

State plans 4 food parks for Rs 100 Cr

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Work on four food processing parks being set up for an investment of Rs 100 crore in four cities in the state is progressing on schedule. The food parks will start functioning from next year, Karnataka horticulture minister Umesh Katti said.

Inaugurating the Mango and Jackfruit Mela at Lalbagh he said land has been acquired for the proposed food processing parks planned at Kolar, Mysore, Hassan and Belgaum. Parks would be provided all processing facilities, and also conference halls and cold storages. Efforts are being made to restore Karnataka's leading position in horticultural crops which has seen the state slide to the third place from being the top producer of horticulture crops in the country, he said.

The main objective of developing these food processing parks was to promote exports. **A Delhi-based marketing company Premium Farm Fresh** has come forward to work with the government under the public-private partnership model to set up the parks. An international marketing park on a 77-acre plot in Devanahalli has also been planned, he said.

Katti said the state has no intention to develop such parks on its own. But, it will support the private sector firms if they come forward to strengthen the marketing network for horticulture crops. These food processing parks will work at elimination of middlemen and thereby ensure higher prices for the produce.

According to the minister, nearly 30 per cent of the mango crops in Devanahalli and Chikkaballapur taluks have been damaged by unseasonal rainfall last month. Officials of the revenue department were surveying the extent of damage of the mango crop. Banana plantation had also been destroyed by unseasonal rain and strong winds in Bangalore rural district, he said.

In the last 10 days, the horticulture department has sold 426 tonnes of mango fruit under the banner of Mango Mela.