



# **BASAI News Updates**

**Oct. 4, 2022**

# 1 lakh saplings, cheaper machinery, HP readies plan to boost tea plantation

**BHANU P LOHUMI**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, OCTOBER 3

Facing a challenge to revive 53 per cent (about 1,200 hectare) of abandoned area under tea cultivation, the Agriculture Department is distributing one lakh plants among farmers, besides undertaking fresh plantation in Jogindernagar, Palampur, Dharamsala and Jaisinghpur.

As per a survey, at least 2,311 hectare is under tea cultivation, of which 1,096 hectare is well-maintained and the remaining 1,215 hectare is abandoned. Nearly 5,900

## LABOUR CRUNCH, NO READY MARKET KEY ISSUES

- Nearly 5,900 growers cultivate tea in Kangra, Mandi, Chamba
- Landholding of 96 per cent of growers less than 0.5 hectare
- Lack of labour and market, low yield, high cost other key issues
- Dept plans to give one lakh plants, 50% subsidy on machinery

➤ Nearly 2,300 hectare is under tea plantation in the hill state.



growers cultivate tea in the Palampur, Baijnath, Dharamsala and Kangra areas of Kangra district, Jogindernagar

and Karsog areas of Mandi district and Bhattiyat of Chamba. The landholding of 96 per cent of the growers is

less than 0.5 hectare.

The average annual production is around 10 lakh kg, of which 4,000 kg tea is exported

to the UK, Germany and France. Small tea growers contribute 59.2 per cent of the total production. There are four cooperative and 35 private tea units, which sell 90 per cent of the produce in Kolkata at an average price of Rs 160 per kg.

Despite this, tea cultivation in the hill state hasn't shown encouraging results owing to small and scattered landholding, lack of labour, high labour cost, low yield, high production cost and lack of market. The tea auction centre in Kolkata is far away and involves high transportation cost.

The department has now

brought additional nine hectares of land under tea cultivation and revived 7-8 hectare by gap filling since 2021, said BR Takhi, Director, Agriculture, adding that the department had set a target to distribute one lakh plants this year, of which 40,525 had been distributed in five circles of Baijnath, Bhawarna, Bir, Panchrukhi and Dharamsala.

"We are providing plants to farmers at Rs 2 per plant on the doorstep. We plan to give 50 per cent subsidy on tea machinery and pruning machines to overcome labour problem," he added.



# Farmers pool in money to buy pump to drain out water from fields

**SUNIT DHAWAN**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

**SUNDANA (ROHTAK), OCTOBER 3**  
Tired of making rounds of government offices, farmers of Sundana village in Rohtak district have bought a water pump and pipes using their own money to drain out rainwater accumulated in their fields.



Farmers of Sundana village show the pipe purchased by them to drain out rainwater from their fields. PHOTO: MANOJ DHAKA

Rainwater is stagnating in the fields of many villages ever since the recent spell of rain. The affected farmers lament that their crops standing in the waterlogged fields are getting damaged.

"We required four pumps

to drain out the water accumulated in our fields, but got only one from the gov-

ernment. After making rounds of various offices and waiting for several

days, we pooled in funds and bought a motor and pipes by spending Rs 1.5

## ₹1.5 LAKH SPENT

“We required four pumps to drain out the water accumulated in our fields, but got only one from the government. After making rounds of various offices and waiting for several days, we pooled in funds and bought a motor and pipes by spending Rs 1.5 lakh. Amarjeet, FARMER

lakh,” said Amarjeet, a farmer of Sundana village.

Farmers say bajra, cotton and vegetable crops have suffered the maximum damage due to waterlogging, while standing paddy crop has also got submerged and is getting damaged.

The district administration is making efforts to drain out water from the waterlogged fields, but it is taking considerable time due to practical limitations.

“We are doing our best to drain out the accumulated rainwater from the waterlogged fields. Pumps and

other things are being provided to the affected farmers as per their requirement,” stated Rohtak Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Mahender Pal.

Questioned about the farmers of Sundana village being forced to buy their own motor and pipes to drain out rainwater from their fields, the ADC said the matter was not in his notice.

He, however, asserted that affected farmers might approach senior officials to get their concerns addressed in case they were not getting the requisite equipment/material.



# Non-basmati sells above MSP in Karnal

Farmers elated as PR-114 variety sells at ₹ 2,100-2,300 a quintal against ₹2,060 MSP

**PARVEEN ARORA**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

**KARNAL, OCTOBER 3**

With the start of the procurement of the non-basmati varieties by government agencies, farmers are happy, but the drastically low yield in the major non-basmati varieties like PR-114, commonly known as PR-14, has disappointed them.

Farmers blamed dwarf disease and untimely rain at the heading stage for the low production as, on an average, they are getting 15-24 quintals per acre in comparison to 30-32 quintals last year.

