

Jackfruit to be Kerala's state fruit; declaration on March 21

Elephant is the state animal of Kerala, while 'great hornbill' the bird and 'kanikkonna' the official flower. The state had recently declared pearl spot, popularly known as 'karimeen', as its official fish

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After the state animal, bird, flower and fish, Kerala is all set to get its “official fruit” now. And it is none other than the jack fruit, the largest tree borne fruit known for its distinctive taste and aroma. The state government will make an official declaration in this regard on March 21, based on a proposal of the Agriculture Department.

The government also plans to promote the 'Kerala Jack fruit' as a brand in markets across the country and abroad, highlighting its organic and nutritious qualities. State Agriculture Minister V S Sunil Kumar said the core objective of the government was to give a fillip to the production and sale of jack fruit and its value-added products.

A total revenue of Rs 15,000 crore is expected through sale of jack fruit and its allied products through the branding of the fruit, he said. “We are planning to declare the jack fruit as the state fruit on March 21. I will make an announcement in this regard at the state Assembly also,” Sunil Kumar told PTI.

“Though jack fruit is one of the most widely produced fruits in the state, we are yet to tap its potential completely. Crores of jack fruits, that also of different varieties, are produced in Kerala every year,” he said. Detailing the qualities the ‘Kerala jack fruit’, he said it is more organic and tasty as it is produced in a very natural way without using any chemical fertilisers or pesticides.

“Our people do not use any fertiliser for production of jack fruits. They are grown in a very natural way in villages without any special care. So our jack fruits are more organic, natural and tasty than those from other states,” he said. With the awarding of the ‘state fruit’ status, the demand for jack fruits and allied products are expected to go up and more people would foray into the cultivation of jack fruit trees, known as ‘plavu’ in local parlance, the minister said.

The government plans to distribute maximum jack fruit tree saplings among the public to grow it in their backyards as part of plans to expand the cultivation. A research centre has already been opened at Ambalavayal, under the aegis of the Agriculture Department, to carry out studies on jack fruit and tap its potential further. The government also conducts ‘jack fruit fest’ every year to popularise the fruit and its products among public, he added. “Besides the taste and nutritious quality, the timber value of jack fruit tree is also high. Compared to many other trees, it plays a great role in fighting greenhouse gases,” the minister added.