

Camson Biotech develops fit-to-fridge watermelons

September 11, 2010

Suresh P. Iyengar

Mumbai, Sept. 10

Now, lighter and smaller watermelons will hit the market for those who want an easy fit option for their refrigerators.

The recently launched 'Freezer Watermelon' developed by Camson Biotechnologies weighs no more than 3-4 kg unlike the conventional ones that weigh over 10 kg. Further, when cut, not a drop of juice goes waste or trickles from the melon.

The flesh is crunchy, soft and sweeter than the earlier varieties. Globally, Camson-type hybrid watermelon variety is known as ice box watermelon.

Camson Biotechnologies has not only received an encouraging response for its variety but appears to have helped farmers reap better rewards in terms of price and appeal.

Mr Dhirendra Kumar, Managing Director, Camson Biotechnologies, said though his hybrid seeds cost Rs 45,000-60,000 a kg, they were in demand as the yield was far higher than the conventional varieties. Seeds of the conventional watermelons are sold at Rs 5,000-8,000 a kg.

"While normal hybrid watermelon seed output is 8-12 tonnes an acre, Camson's Netravati gives 30-32 tonnes an acre and Vedavati yields 35-40 tonnes an acre," he said. The hybrids also score on the price front. As against Rs 5-8 a kg for the normal watermelon, the Camson's command Rs 10-15 a kg.

"Since the Camson seeds are smaller, about 250 g of seeds are enough cover an acre, while 500 g of the conventional variety seeds are required for the same area," said Mr Jitendra Singh, a Chandigarh-based farmer who recently sowed Camson's seeds. The plant matures in 75-80 days and has thick foliage with a few seeds," he said.

The Camson's two seed varieties – Netravati and Vedavati – are in demand in the tier-II and tier-III cities.



Competition

Camson's watermelon seeds are pitched against Taiwan-based "Known-You Seed Co Ltd" in a market estimated at 150-200 tonnes a year. "There is a huge shortage of hybrid watermelon seeds in India as there are only 10-15 tonnes of seeds available in the market and the waiting period for our seeds extends up to six months," said Mr Kumar.

To service the demand, Camson is setting up two manufacturing and production facilities at Nangal, Himachal Pradesh and Kotabagh, Uttarakhand, exclusively for the northern markets. The Himachal Pradesh facility will be the first to begin production.

Hybrid veggies

Besides watermelon hybrid seeds, Camson offers hybrid vegetable seeds such as lady's-finger, tomato, brinjal, chilli, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, ridge gourd, sponge gourd, sweet corn and baby corn. It makes a wide range of bio-products including biocides and bio-fertilisers.

"We focus on innovation-led R&D for bettering agriculture-produce through crop protection and higher yield with research stations at Bangalore and Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh," said Mr Kumar.