At the same time, the good price of their produce has given some reasons to farmers to cheer as the non-basmati variety PR-114 is being sold between Rs 2,100-2,300 per quintal, which is above the MSP in the Karnal grain market. As per the authorities, the MSP of the grade-A PR variety is Rs 2,060 per quintal, while for the com-



**1.5 LAKH QUINTALS PROCURED**

“Around 2.10 lakh quintal paddy has arrived in the Karnal grain-market, of which around 1.50 lakh quintals have been procured. Six lines have been made for the issuance of the gate passes. Chander

Parkash, SECRETARY, MARKET COMMITTEE, KARNAL

Paddy harvest has been hit due to untimely rainfall and dwarf disease. PHOTO: SAYEED AHMED

mon PR variety, it is Rs 2,040 per quintal.

“The dwarf disease and later the unseasonal rainfall reduced production. On an average, I have got only 15 quintals per acre, while the input cost was much higher,” said Jagir Singh, a farmer of Dabri village.

Manjeet Singh from Darar village said he had brought paddy crop from over 3 acres, which was sold at Rs 2,300 per

quintal, but the low yield had disappointed him and other farmers. “On an average, I have received 22 quintals per acre in comparison to 32 quintals per acre last year. I am still in loss, as the input cost was higher,” he added.

Mehal Singh, a farmer of Saidpura village, who came with 6 acres of paddy, said his produce was sold at Rs 2,300 per quintal, while on an average, he had received 23 quin-

tals per acre compared to 30-32 quintals per acre last season. Shispal of Narukheri village, who was waiting for a buyer, was tense due to the low harvest, but was hopeful for a price above the MSP.

Apart from this, the early maturity group variety PR-126 escaped damage caused by untimely rains. Some farmers got yields ranging between 28 and 32 quintals per acre.

Rajnish Chaudhary, presi-

dent, Karnal Arthiyas Association, said no doubt, the production was less this year due to several reasons, but the farmers are getting good prices this time.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Anish Yadav visited the grain market and took stock of the situation. He reviewed the process of the issuance of the gate passes and the procurement process.

# Despite downpour direct seeded rice suffers less damage

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

**KARNAL, OCTOBER 3**

Direct seeded rice (DSR) has shown less lodging in recent heavy rains and has witnessed less effect of dwarf disease in both early and late sown varieties of basmati and non-basmati, claimed experts and farmers involved in the DSR farming.

This may be due to deep rooting of DSR crops and less irrigation, while the root zone in transplanted rice is restricted only to hard pan surface areas of about six to eight inches of depth in puddle soils and it is flooded irrigated, said Dr Virender Singh Lather, former Principal Scientist, ICAR-IARI, Karnal.

Heavy rains from September 20 to 25 in the district have not only flattened and

Early maturing varieties suffer heavy losses

lodged a large area of paddy with heavy losses in terms of grain yield and discolouration, which will further fetch low prices to farmers. Early maturity group varieties PB-1509 and PR-126 suffered heavily due to the lodging.

Dr Lather said seed germination with main root length was more than six inches on the third day of the sowing under the DSR whereas other paddy varieties normally germinated six to nine days after sowing.

DSR crops were sown early from May 20 to June 10 under hot and dry climatic environmental conditions with delayed first irrigation at two-three weeks after the sowing and further irrigation schedules of weekly alternate wet-

ting and drying cycles which proved unfavourable for the development and spread of plant hopper and dwarf disease, he added.

“Due to deep roots in comparison to the transplanted crop and cultivated in lines, the DSR crop was less lodged in this unprecedented rainfall, said Aditya Dabas, Deputy Director, Agriculture.

The DSR was introduced by the state government to save water and a financial assistance of Rs 4,000 per acre was given to farmers to adopt it, he added. This year, around 9,000 acres have been covered under the DSR in the district. Bharat, a farmer, said he had cultivated paddy with the help of DSR, which was not flattened in downpour.



# Delhi's pollution nightmare

Farm fires have begun to rage across Punjab and Haryana. But experts said they are yet to impact Delhi air



### Farm fires (Sept 15 - Oct 2)

State	2021	2022
Punjab	228	275
Haryana	13	9
UP	46	49
Rajasthan	1	5

Delhi has not reported any fire yet

Most fires in Amritsar, Tarn Taran (Punjab)  
Most fires in Karnal, Kurukshetra (Haryana)  
Most fires in Shahjahanpur, Kheri (UP)

Why stubble burning is harmful for air  
One tonne of stubble burning releases

2kg SO <sub>2</sub>	3kg PM	60kg CO	1460kg CO <sub>2</sub>	199kg ASH
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Loss of valuable nutrients  
Paddy straw contains (per hectare)

- 339kg of Nitrogen
- 140kg of Potassium
- 6kg of Phosphorous
- 11kg of Sulphur

# Stubble fires rising, may impact Delhi after Oct 10

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**NEW DELHI:** Farmers have started burning crop stubble across the northern plains, with Sunday recording this year's highest single-day fire count of 130, data collated from satellite images showed.

