

# UP pushes for more molasses for ethanol

## Cuts Share Meant For Breweries

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**Lucknow:** Desi daru (country liquor) will have to wait. Part of the molasses meant for local breweries in UP would soon be diverted for the manufacture of ethanol, the renewable fuel essentially meant for blending with petrol in the state.

Highly placed sources in the cane development department said that around an additional six lakh quintal of molasses generated in the sugar mills would be earmarked for the manufacture of more than 1.3 crore litre ethanol. Sources said that the state govt had initially fixed a quota of 26% molasses for the manufacture of country liquor. This is now proposed to be reduced to 25%, a development that is seen as a culmination of a hectic and prolonged deliberation with the sugar mills in the state.

A senior official in the cane development department said that ethanol production has been turning out to be a

Representational photo



### **FIXING PRIORITIES**

key priority of the state govt to meet the target of a 20% blending rate in petrol by 2025, in what has necessitated an annual production of 990 crore litre of ethanol in the country.

In the case of UP, ethanol production has increased dramatically from around 43 crore litre in 2016-17 to 180 crore litre in 2023-24, industry data show. Accordingly, the blending rates too have been on the rise.

As a matter of fact, the govt has been looking to optimise the use of grain and sugarcane feedstock to ramp up the production of ethanol. In UP, the option of using maize for the purpose is being given much prominence. Sources said that the agriculture department and the sugar mill operators have begun discussions to identify maize cultivation areas in every sugar mill region.

Officials said that the state govt plans to increase the maize cultivation area by around 2 lakh hectare in the next four years. For this, the state govt would be providing subsidies to the farmers on equipment related to maize cultivation. Significantly, the UP govt has launched the 'Rapid Maize Development Scheme' under which it has allocated a budget of Rs 27.68 crore in the 2024-25 state budget.

Currently, maize is sown in an area of around 830,000 hectare in the state. The plan is to increase the cultivation area by 200,000 hectare and boost production. The central govt has also initiated a project called 'Increasing Maize Production in the Watershed Areas of Ethanol Industries', which is being implemented by the Indian Institute of Maize Research (IIMR). Under this project, 15 states, including UP, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, have been selected.

Sugar industry experts, however, apprehend that the measure needs to be taken up in a controlled manner to ensure that the increase in maize cultivation area does not come at the cost of sugarcane, which may lead to underutilisation of mill capacities, eventually leading to rise in cost of sugar.