

Bihar Seeks MSP for Makhana, Flags Issues at ICAR-NRC Darbhanga

October 27, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com



What's in today's article?

- Why in News?
- What is Makhana?
- What is Indian Council of Agricultural Research — National Research Centre (ICAR-NRC) for Makhana?
- Demand by Bihar Govt

Why in News?

The Bihar government has urged the Centre to declare the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for makhana, an aquatic crop.

The state has also flagged lack of manpower at the Darbhanga (Bihar)-based Indian Council of Agricultural Research — National Research Centre (ICAR-NRC) for Makhana.

What is Makhana?

- **About**

- Makhana are also known as fox nuts, Euryale ferox, lotus seeds, gorgon nuts and phool makhana.
- **Botanical name** – Euryale ferox Salisb
- Basically, it is an aquatic crop, belonging to the family of Nymphaeaceae.

- **Cultivation**

- This plant, which is grown commercially, is often found in stagnant water bodies like ponds, swamps, oxbow lakes, ditches, and certain low-lying areas.
- It thrives naturally in warm, tropical, and subtropical climates.
- Farmers typically sow the seeds in shallow water, and the plants are allowed to grow until they flower and produce seeds.

- **Harvesting**

- Harvesting usually occurs during the summer months. The mature seeds are collected from the water, dried in the sun, and then roasted to remove the hard outer shell.
- The process of roasting and popping is essential to convert the hard seeds into the light, crunchy, and edible form we recognize as makhana.

- **Areas where makhana is produced**

- Makhana plant or Euryale ferox Salisb is a native of South-East Asia and China, but is now distributed and exported to different parts of the world.
- In the initial years of commercial production, the plant's distribution was limited to tropical and sub-tropical regions of South-East and East Asia and other countries.
- This includes Japan, Korea, Russia, North America, Nepal, Bangladesh to name a few.
 - In India, the makhana seeds are distributed in different states including West Bengal, Bihar, Manipur, Tripura, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Eastern Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- However, the commercial cultivation and processing is limited to North Bihar, Manipur, parts of West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh.

- **Indian States Producing Makhana**

- Traditionally the Indian state of Bihar has been the hub of makhana cultivation and production.
- The focused and major lotus seeds producing districts includes Madhubani, Darbhanga, Sitamarhi, Saharsa, Supaul, Araria, Kishanganj, Purnia and Katihar.
- It should be noted that 80% of the total production of processed makhana seeds comes from 4 districts of Madhubani, Darbhanga, Purnia and Saharsa.
- Out of these districts, Madhubani and Darbhanga lead the production.

- **Nutritional Value of Makhana**

- **Fox nut has a low Glycemic Index (GI)**
 - It means that is slowly absorbed by the body and does not shoot the sugar level in human beings and is also helpful for people suffering for diabetes.
- **High Fiber Content**
 - High fiber acts as an absorbent and is helpful for the body ,in heart management, keeping the body fit and fine.
- **Low in Calories**

- Fox nuts can be eaten on a daily basis in different forms to regulate normal body functions.
- **High in Potassium** and also contains Vitamin B1, carotene, iodine, iron, and phosphorous in addition to calcium.
- The natural sodium content in phool makhana is insignificant which is also helpful to manage blood pressure.

What is Indian Council of Agricultural Research — National Research Centre (ICAR-NRC) for Makhana?

- The ICAR-NRC for Makhana, Darbhanga, was sanctioned by the Department of Agricultural Research & Education.
- It was sanctioned as a new scheme during the **IX Five Year Plan period (1997-2002)** for Conservation, Research & Development of the makhana crop.
- It started functioning from February 2002.
- However, in 2005, the NRC for Makhana was merged and brought under the administrative control of ICAR-Research Complex for Eastern Region (RCER), Patna.
 - With this move, the national tag of the NRC for Makhana was revoked.
- In May 2023, the Central government restored the status of Research Centre for Makhana, Darbhanga to “National Research Centre for Makhana, Darbhanga.”
 - It added other aquatic crops including fish in its mandate.
- However, the NRC for Makhana was transferred under the administrative control of the ICAR’s Agricultural Engineering Division and attached to the Ludhiana-based ICAR-Central Institute of Post Harvest Engineering & Technology.

Demand by Bihar Govt

- **Declare the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for makhana**
 - The Bihar government has urged the Centre to declare the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for makhana.
 - It has also flagged lack of manpower at the Darbhanga-based Indian Council of Agricultural Research — National Research Centre (ICAR-NRC) for Makhana and told the Centre it was in bad shape.
- **Bihar - hub of makhana production**
 - About 85 per cent of the country’s makhana production comes from Bihar.
 - About 10 lakh people are directly or indirectly involved in its cultivation and production process.
 - Most of the farmers who cultivate the GI-tagged makhana — in Darbhanga, Saharsa, Madhepura, Supaul, Purnia, Katihar, Araria, Kishanganj, Madhubani and Sitamarhi districts of the state — come from poor backgrounds.
- **Darbhanga-based ICAR-NRC in bad shape**
 - The Darbhanga-based ICAR-NRC for Makhana has only 10 employees against a sanctioned strength of 42.
 - There’s no administrative staff and a full-time director was never appointed.
 - Bihar govt has emphasized that the ICAR-NRC for Makhana in Darbhanga needs to be upgraded, and its administrative headquarters should be moved to Patna.

Q.1. What is GI Tag?

A Geographical Indication (GI) tag is a certification that identifies a product as originating from a specific region, attributing its unique quality, reputation, or characteristics to that location, thus protecting and promoting regional products and heritage.

Q.2. What is Minimum Support Price (MSP)?

Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a government-set price at which it purchases crops from farmers, ensuring them a minimum profit and protecting them from market fluctuations and low prices, thereby encouraging agricultural production and stability.

Source: Bihar govt seeks MSP for makhana, flags 'bad shape' of research centre | [Makhana.Org](#) | [NDTV Food](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/bihar-seeks-msp-for-makhana-flags-issues-at-icar-nrc-darbhanga/>

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