

China clears 14 Indian rice companies for export

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New Delhi, 24 July

China has agreed to import rice from 14 of the 19 registered rice exporters from India, while the remaining five— mostly of basmati rice sellers — have been asked to improve storage and isolation facilities before applying afresh.

China allows import of only basmati rice from India, but with this clearance, even non-basmati rice can be exported. The clearance comes amid rising tension between the United States and China over trade tar-

iff. China is looking for newer markets to boost its inventories. Export from India has been caught under wraps since it failed to clear Chinese food safety and quality norms.

China alleged India's rice consignments contained 'khapra' (cabinet) beetle and were unfit for consumption, which Indian authorities and traders denied.

In an agreement signed on June 9, China agreed to import from India non-basmati rice as well. The shipments had to comply with the Chinese plant quarantine laws and regulations. India has to ensure that processing and storage houses of the

rice to be exported to China is free from pests — *Trogoderma granarium* and *Prostephanus truncatus*— and live insects. The exported rice will have to be free of soil, seeds of weeds, paddy hull, loose bran and any of plant debris of rice.

Non-basmati rice exports from the country during April-February 2018 stood at \$3.26 billion as against \$2.53 billion in 2016-17. India wants to increase exports to China with a view to bridging the ballooning trade deficit, which has increased to \$63.12 billion in 2017-18 from \$51.08 billion in the previous fiscal.