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Shri Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Union Minister of Food Processing Industry laid the foundation stone for First Maize based Mega Food Park in Kapurthala, Punjab today. Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti, Minister of State for Food Processing was also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion Shri Harsimrat Kaur Badal said that Maize is an amazing cereal and is an alternate to *Jhona* (paddy) and *Kanak* (wheat). Maize is rich in protein, provides nutritional requirements that India needs and Maize consumes much lesser water and could contain the problem of further water depletion. The Mega Food Park is being developed by Sukhjit Mega Food Park & Infra Limited at village Rehana Jattan, Phagwara, District Kapurthala, Punjab. She also said that Kapurthala has been declared as a Dark Zone district where slow desertification is happening because of overexploitation of water due to cash crops. So establishment of this Mega Food Park was not allowed. Since this would be a maize based Mega Food Park which will promote crop diversification and water conservation, Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal informed that her ministry made special efforts to get this Mega Food Park approved from Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. Establishment of this Mega Food Park will result in the development of this Dark Zone which includes Job opportunities, Environmental Conservation, she added.

Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal also said that there is an urgent need to turn to Maize and our government would relentlessly work to make Maize as the third viable staple crop of Punjab after Wheat and Rice and growing of maize with enhanced quality of seeds. A Maize based Food Park is like putting an engine to the cart so that cultivation of maize grows leaps and bounds. Highlighting the new flagship scheme "KISAN SAMPADA YOJANA", Minister of Food Processing Industries said that with the aim of making every farmer a Food Processor also, this scheme has been designed where farmers can also set up big or small food processing units and marketing units. She also said that enterprises willing to set up maize based food processing units in Sukhjit Mega Food Park would get loan from NABARD at affordable rates. She also thanked the state government for extending support for the establishment of the Mega Food Park.

Background:

Maize Based Mega Food Park is the first major and serious step in the history of India for containing the desertification problem of Punjab and would make farmers turn to maize cultivation which need less water for more production. Maize is being used by different industries for seed, starch, brewery, food additives, sweeteners etc and it is also a basic raw material to thousands of industrial products like oil, proteins, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, beverages, film, textile, gum, value added foods, paper industries, bio-ethanol etc.

The Mega Food Park will leverage an additional investment of about Rs.250 crores in 25-30 food processing units in the park and generate turnover of Rs.450-500 crores annually. The Park will provide direct and indirect employment to 5,000 persons and benefit about 25,000 farmers.

Set up in an area of 55 acres, the first Maize based Park is being built with an investment of Rs. 123.7 crores with a grant of Rs.50 crores by Union Food Processing Industries Ministry to have Multipurpose Cold Storage of 3, 000 Metric tonnes, Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) and Deep Freezer 1 Metric Tonne/Hour capacity, Sorting and Grading Yard of 2,000 sqm and Food Testing Lab. In addition to that promoter is also set up an Anchor Unit with an investment of Rs.105 crores

for Maize Processing with an installed grinding capacity of 500 Metric Tonnes a day.



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