

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2432
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.12.2024

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO STABILIZE SUPPLY CHAINS OF FOOD ITEMS

2432. SMT. SUMITRA BALMIK

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps taken by the Ministry to find innovative solutions for stabilizing the price of tomato and onion;
- (b) the details of the recently held tomato grand challenge and the kind of innovative ideas that have come forward;
- (c) the support provided by the Ministry to startups working in this domain; and
- (d) whether such initiatives like the tomato hackathon is planned for other items as well, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE, CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI B.L VERMA)

(a) to (d) : Prices of perishable agri-horticultural commodities like tomato and onion are volatile because of the seasonality in production and susceptibility of the crop to adverse weather condition which impacted the crop health, shelf life and supply chain. In order to address the challenge of price volatility in these crops, the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, in collaboration with Innovation Cell of All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Ministry of Education initiated a hackathon titled Tomato Grand Challenge (TGC) by inviting innovative ideas at various levels of the tomato value chain. The Tomato Grand Challenge (TGC) launched on 30.06.2023 was met with enthusiastic response from students, research scholars, faculty members, industry individuals, start-ups and professionals.

A total of 1,376 ideas were received from innovators across India with ideas/technologies encompassing market insights for the farmers through modern technology adaptation; value-addition through interventions that can increase shelf-life; improved transportation and packaging; cost-effective storage solutions; and processing and value addition. After rigorous rounds of evaluation by experts, 28 ideas have been provided funding for prototype development and mentorship. The projects underwent periodic monitoring, short visits, and reviews by TGC Evaluation Committee of AICTE and Department of Consumer Affairs. Multiple rounds of evaluation by panel of experts culminated in final evaluations where projects were judged on their relevance, scalability, and innovation. The Tomato Grand Challenge created a significant impact, leading to filing of many Intellectual Properties (IPs) which includes 14 patents, 4 design registrations/Trademark and 10 publications.

Department of Consumer Affairs had, earlier, organised a similar hackathon titled Onion Grand Challenge in 2022 in collaboration with Innovation Cell of AICTE. The innovative technology solutions developed in the Onion Grand Challenge are at different stages of adoption and deployment.
