

ALTERNATE METHOD

Sugarbeet may help bridge sweet gap

LUCKNOW: Sugarbeet has the potential to help meet the sugar requirement of the country by the year 2025. India needs to produce about 30 million tonnes of sugar by that time.

Experts put forth this theory during a national workshop on 'Sugarbeet as a Supplementary Sugar Crop in India'. It was held at the Indian Institute of Sugarcane Research, Lucknow, on Wednesday. Fifty experts discussed how to harness the potential of the sugarbeet, a cultivated plant whose root contains a high concentration

of sucrose. Even optimum sugarcane production (350m tonnes) can yield about 20-21 mt sugar.

As the cultivable area has been shrinking, the 9-10 mt gap would be difficult to bridge with increased sugarcane production alone.

Sugarbeet is best grown in a temperate climate and its cultivation in India has not spread to large areas.

Also, the investment in processing the infrastructure is restricted to small pockets. Thus, sugarbeet is not a popular option in India, although

its contribution to the world sugar production is about 25%. Vasantdada Sugar Institute (Pune) director general Shivajirao Deshmukh, who inaugurated the meet, said a long-term policy and a coordinated approach were essential to achieve success.

He also cited the successful implementation of a pilot project on sugarbeet cultivation and processing in Sangali, Maharashtra.

Dr Gurbachan Singh, agriculture commissioner, union ministry of agriculture, was the chief guest.