



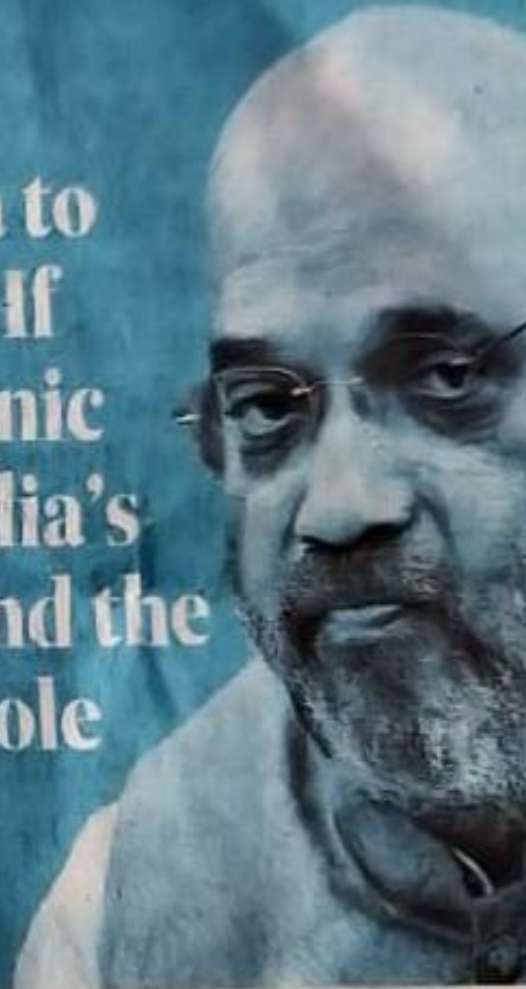
# **BASAI News Updates**

**April 11, 2022**

[ AMIT SHAH ] UNION HOME MINISTER



Now the time has come for India to move towards natural farming. If India fulfils the demand of organic food all over the world, then India's economy will be transformed and the dairy sector can play a big role in that.



# Early summer sparks farm fires, wheat yield hit

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**NEW DELHI:** A combination of extremely high temperatures and hot, dry winds across the north Indian plains has caused scores of unusual farm fires in the breadbasket states over the past two weeks, destroying swathes of wheat crop ready for harvest.

Authorities have cautioned farmers, asking them to take precautions, as meteorologists said heatwaves, the main reason for the fires, are unlikely to abate soon. Unchecked, these fires can sweep through human habitations as well, they said.

Ripening wheat crops have caught fire in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana over the past two weeks, farmers and officials said. The winter staple is a major source of farm income in a country where half the population depends on agriculture-based livelihoods.

Authorities in Rajasthan and



High temperatures have caused scores of unusual farm fires, destroying swathes of wheat crop ready for harvest. HT FILE

Punjab have asked farmers to be watchful, avoid smoking near fields, or storing combustible substances, including pesticides and farm chemicals.

In Punjab, the government has resorted to cutting off electricity in high tension wires running through fields as a preventive measure.

“Extreme heatwave conditions and lack of moisture have made vegetation brittle and dry.

This makes crops easily combustible,” said Binayak Ghoshal, a former India Meteorological Department official. A carelessly thrown cigarette butt is enough to start wildfires, he said.

North India will continue to face severe heatwave conditions in the coming days, according to Navdeep Dahiya, a forecaster and chief executive of Live Weather of India. The mercury will remain elevated between 40

and 46 degrees Celsius, he said.

At least 36 incidents were reported from the above-mentioned states, according to state officials who spoke to HT.

Farmers scrambled to douse blazes either by spraying tractor-mounted water guns or flattening a section of the wheat crop to stop the fires from spreading.

Heatwaves and droughts induced by climate change will increasingly cause wildfires across the globe, according to the landmark Code Red report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a United Nations body, in August last year.

Farm activist Ramandeep Singh Mann said he had received reports of at least 1,000 crop fires over the course of the past few weeks, and there has been no word on any compensation from government. In Haryana’s Panipat district, a massive blaze in Adhmi village swept through 30 acres of wheat last week, causing massive losses.



