

Agriculture Ministry takes quick action to help tomato farmers in Barwani

Madhya Pradesh Govt orders issue of curfew passes

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With chaos in farm mandis across the country following the nationwide lockdown, *BusinessLine* on Thursday featured a story, "As mandis get shut, here are five ways the government can help farmers cope", highlighting the ground-level situation in several States, including Madhya Pradesh. On reading the story, an official from the Ministry of Agriculture called the writer to understand the state of affairs in Madhya Pradesh. The problems of tomato farmers in the three districts of Barwani, Shivpuri and Ratlam, where truckloads of harvested produce have been stuck over the last few days and face the risk

of rotting in the heat, were explained to the authorities.

Immediately, PK Swain, Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Government of India, connected with the Madhya Pradesh Principal Secretary, Agriculture, Ajith Kesari, and the Managing Director of the Mandi Board, Sandeep Yadav.

Late in the afternoon, the writer received a call from the Madhya Bharat Consortium of Farmers Producer Company in Madhya Pradesh, stating that District Collector Amit Tomar had called and assured them that a pass would be issued for farmers to ensure that their trucks reach Bhopal without any problems.

Tomatoes to reach Bhopal

The Consortium plans to transport the first load of 15 tonnes

of tomatoes to Bhopal from Barwani tomorrow, a distance of 200 km.

While traders in Barwani pay only ₹5-8 for a kg of the produce to farmers, in the local market in Bhopal, tomatoes sell at ₹30-35/kg.

The FPO will incur a cost of ₹3-4/kg for transporting the tomatoes to Bhopal. But the Producer Organisation is still happy as it intends to sell the tomatoes for ₹20/kg.

Now, potato farmers from the Tarana block of Ujjain district in Madhya Pradesh are also planning to reach out to the Collector for curfew passes to reach the tubers to the city where they will be sold.

The Ministry of Agriculture is now taking steps to ensure that at least fruit and vegetable mandis across the country are either reopened or farmers are given passes to take the produce to the markets directly. It appears that the Lasalgaon mandi in Maharashtra, the largest for onions, may open by tomorrow.

However, basic hygiene practices, including wearing of masks and social distancing, will be followed at the mandis, adds Swain.



Farmer truck loaded with tomato in Barwani