to blue. The provisions concerning quality, sizing, minimum requirements and tolerances allowed in each class have been elaborated in standards," Malhotra said. Globally, 380 million tonnes of potato is produced in more than 100 countries and 50% of this is consumed fresh. The tuber is important for food security for millions of people across South America, Africa, Europe and Asia. India produced about 53 million tonnes of potatoes during 2018-19. The country exports around 3.5 lakh tonnes of potatoes a year, earning Rs 350-400 crore.

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