

# Farmers say cheers as barley sales to SABMiller fetch high prices

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**Chomu (Rajasthan), March 25:** Boduram Yadav, a farmer in Chinanpura village of Jaipur district, swears by barley. It only helps that his yields have risen steadily over the last few years. From 12-14 quintal/acre a decade ago, they are 24-28 quintal/acre now, mainly due to better seeds and improvement in agricultural practices.

Mangal Singh Saini of the adjoining Kaladera village has also grown barley on 5 acres this year, and he expects a premium on the government's minimum support price (MSP) of ₹980 per quintal.

Yadav and Saini are among the 10,000 farmers, most of them small, partnering liquor major

SABMiller India for growing global quality barley, a key raw material for beer. The company initiated a farmer partnership programme in 2005, through which it aims to secure a sustainable supply of malt-quality barley.

"Since the company buys all of our barley, we have stopped going to the mandis," Yadav said. He said this year he expects to get ₹1,100 per quintal against the MSP of ₹980 per quintal.

"We assure farmers on the expected price, which is more than the MSP. In return, they need to follow our guidance on adopting modern agricultural practices," a field official at the liquor major said.

Through thirty-two Saanjhi



**A barley farmer in Rajasthan. As SABMiller buys the entire produce, farmers going to Saanjhi Unnati Centres don't have to sell at mandis anymore** EXPRESS PHOTO

Unnati Centres located across five key states, SABMiller buys barley from farmers, paying them cash. Farmers get quality seeds and fer-

tiliser at subsidised rates, apart from critical inputs on modern agricultural practices, at these centres.

"We used a lot of seeds for a high yield; however, our seed usage has declined by more than 25% while the yield has gone up significantly," Saini said.

Farmers are told to adopt simple agronomic practices, such as sowing in a single row, a field official at SABMiller said.

At present, about half the barley needs of the company's 10 breweries, located across nine states, are met through Saanjhi Unnati. And the rest is sourced from traders and imports.

"Through the programme, the farmers have benefited in getting

an assured market for their barley, transparent transactions and fair pricing structures. The objective is not only to improve the yield and income of barley farmers, but also to improve their overall standard of their living," Ajit Jha, director, corporate affairs and communication at SABMiller India, said.

Of the 1.5 million tonne of barley produced annually in the country, only 6 lakh tonne is used to make beer, and the rest is used as animal feed. Rajasthan contributes more than 40%, and the rest is contributed by UP, Haryana, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh.

Barley is suitable for the northern India as it requires 30-40% less water than wheat.