ICRISAT develops oleic-rich peanut

The high oleic groundnut varieties are expected to improve incomes of small-holder groundnut farmers.

Hyderabad: Groundnut scientists from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and partners across India have developed the first-ever oleic-rich peanuts adapted to Indian farm conditions.

Soon Indian grown peanuts could replace tons of imported peanuts from Australia. Until now, Indian groundnut farmers have not benefited from the fast growing global confectionery market, as they could not supply high oleic content peanuts as required by the confectionery industry.

Currently, Indian groundnut farmers grow bunch type groundnut varieties adapted to rain-fed environments, early maturing and with rapid filling of the pods after flash rains. Such groundnuts are however low in oleic acid, around 45 to 50% of the total fatty acids.

Certain groundnut varieties grown in America and in Australia are much richer in oleic acid (above 80%) thanks to specific mutations in the gene coding the enzyme fatty acid desaturase or FAD, which blocks the conversion from oleic acid to linoleic acid.

Food industry seeks high oleic peanuts as they have ten-fold lower oxidation compared to normal peanuts, improving its shelf-life from 2 to 9 months. It avoids rancidity and high oleic peanuts have much better flavour. Oleic acid or omega-9 fatty acids which can be found in olive and nuts like almonds also have important health benefits. Read more.