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Spine gourd good for diabetes patients: ICAR

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NEW DELHI: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has identified the first variety of spine gourd for commercial cultivation in Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Maharashtra. Indira Kankoda-I (RMF 37), as it is called, is said to be good for diabetes patients.

"The consumption of green fruits and tubers stimulates the pancreas and controls the sugar level. It also contains 12 to 14 per cent protein. The fruit is sold at Rs. 20-60 a kg in the market," said the ICAR.

Kankoda, also known as Meetha Karela, Khekhsa, Padora, Bhaat Karela, is popular for its nutritional value and shelf life. The spine gourd is sown at the onset of monsoon every year. A good yield can be harvested every year up to five to six years from the same tubers/plants.

The gourd has been developed by the Ambikapur-based (Chhattisgarh) Indira Gandhi Agricultural University. It was recently identified in the group meet of the All-India Coordinated Research Network on Underutilised Crops held at Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana.

According to agriculturists, spine gourd is resistant to all major pests. Its attractive green fruits are ready for harvest in 75-80 days from seeds in the first year and in 35-40 days from tubers from the second year of cultivation till five to six years. Three to four pickings can be done for the green fruit. The approximate weight of the average fruit is about 14 grams. The average yield of this variety of gourd is between eight to 10 quintals per hectare in the first year, 10 to 15 quintals per hectare in the second year and 15 to 20 quintals per hectare from the third year on.