

Syngenta, NRCG research partnership to benefit grape farmers

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The research was done using different crop protection brands of Syngenta India Limited, to ensure production of quality grapes with a lower MRL that can meet the stringent requirements of the European market. This is crucial at a time when Maharashtra grapes are registering an impressive footprint across EU.

The results gain importance when Maharashtra has recorded a remarkable 26 K tonnes of grapes export this year so far as against 15 K tonnes in March last year. Majority of the exports are done to European Union countries, which impose stiff quality control regulations including minimum residues levels (MRL).

The research report of Syngenta India Ltd and NRCG, which is ready for publication in academic journals, noted that "Plant protection practices in vineyards based on location specific weather forecast and guideline developed by NRCG, Pune are useful in reducing expenses on crop protection and produce quality grapes with less pesticide applications and residues." It further adds: "The schedule developed by NRC for Grapes Pune and Syngenta India Limited using mainly Syngenta brands, when implemented, based on location specific weather forecast and above mentioned guidelines, showed effective disease and insect pest management in grapes. Thus the pesticide schedule can be adopted by growers along with weather forecast based advisory developed by NRC for grapes, Pune. The usage of pesticides however, will be based on valid CIB label claims of the formulations for use in grapes."

NRCG is a nodal Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) institute responsible for research and development in grapes. The institute and its scientists are well known for their technical knowledge and expertise in different aspects of grape cultivation.

"Grape farmers suffer losses when a consignment is rejected due to MRL issues. Syngenta decided to solve this problem proactively and launched this research project with NRCG and results speak for themselves. This will help growers minimize their rejections and increase their returns. In addition growers achieve sustained profits and protect the environment. For

Syngenta this is living its value and purpose of bringing plant potential to life," said Syngenta representative Mr Gudihal Anand, Head, Crop Marketing, Specialty crops, South Asia.

Grape is one of the important fruit crops grown in India. It offers attractive remuneration to growers due to domestic demand and export to European countries. Insect pests and diseases are some of the major hurdles in improving productivity. Regular usage of crop protection products is one of the important considerations in grape cultivation but most of the times the grower's anxiety results in indiscriminate use leading to residues beyond acceptable limits. This results in rejection of export consignment and huge losses to the grower.

The findings of the research are significant as they will help growers across the country follow robust and scientific crop protection processes, reduce expenses and help them grow world-quality grapes. Though Maharashtra accounts for the largest share of grape cultivation - 82% - of 220,000 tonnes, according to Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), grapes are also cultivated in other states including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Mizoram, Punjab, J&K, Haryana, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh.

Growers are a happy lot. Mr Pramod Rao Saheb Patil of Bolwad in Sangli district said, "Because of changing climatic conditions the use of quality crop protection products like those from Syngenta are the need of the hour. It is because of Syngenta fungicides Revus & Amistar that my vineyard is safe even though weather conditions were favorable for the deadly disease - downy mildew. All growers should use Syngenta's new generation fungicides like Revus and Amistar to produce disease free and quality raisin."

One of the key factors in grapes productivity is the spraying decision, which for want of scientific know-how and extension, has been a handicap. Now with the new research, it is proved that when spraying decision is taken based on weather conditions and scientific forecasting it helps to reduce the number of sprays and production of high-quality grapes. The study found that growers could save upto 9 sprays per season using Syngenta's schedule, which constitutes about 33% saving on their expenses.

Helping growers has been a focus for Syngenta. "Revus 25 SC is the best front line fungicide for effective management of Downy Mildew. Amistar 25 SC is the best solution for the management of both Downy and Powdery mildew. It helps in increasing the quality aspects and helps to reduce Pink Berry incidence. Residues of the recommended pesticides were found lower than MRL prescribed by EU countries," informed Dr Deshmukh on the products of Syngenta.