

Name of Paper : THE TRIBUNE

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Published at : NEW DELHI

Dated : 7 JUN 2012

Govt to facilitate basmati export

Exporters want pesticide norms relaxed

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, JUNE 6

Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal today assured a delegation of rice exporters that the Basmati Development Board would be strengthened to facilitate basmati export.

The Chief Minister, who met a delegation of the Punjab Rice Millers Exporters Association led by its executive director Ashok Sethi here, said the board would create a congenial atmosphere for the export of basmati. He said the area under basmati cultivation had increased from 6 lakh hectares to more than 8 lakh hectares in the state during past few years.

Badal hoped that the strengthening of the board would not only be instrumental in improving the quality of basmati rice but would also safeguard the interests of the industry as well as farmers.

Emphasising the need to

enhance the export of basmati from Punjab, Badal said the board would initiate a worldwide campaign and create awareness among the farmers to refrain from excessive use of pesticides and fungi-

cides. Conceding the long-pending demand of the association, the Chief Minister asked the Rural Development Board to release a sum of Rs 8 crore on account of refund. On the demand to reduce the Punjab Infra-



structure Development Fund (PIDF) cess on rice mills, the CM asked the departments concerned to study the issue in a holistic manner before taking a final decision. Food and Civil Supplies Minister Adesh Partap Singh Kairon assured the delegation that he would take up the matter of relaxing pesticide norms for rice exporters with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Indian Council of Agriculture Research.