Biological Agri Solutions Association of India



Policemen help villagers douse the flames in Palwal.

## Crop gutted in Palwal

**PALWAL/KARNAL, APRIL 10**

A fire broke out in fields near Sondhhad and Banchari villages in Palwal district and Kachwa village in Karnal. Locals with the help of the police and fire brigade personnel doused the flames on Saturday evening. The SP, Palwal, has announced commendation certificate for cops, who helped villagers in

dousing the flames.

“The fire damaged standing crop of wheat and straw worth several thousands. Policemen and a fire brigade team reached the spot and doused flames,” said an official of the district police. He said a team led by Anoop Singh, SHO, Hodal police station, along with firemen and locals, managed to douse flames. — TNS

Source HT 11.04.2022 Delhi Edition

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**INFOCUS AGRICULTURE**  
**ORGANIC FARMING**

# Go-green route dotted with manifold challenges

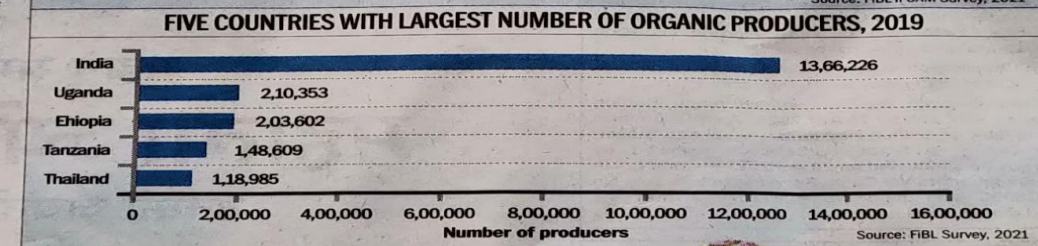
**BISHWA BHASKAR CHOUDHARY AND AMARESH CHANDRA**

**F**OOD security and safety, in the light of rapidly growing population, resource scarcity and environmental externalities, are perhaps the two definitive challenges for us to combat in the near future. Conventional agriculture, which is often seen as a natural outcome of the Green Revolution, despite having evident merits of meeting food security needs over the years is under frequent scrutiny as its cost to human, animal and environmental health are apparent. It necessitated an alternative production system that is profitable and attuned to diverse needs.

Organic farming in India has just begun taking baby steps. The key to success lies not only in a bold decision to turn organic, but to address underlying bottlenecks which include lack of appropriate infrastructure, shortage of compost, organic fertilisers, biopesticides and allied inputs, and high input cost of farming. Studies show the trade-offs in productivity and efficiency parameters that accompany the adoption of organic farming.

After years of being ridiculed, organic farming is now on the policy radar of governments across the globe. Intellectuals are urging farmers to jump off the chemical bandwagon. Growing research evidence on inevitable climate change and its potential impact on agriculture also provide strong rationale for an increasing focus on sustainable production model. As per the research report of Netherlands-based University of Twente, organic agriculture has a positive impact on no less than eight of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Zero Hunger, Good Health and Wellbeing, Clean Water and Sanitation, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water and Life on Land.

In a recent publication of FiBL (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture) and IFOAM-Organic International, in 2019 a total of 187 countries were reported to



be involved in organic activities. Compared to 2009, organic agricultural land in the world has doubled from 36.3 million hectares (mha) to 72.3 mha in 2019 and the share of organic land to total agricultural land increased from 0.8% to 1.5% during this period. Apart from land dedicated to organic farming, a considerable area of around 35 mha of organic land across the globe is under other activities like wild collection (apiculture,

forest honey, wild medicinal and aromatic plants etc.), aquaculture, forests and grazing areas. India, with around 2.3 mha (around 1.3% of total agricultural land) under organic cultivation, is at a nascent stage, yet the country still ranks fifth on the global list of organic agricultural land after Australia (35.69 mha), Argentina (3.67 mha), Spain (2.35 mha) and the USA (2.33 mha). Interestingly, India added 3.6 lakh hectares (around 18.6%

increase) — highest in the world — under organic farming between 2018 and 2019. Besides, out of 3.1 million reported organic producers globally, around 51% are in Asia; India, with over 13 lakh organic producers, tops the countries' list. These statistics reveals India's strong growth potential to emerge as a global leader in meeting the SDGs by 2030. The decision to focus on farmers' lands in 5-km-wide corridors along the Ganga

(Union Budget 2022-23) reiterates India's thrust on healthy agro-ecosystems.

