



BASAI News Updates

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Air begins to worsen as rains recede, fires start

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Delhi's air quality plunged to its worst levels since the monsoon rains began as the weather slowly transitions into what will bring much needed respite from one problem — humidity — but soon lead to another: high pollution.

The overall Air Quality Index (AQI), according to the 4pm bulletin, was 182, the highest since June 25, five days before the monsoon rains arrived. The monsoon season is marked by windy conditions and precipitation that helps blow and wash away pollutants, leading to clear blue skies.

That brief period, which lasted about two-and-a-half months, is now coming to an end, experts said, and the situation is only likely to get worse with farm fires in some nearby regions having already begun.

"During the night on September 17 and 18, there were calm winds over the Delhi-NCR region. This resulted in an accumulation of pollutants. In fact, air quality is likely to be in

continued on → 20



Punjab's paddy straw reuse capacity only a fraction of stubble generated

Gurpreet Singh Nibber

gurpreet.nibber@hindustantimes.com

CHANDIGARH: Punjab generates an estimated 18.5 million tonnes of paddy straw each year, but the state can dispose of only 1.1 million tonnes by using it as industrial fuel and for generat-

ing power, a gap that poses a major challenge to the state's attempts to cut the quantity of crop residue that is burnt across its fields each year, leading to an air pollution crisis in much of north India, including Delhi.

Half the paddy straw is managed in-situ (by being mixed

into the soil) and the rest ex-situ (used as fuel) or is set ablaze.

Officials aware of the matter said that with the state already reporting stubble fire incidents, pressure is mounting on the government to push for ex-situ crop residue management to tackle farm fires this season →

Punjab faces uphill fight to dispose of its farm stubble

Gurpreet Singh Nibber

gurpreet.nibber@hindustantimes.com

CHANDIGARH: Punjab generates an estimated 18.5 million tonnes of paddy straw each year, but the state can dispose of only 1.1 million tonnes by using it as industrial fuel and for generating power, a gap that poses a major challenge to the state's attempts to cut the quantity of crop residue that is burnt across its fields each year, leading to an air pollution crisis in much of north India, including Delhi.

According to state government data, Punjab produces an estimated 185 lakh (18.5 million) tonnes of paddy straw every year. Of this, half is managed in-situ (by being mixed into the soil) and the rest ex-situ (used as fuel) or is set ablaze. The ex-situ methods include using paddy straw in the biomass-based power generation plants, and as fuel in industrial units manufacturing paper, cement, sugar and edible oil.

Officials aware of the matter said that with the state already reporting stubble fire incidents, pressure is now mounting on the government to push for ex-situ



Punjab produces an estimated 18.5 million tonnes of paddy straw every year.

HT ARCHIVE

crop residue management to tackle farm fires this season.

According to Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) data, there are 11 private biomass-based power generation plants in the state, with a total annual capacity of 97.5 megawatts. These plants consume 8.8 lakh (0.8 million) tonne of paddy straw. While Muktsar, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur

have two plants each, Jalandhar, Mansa, Moga, Faridkot and Ferozepur districts have one facility each.

According to PPCB, seven industrial units manufacturing paper, cement, sugar and edible oil use stubble as fuel and five more such units have committed to using 2.75 lakh (0.275 million) tonnes of stubble.

However, the owners of these power plants have complained

about the poor availability of stubble pellets. "We use stubble in bricks or pellets form, and as per our requirement, the production is insufficient. There is one plant in Ludhiana that produces pellets but the output is poor," said a manager of a private power plant at Rajpura.

Punjab Agricultural University vice-chancellor Dr Satbir Singh Gosal said the state needs an infrastructure push to amplify ex-situ methods. "It's a cheaper proposition but needs infrastructure for which big budget is required," he said, adding that the state needs more biomass-based power generating plants, pellets making industry, bio-CNG plants, and fast transportation to carry stubble from the farms and storage godowns.

"So far, the state government has largely focused on in-situ crop residue management which is an expensive option. Ex-situ management is the effective way to dispose of paddy stubble. But, in the absence of infrastructure it is difficult to encourage farmers to adopt this system," asked Sukhdev Singh Kokri Kalan, general secretary Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ugrahan).



