

Mattu Gulla set to sail abroad next year

Export network to UAE planned



Mattu Gulla is grown in select villages in Udupi district.

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People from the coastal districts of Karnataka who are settled in the Middle East may, in the coming year, be able to enjoy dishes of the famed Mattu Gulla, a variety of brinjal that has Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Though a consignment of the vegetable was sent to Kuwait from Mattu village December last through an agency, a formal export network has not been established.

Known for its unique taste, Mattu Gulla is grown in Mattu, Kaipunjil and Uliyargoli villages of Udupi district. About 200 farmers cultivate this rare variety of brinjal on about 120 acres of land from October to June. These farmers have formed a collective called Mattu Gulla Belegarara Sangha.

Besides, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) sanctioned the Mattu Gulla Farmer-Producers' Organisation (FPO) in 2015. In an effort to expand the market for this vegetable, Harish Joshi, professor at Manipal Institute of Management and NABARD project coordinator for Mattu Gulla, has been in touch with three firms in the United Arab Emirates run by people from Udupi district for exporting Mattu Gulla from here. They have agreed to it.

"We could not do much

this year because a lot of the Mattu Gulla crop was destroyed during the heavy rains. The current produce will be needed to meet the local demand. Hence, we will take up exports next season. This will also give the firms time to study and meet the import requirements of the UAE," he said.

Lakshman Mattu, president of the Mattu Gulla Belegarara Sangha, said the production of Mattu Gulla fell by about 70% because of the rains this year. "We sent 500 kg of Mattu Gulla to Kuwait last December. If Mattu Gulla is exported, the demand for it will increase and farmers will get good price for it. But maintaining quality will sometimes be a challenge. This is because the quality of crop is affected by rains," he said.

Legend has it that over 400 years ago, Sri Vadiraja (1480-1600) of Sode Mutt, one of the Ashta Mutts of Udupi, gave the seeds of this special brinjal to the farmers of Mattu to cultivate. The speciality of Mattu Gulla, besides its taste, is that it has less seed and more pulp.

This vegetable has a special relationship with the biennial Paryaya festival held in Udupi as the farmers offer the crop to the 800-year-old Sri Krishna Mutt/Temple for the festival. A dish is prepared using it and served to devotees.