**Consumers' concerns**  
Owing to growing health and environmental concerns among the people, consumers are keen on safer foods produced authentically by local systems. Organic products have become a part of the go-green lifestyle and are ranked higher among consumers' choices compared to their conventional counterparts. The Covid-19 pandemic has also triggered the demand for organic foods due to their perceived benefits in boosting immunity; however, the studies on nutritional superiority of organic products over conventionally grown food are still inconclusive.

**Marketing prospects**  
According to the Expert Market Research report, the global organic food market was worth \$167.85 billion in 2020. The single largest market is the US, followed by Germany, France and China. Regionally, North America is the leading market, followed by Europe and Asia. Though the Indian organic food industry scene may appear less encouraging with estimates around \$1,023 million now, it is forecast to grow at a CAGR of 20.5% during 2022-2027, driven by renewed demand for healthy and immunity-building foods after the pandemic. The exports of organic products from India are valued at over \$1.0 billion, but we can expect a jump due to the country's high potential, assisted by the food industry transitions in the post-Covid world.

**The way forward**  
Sri Lanka's leap into a fully organic food-producing paradise

is a cautionary tale for developing nations. When the food security of a country is at stake, it is naive to stick to the binary choice of organic or conventional agriculture. The Sri Lankan crisis, though, does not offer sufficient justification to discourage organic farming in India as the country has a sufficient buffer to face such challenges. However, a change in the agricultural production system of a country of more than a billion people must be a well-researched and thought-out process.

Organic farming in India has just begun taking baby steps. The key to success lies not only in a bold decision to turn organic, but to address underlying bottlenecks which include lack of appropriate infrastructure, shortage of compost, organic fertilisers, biopesticides and allied inputs, and high input cost of farming. Considerable studies show the trade-offs in productivity and efficiency parameters that accompany the adoption of organic farming. Cost of organic certification accentuates prices of the products, making them out of reach for lower-income families and therefore often attract criticism for being elitist. Therefore, such systems often demand price support to make production economically viable for farmers.

We must rethink policies supporting exports of our organic products and also spread knowledge among the farmers regarding scientific and management approaches for quality organic produce. This would help to shape organic farming, meet the global climate targets and conserve natural ecosystems.

*Choudhary is a scientist at ICAR Indian Grassland & Fodder Research Institute, Jhansi; Chandra is Director of the institute. Views are personal*

# Admn report confirms crop losses in Narnaund last year

Cites flooding due to untimely rain, pest attack as major reasons

**DEEPENDER DESWAL**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

**HISAR, APRIL 10**  
The district administration committee formed to look into the compensation demand of the agitating farmers in Kheri Jalab tehsil has suggested that the cotton crop in the region has suffered damage while *moong* and *guar* produce too was hit in terms of quality.

Since March 16, farmers of 17 villages are staging a dharna and have locked up the tehsil office after they were denied compensation on the basis of a special girdawari. In Hisar, the farmers later met Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, who directed the administration to look into their demands.

DC Priyanka Soni has set up a committee comprising the SDMs of the Narnaund and Hisar blocks, besides the district revenue officer and the deputy director of the Agriculture Department. The committee submitted the report to the DC, who had established



## FARMERS THREATEN TO INTENSIFY STIR

“The admn report has proved the allegations of discrimination of farmers. Now the ball is in the court of the state to compensate the affected farmers. We are set to intensify the stir if the government continues to ignore our demand.

Suresh Khoth, A FARMER LEADER

the fact that the kharif crops-2021 had suffered damage because of waterlogging due to untimely rains and pink bollworm attack.

