

# FCI RICE TO BE USED FOR ETHANOL PRODUCTION

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The Central government has allocated 78,000 tonnes of rice procured for food security purposes to be diverted to ethanol production instead this year, at a subsidised rate of Rs. 20 a kg, Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said on Tuesday. However, he insisted that the share of rice in ethanol production was “miniscule and transitory”, emphasising that maize would form the primary feedstock for grain-based ethanol production instead.

This is part of the government’s plan to double distilling capacities by 2025, partly by encouraging an increase in the share of grain-based ethanol production from the current focus on molasses-based production.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented a road map advancing the target date for achieving 20% blending of ethanol in petrol by five years to 2025. The last two years have seen blending levels of around 5%, which is likely to jump to 8.5% in the current year, according to a Ministry statement.

Mr. Pandey told presspersons that the Centre was targeting an ethanol production of 1,500 crore litres by 2025, out of which almost half, 740 crore litres, would be from grain-based distilleries, with the remainder coming from sugar-based distilleries. Currently, about a third of the 710 crore litre ethanol production capacity comes from grains. Only 38 crore litres of grain-based ethanol is used for fuel.

This year, the Centre had committed for about three lakh tonnes of rice procured by the Food Corporation of India for ethanol production.

However, only 78,000 tonnes would be lifted by six distilleries, said Mr. Pandey.

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