

India-US deal: Pulses off factsheet but still on the table

Amiti Sen
Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi



Despite the White House last week dropping the mention of Indian pulses from its revised factsheet on the US-India interim trade deal framework, they are not off the negotiating table, sources said.

"There is no agreement yet on pulses in the interim trade agreement, but negotiations on the matter are still on. Once the negotiating teams meet face-to-face in Washington next week, the final commitments may be sorted out," a source tracking the matter said.

CHOUHAN FLAYS CONG

Interestingly, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh

Chouhan on Tuesday criticised the Congress for resisting the trade deal with the US and opposing the import of pulses, cotton and apples, which he said the country needs.

"Whatever we produce, like wheat, rice or maize, will not come (from the US)... we all know that in the case of pulses, we are not self-sufficient today; consumption is higher than production. It is required to be imported to

meet demand. Whatever product we require (to import), why is there an objection if it comes from any country?" Chouhan said at an event in Jaipur.

There was no mention of pulses in the India-US joint statement on the framework for an interim trade deal issued on February 6. But a factsheet issued by the White House soon after included "certain pulses" in the list of farm items on which India had supposedly agreed to eliminate or reduce tariffs. This led to protests from some farm groups and heated political debates in India, following which the reference to pulses in the factsheet was dropped.

AWAITING CLARITY

"The White House factsheet was supposed to reflect what

was contained in the joint statement. Because the joint statement did not mention pulses, it was edited from the factsheet. But one has to understand that there are about 1,800 traded tariff lines in agriculture and everything cannot be included in the joint statement. The negotiations are on and there will be more clarity on many things, including pulses," another source said.

At a media briefing following the joint statement, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal mentioned "lentils" among agricultural items that India had been importing from the US for many years, including during the UPA government's tenure, where some concessions had been offered as part of the deal.

Also read p10

CM
VK