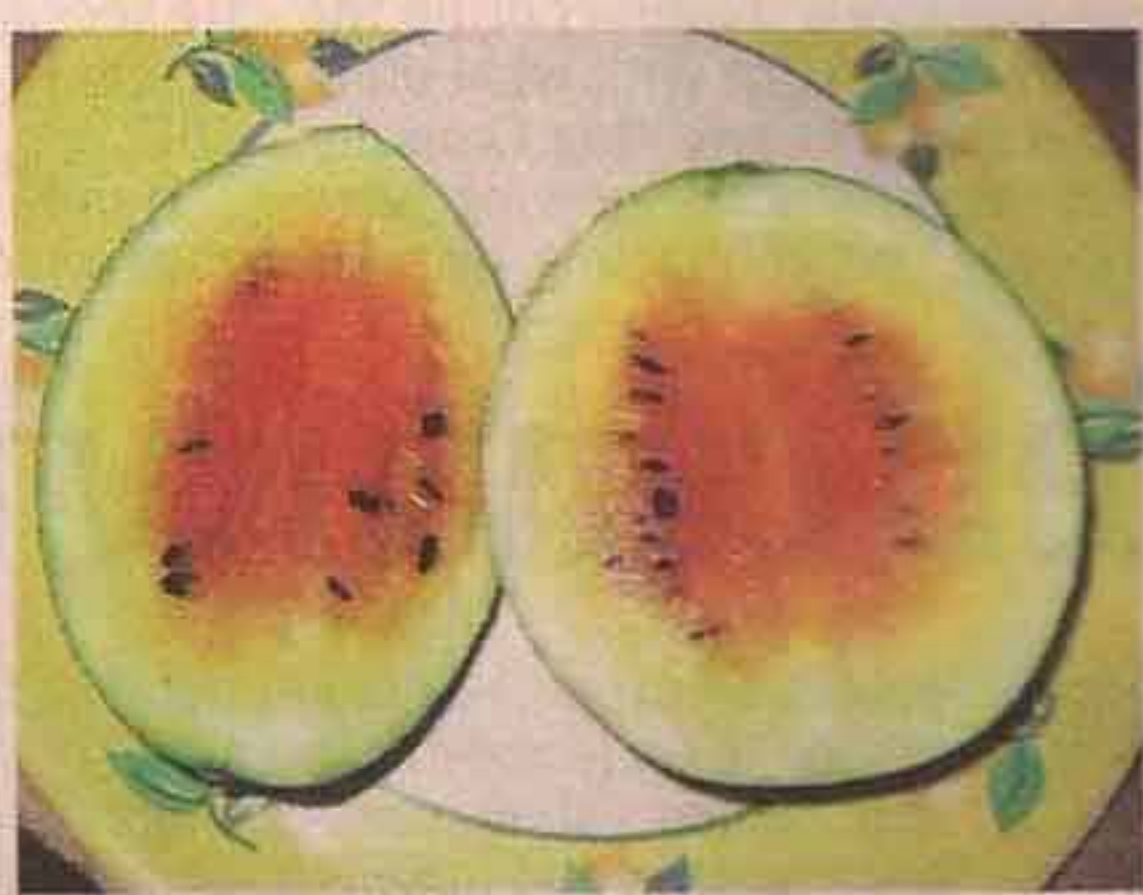


A riot of colours in melons, anyone?



introduced February, while the orange fleshed and red-yellow watermelons (Champavati) will be launched in early 2013," said Dhirendra Kumar, managing director.

Branded after Indian rivers, these fruits will have a longer shelf-life of 30-35 days (from the time they are harvested), compared to 10 days which non-hybrid varieties, said Kumar. "The fruits will maintain sweetness and will have lesser seeds and weigh about 1-2 kg, thereby aiding in portability."

The prices will be almost 50% higher per kg compared to the usually available varieties.

In February the firm had introduced watermelon with yellow outer skin and a white fleshed muskmelon and Kumar said the demand was phenomenal.

Due to its hybrid nature, the yield per acre is also significantly more, says Ram Yadav, who interacts with Andhra farmers who are growing these watermelons. Usual watermelon yield is around 12-15 metric tonne per acre, fetching the farmer ₹2-3 per kg. While the hybrid varieties yield 30-40 metric tonne per acre and due to their exotic colours, fetch the farmers ₹12-20 per kg, says Kumar.

The ₹100 crore firm, which earns about 80% of its turnover from hybrid melons, chillies and tomatoes, is expecting a growth of 25-30% annually from its melons, similar to what the melon market in India is witnessing. Kumar says Camson will also look at markets in Dubai, Singapore and other Asian countries in the future.

Bangalore-based Camson is introducing yellow, orange and bi-coloured watermelons and green muskmelons

Priyanka Golikeri • BANGALORE

Ever seen grown-in-India watermelons that are not red, but yellow or orange or a combination of yellow and red? Or green hued muskmelons?

The picture alongside could be highly intriguing and might seem too good to be true. But an agri-biotech firm in Bangalore is on the verge of introducing these exotic hybrid varieties of melons in February, which would be grown by farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh; in districts like Warangal, Nizamabad, Anantpur, Koppal, Kurnool, Bijapur, Ranebenur, Moradabad, Bareilly, etc.

Camson Biotechnologies, which makes hybrid seeds, will give the seeds to contract farmers who will be taught to cross pollinate and cultivate the melons. Once harvested, Camson will buy the produce from the farmers and sell the same through supermarkets in the metros.

"The green fleshed muskmelon and yellow fleshed watermelon (branded as Bagmati) will be