Sources revealed that the report stated that there was no mechanism to assess the losses to these farmers. “The cotton crop has suffered damage of quality and quantity due to inundation and pink

bollworm attack. While moong and guar have suffered qualitative loss due to the discolouring of the grain,” the report has suggested.

It further revealed the crop loss could not be gauged in the special girdawari, which was ordered after the untimely rains. “The pink bollworm attack had occurred during and after the special gir-

dawari carried out by the officials of the Revenue Department. It could be possible that a major loss had occurred due to the pink bollworm attack after the visit of the officials for the special girdawari,” the report added.

Kuldeep Kharad, a leader who was among the delegation of farmers that met the DC, said there was no solid assurance from the administration about the compensation to these farmers. “Our dharna will continue until the affected farmers get due compensation for the crop damage. The neglect of these villages shows the discriminatory attitude of the government in allocating compensation to the farmers on the basis of the special girdawari,” he alleged.

The farmer leader further said the district administration had tried to pin blame on the revenue officials for the laxity in assessment of the crop loss and had thus transferred about 100 patwaris in the district.



Biological Agri Solutions Association of India

# Centralisation of forensic data can help solve crimes better

In the early years of the 20th century, French criminologist Edmond Locard discovered a principle called trace exchange. Locard, who would come to be known as the pioneer of forensic science, argued that a criminal always leaves something identifiable at the crime scene and carries something from the spot. Decades later, American scientist Paul L Kirk called the principle a silent witness against the criminal.

Whatever the wrongdoer touches or leaves behind, such as fingerprints or footprints, hair strands, cloth fibres, marks from tools used, blood or semen, are factual evidence that can be instrumental in solving a case. Physical evidence cannot be wrong, cannot perjure itself, cannot be wholly absent, he argued. "Only human failure to find it, study and understand it, can diminish its value," he said.

Newer and advancing technologies are crucial to an investigating officer – take, for example, CCTV systems capturing movements of people, videos and photos of criminals, and access control mechanisms of large complexes recording the signature, fingerprints, iris or retina scans. These evidences can be used forensically in two ways.

One, they can help in establishing that the person caught has committed the crime as fingerprints, DNA and handwriting samples may be matched with physical and biological evidence found at or near the crime scene. Second, they can be used in searching the data bank of fingerprints, palm prints and biological characteristics of criminals from the past.

Unfortunately, in India, we have not maintained data banks (except fingerprints and palm prints) due to an inadequacy in the

**THIS ACT IS A STEP IN LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO STREAMLINE FORENSIC AID TO INVESTIGATION, IMPROVE CRIME WORKING OUT RATIOS AND REDUCE CRIME INCIDENCE RATES.**



Karnal Singh

legal system. The Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920 was the only law that allowed the collection and storage of fingerprints and palm prints of criminals. Each state operated its individual fingerprint bureau which kept a record of fingerprints of people previously involved in crime in that particular state.

But the law didn't address two significant issues.

One, the fingerprint bureaus are stand-alone databases and are not connected to each other. If a man has a criminal record in state A but has committed a crime in state B for the first time, his fingerprints will find no match in state B as he has no previous record there. This highlights the need for a centralised database connecting all the bureaus currently working in silos. Information centralisation and exchange will also improve the time taken to solve cases and prevent the commission of more crimes by the same people.

Two, this Act covered only fingerprints and palm prints. Criminals also leave traces in the form of physical and biological evidence. There was a need to include these recognisable traces, including unique identification like retina scans.

The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022, which was passed by Parliament last week, addresses these difficulties and provides cohesive tools to investigating officers through better forensic support. This Act permits collecting identifiable physical and biological samples (including retina and iris scans), signatures and handwriting of criminals and storing them in national data banks.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will be the nodal agency responsible for recording and maintaining the records of criminals from anywhere in the country, making it impossible for criminals to take advantage of inadequate and fractured data banks. This new Act is a commendable step in leveraging technology to streamline forensic aid to investigation, improve crime working out ratios and reduce future crime incidence rates.

*Karnal Singh is a former chief of the Enforcement Directorate. The views expressed are personal.*



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