

ONION WOES

The government bans the export of the staple vegetable in a bid to rein in spiralling domestic prices. **By Ramesh Chakrapani**

After years of bountiful harvests and booming exports, India's onion trade has suddenly been hit by a government ban on exports in the last week of September in the wake of spiralling domestic prices. Wholesale prices of the staple vegetable have steadily risen this year, from Rs.1,344.30 a quintal in March to Rs.1,908.60 in July and Rs.2,312.30 in August.

Arrivals in August totalled 10,14,420 tonnes, compared with 10,43,200 tonnes in the same month last year.

The Horticultural Statistics Division's latest monthly report on onion said that the area sown up to end-August was 1.81 lakh hectares, down from 1.88 lakh hectares in the corresponding period last year.

The major kharif growing States are

Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

In 2018, a total of 19,90,461 tonnes valued at Rs.3,516.26 crore were exported. This year, in the January-July period, 12,35,981 tonnes worth Rs.1,840.70 crore were exported.

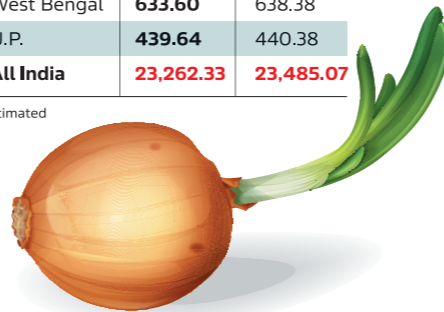
In recent years, the country's onion production has steadily risen. The five-year average production between 2013-14 and 2017-18 was 2,09,90,520 tonnes; production in 2017-18 alone was 2,32,62,330 tonnes, while the third advanced estimate for 2018-19 is slightly higher at 2,34,85,070 tonnes.

Maharashtra is the biggest producer, accounting for 31.77 per cent of the all-India production during the period between 2013-14 and 2017-18. It was followed by Madhya Pradesh (15.19 per cent) and Karnataka (13.36 per cent).

Production in 2018 and 2019* ('000 tonnes)

Maharashtra	8,854.09	8,047.14
M.P.	3,701.01	3,714.79
Karnataka	2,986.59	2,645.61
Bihar	1,240.59	1,403.03
Rajasthan	996.73	1,388.42
Gujarat	546.20	1,111.09
A.P.	915.73	970.55
Haryana	701.50	696.92
West Bengal	633.60	638.38
U.P.	439.64	440.38
All India	23,262.33	23,485.07

*estimated



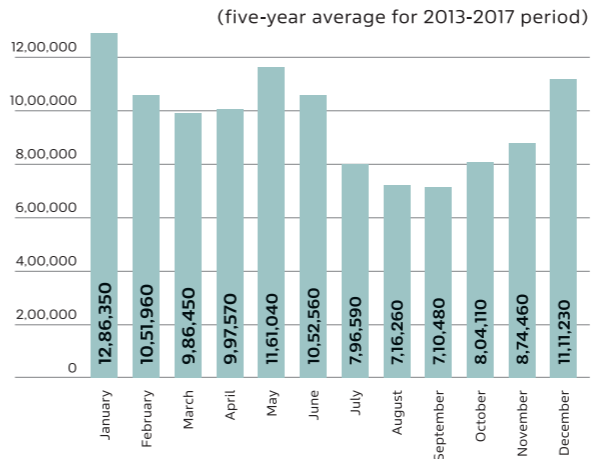
Monthly export of onions in 2018

	Value (Rs.crore)	Quantity (tonnes)
January	289.82	55,864
February	209.14	1,02,851
March	306.04	2,11,337
April	312.52	2,46,761
May	351.17	2,15,582
June	199.14	1,52,782
July	302.42	2,02,860
August	365.49	2,19,786
September	335.45	1,79,504
October	307.61	1,38,815
November	260.02	1,14,867
December	277.44	1,49,452
Total	3,516.26	19,90,461

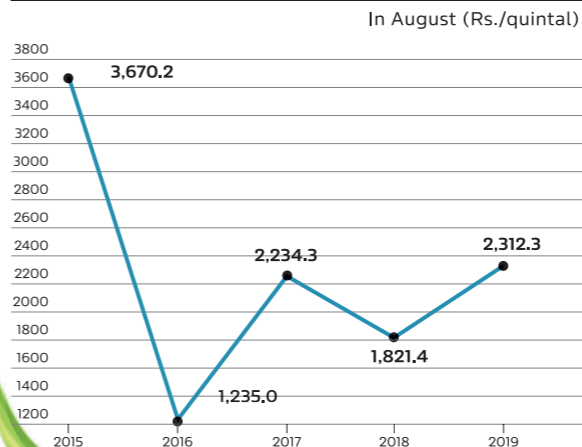
Monthly export of onions in 2019

	Value (Rs.crore)	Quantity (tonnes)
January	236.00	1,61,501
February	249.55	2,04,063
March	272.07	1,97,793
April	312.52	1,88,948
May	239.83	1,63,417
June	265.37	1,59,614
July	265.36	1,60,645
Total	1,840.70	12,35,981

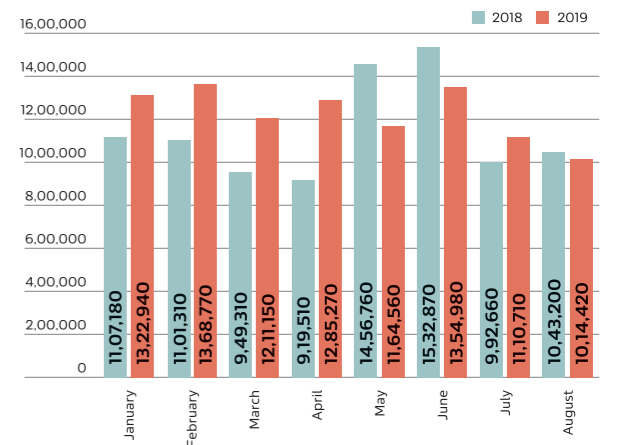
All India onion arrivals (in tonnes)



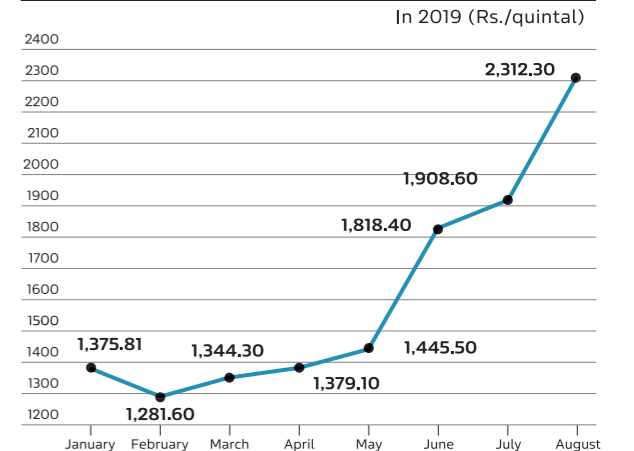
All India average wholesale prices



All India arrivals (tonnes)



All India monthly average wholesale prices



Key States' average share of production

(2013-14 to 2017-18)

