

Mahindra reaps rich harvest by targeting potato farmers

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Ravindra Shahane, Vice- President, Marketing, Farm Equipment Sector, M&M Ltd

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Company launches special tractors for potato farming

Mumbai, November 4:

A unique marketing initiative by Mahindra and Mahindra's farm equipment division, aimed at potato farmers in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, has helped the company drive up tractor sales in a sluggish market.

The \$16.5-billion group has launched special potato tractors, and wants to "educate" farmers on advanced farming practices, Ravindra Shahane, Vice-President, Marketing, Farm Equipment Division, told *BusinessLine*.

Around 15 per cent of the 60 crore farmers across the country are into potato farming.

"The brand's presence in the potato belt has been weak. Through a new line of products, supported by regional promotions, we have grown over the years and by 200 per cent in the first half of FY15," said Shahane. The Mahindra 595 DI, 475 DI, 265 DI and 295 DI are potato specialist tractors.

Cut wastage

A M&M official pointed out the potato community had been using regular farm tractors for digging operations, and were ignorant of the wastage caused by crushing of the potatoes due to the non-adjustable rear wheel alignment of the tractor.

M&M's potato specialist tractor gives farmers the option of rear wheel alignment in addition to safety and comfort

"Through several activations, we decided to take the brand to the customers, rather than wait for them to approach us. The effort is to create a larger than life image for brand Mahindra, and keep it topical for the customers in order to consistently occupy their mind space," said Shahane. This marketing technique helped the company reach out to potato farmers even in remote interiors. "At present, we have 1,100 sales and service points across the country.," added Shahane.

Market leadership

This year too, despite the delayed monsoon, M&M's Farm Equipment Sector managed to maintain its leadership position in the tractor industry. Domestic sales of all tractors in October stood at 30,800 units, against 37,532 units during October 2013. However, exports, including completely knocked down units, jumped 51 per cent in October.

Rajesh Jejurikar, Chief Executive, Farm Equipment and Two Wheeler Division, M&M, said the delayed rains and consequent slow sowing had led to a sluggish domestic market.

The recently launched Arjun Novo tractor had been well received in the market, and would help drive sales in a challenging environment, he added.

Launched in September this year, the Arjun Novo tractor has a precision hydraulics system for potato farming, high lift capacity of 2,200 kg, and an advanced synchromesh 15-forward and 3-reverse transmission.

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