AIR WE BREATHE

Despite low returns last year, growers opt for PUSA variety

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, SEPTEMBER 19

Even though farmers did not get good returns from PUSA-1509 paddy variety last season, they have again shown faith in it this time too by increasing the area under the crop. It is evident as the arrivals of the variety has doubled in 10 grain markets of the district than the last season.



At 11.81 lakh quintals, paddy arrivals in 10 Karnal mandis have doubled this year

The data of the Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board shows that 11.81 lakh quintals of PUSA-1509 variety have arrived to date, while it was 5.56 lakh quintals last year. Of the total arrival this season, 11.80 lakh quintals have been procured.

The Karnal grain market has received the maximum arrival of the variety at 6.49 lakh quintals, followed by Indri (2.01 lakh quintals), Gharaunda (1.48 lakh quintals), Taraori (92,252 quintals), Nissing (53,805 quintals), Kunjpura (10,316 quintals), Jundla (10,094 quintals), Assandh (9,955 quintals), Nilokheri (4,427 quintals) and

Nigdhu (2,090 quintals).

As a result, the farmers have also got good returns this year as the variety is being procured between Rs 3,200 and Rs 3,500 quintal, while it was sold for up to Rs 3,800 per quintal a few days ago. Last year, it was sold between Rs 1,800 and Rs 2,300 per quintal.

As per the data of the Agriculture Department, the paddy is cultivated on 1.68 lakh hectares of land. Of which, non-basmati is cultivated on 65% and basmati on 35%. The

data says this year, major shareholder in basmati is PUSA-1509 variety.

Farmers consider since it a short-duration variety, so they prefer it. "It takes 120 to 140 days and after harvesting it, farmers can sow vegetables instead of cultivating other paddy variety," said Sewa Singh Arya, president BKU.

He said the farmers were also anticipating a rise in demand in the backdrop the Russia-Ukraine war, so they had increased the area PUSA.

Arhtiyas on indefinite strike across state

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, SEPTEMBER 19

The arhtiyas across the state went on an indefinite strike from today on a call given by the Haryana State Arhtiyas Association. They are protesting against crop procurement via e-NAM portal, besides demanding 2.5 per cent commission on the purchase of crops under the MSP system, instead of only Rs 46 a quintal.

Arhtiyas, led by their Karnal unit president and chairperson of the Haryana State Arhtiyas Association Rajnish Chaudhary, observed strike today. They did not procure paddy. Some farmers came there, but their produce was not procured.

In the evening, association members, led by their state president Ashok Gupta, had a meeting with Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Haryana, Sumita Misra; Labour Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of Haryana, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department, Pankaj Agarwal; and other officials



Arhtiyas during strike in Karnal on Monday. PHOTO: SAYEED AHMED

THEIR KEY DEMANDS

- Procurement via e-NAM is not viable and it should be done through earlier procedure via arhtiyas or rice millers
- The govt should pay them 2.5 per cent commission on the purchase of MSP crops, instead of only ₹46 a quintal

MEETING WITH GOVT OFFICIALS INCONCLUSIVE

- A delegation of arhtiyas raised their demands with senior state officials, who said they would discuss these with CM Manohar Lal Khattar
- "Since the meeting was fruitless, we will continue our indefinite strike till the fulfilment of our demands," arhtiyas said
- On Tuesday, they will continue their stir at their respective grain markets and hold a protest in Karnal on September 21

in Chandigarh. As the meeting remained inconclusive, the association decided to continue the strike.

Gupta said they raised their issues with senior officials, who said they would discuss these with the CM. "Since the meeting was fruitless, we will continue our indefinite strike till the fulfilment of our demands," he said.

Chaudhary said the arhtiyas would continue their stir at their respective

grain markets on Tuesday and hold a protest in Karnal on September 21, where they would gherao the CM's camp office.

"Procurement via e-NAM is not viable and it should be done through the earlier procedure via arhtiyas or rice millers," said Chaudhary.

He said the government should pay them 2.5 per cent commission on the purchase of MSP crops, instead of only Rs 46 per quintal.

Arhtiyas were also on strike in Panipat and Sonapat districts. Senior state vice-president of the association Dharambir Malik said they would submit their demands to the Rajya Sabha member Krishan Lal Panwar and MLAs tomorrow.

Almost all arhtiyas observed strike in Palwal and Faridabad districts too. Reports of similar protests were also received from Hisar and Ambala City.