

# Don't Import Sugar, There's Stock to Meet Demand, Millers tell Govt

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**Pune:** The government may not be comfortable with sugar prices hovering around ₹40/kg, but the industry is hell-bent on seeing that there are no imports of the sweetener. Imports would be disastrous for the industry and farmers, they said.

Even as traders and refiners are mounting pressure on the government to import sugar and the government is trying to assess the likely fall in production, sugar millers say they are afraid that imports would hit the industry and farmers. The Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), which



represents private sugar millers, has already stated that the country will have sufficient sugar stocks to take care of its domestic needs in 2016-17. Similarly, the All

India Ganna Utpadak Sangathana has written a letter to the prime minister requesting the government not to import sugar.

OP Dhanuka, co-ordinator, All India Ganna Utpadak Sangathana, said, "Over 50 million cane farmers have suffered heavy losses because of unwanted sugar imports during 2013-14 and 2014-15. Sugar mills could not pay cane price and sugar prices went down below the cost of cane. We fear that if the imports happen, it will kill both farmers and the industry."

Sugar prices are currently at the same level they were seven years ago, but the cost of production has increased, Dhanuka claimed. He said that during 2017-18 or 2018-

19, the country may even have to export sugar.

The Swabhimani Shetkari Sangathana, which represents cane growers of Maharashtra has also opposed sugar imports.

"The government should compel sugar millers to sell in sufficient quantities to keep prices stable. There is sufficient stock of sugar and plantation of sugarcane for the next season is expected to be good. The country doesn't need to import sugar," said Raju Shetti, founder leader of the Sangathana.

Sugar millers are concerned that any decision to import sugar can bring down prices, which can adversely affect their loan repayments.