As in previous years, the most fires were again seen in Punjab with the state accounting for 83 fires on October 2 (Sunday). Seven fires were seen in Haryana, and 36 in Uttar Pradesh.

Data compiled by the Consortium for Research on Agroecosystem Monitoring and Modelling from Space (CREAMS), a centre under the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), shows that between September 15 and 30, 147 farm fires were recorded in Punjab. Compared to that, in just the two days of October, the state recorded a total fire count of 128 – a clear indication that the annual exercise to rid the field of crop stubble has started to pick up.

This does not bode well for Delhi, which every year suffers hazardous levels of air pollution as winds blow smoke and pollutants towards the Capital. Making matters worse is the fact that the stubble-burning season coincides with unfavourable meteorological conditions in Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region), which keep the pollutants trapped near the surface.

CREAMS, which is currently collecting data from all NCR states, said that this year, each state is following the ISRO protocol – a standard developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for monitoring data on farm fires – and contended that it will help provide uniform data from each state to the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), the agency tasked with managing air pollution in Delhi-NCR. Earlier, states were reliant on data from multiple Nasa satellites, which meant each had its own differing count on farm fires.

According to CREAMS data, between September 15 and October 2, Punjab saw 275 farm fires, which is higher than the 228 fires seen in the state during the same period last year. It is, however, lower than the 1,331 fires recorded by Punjab during the same period in 2020.

VK Sehgal, professor and principal scientist at IARI and a part of CREAMS, said initial trends show a similar fire count to last year, and it appeared to be a considerable improvement over 2020.

He also said the late monsoon rains played a key role this year as well as the last. "We saw a spell from September 24 to 29, when no farm fire, while Rajasthan has recorded five such fires until October 2, the data showed.

Pawan Gupta, a Universities Space Research Association (USRA) scientist at Nasa's Marshall Space Flight Center, who carried out an analysis using the VIIRS SNP 375m satellite, says a clearer trend will emerge towards the end of October.

"So far, the season in Punjab is similar to that of last year. We had around 250 fires in Punjab from September 1 to October 1 in 2021 and this year's numbers are about the same. Farm fires returned on October 1 and 2 this year, after a brief break and a majority of them are either in Amritsar, or across the border in Pakistan," said Gupta.

Though the fire count is rising, experts say it has not impacted Delhi's air quality as yet though the wind are northwesterly.

"The fire count is still low, and the wind speed is also not much. The fires are expected to start impacting Delhi after October 10," said Gufran Beig, founder project director at Safar, a government body, which tracks the contribution of stubble burning to PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels in Delhi's air.

# Delhi's pollution nightmare

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Why stubble burning is harmful for air  
One tonne of stubble burning releases

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# Efforts speed up to design new top science honour

Rhythm Kaul

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**NEW DELHI:** The office of India's Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA) has begun work on designing a new science award, Vigyan Ratan, according to people familiar with the matter.

Different departments under the science ministry have begun deliberations on the matter, they added.

"The modalities for institutionalising the Vigyan Ratna award are being worked out in consultation with the science ministries and have not been finalised as of now," said PSA Ajay Sood's office, in response to a query regarding the progress being made in the direction.

The ministry of home affairs (MHA) is in the process of transforming government awards and decorations regarding which home secretary, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, held a meeting with representatives of ministry of science and technology, earth sciences, and health and family welfare on September 16.

In the meeting, Bhalla, suggested that "one Nobel Prize like award (Vigyan Ratna) could be instituted for scientists in con-

## THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS IS IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMING GOVERNMENT AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

sultation with the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government. This award may be open to all science disciplines."

According to people in the government, the award, as it has been envisaged, will be of the highest stature; therefore, it will require thorough consultations and planning before it is launched, they said.

"The award in question is being thought of on the lines of the Nobel Prize; and if you are aiming for something that high, it will need to be thought through in great detail. First step is to initiate a dialogue and that has happened," said a senior Central government official aware of the matter, requesting anonymity.

In the same meeting, the home secretary also discussed the process of transforming gov-

ernment awards and decorations under which it mentioned that at least 100 awards and several fellowships were being considered for phasing out in the field of science and technology.

The Department of Science and Technology currently has 211 awards under it, of which, four are national awards.

In the meeting it was decided that all awards based on private endowments, lectures, scholarships, and fellowships should be discontinued.

All departments were asked to take necessary action as per the decisions taken in the meeting and to submit a report to the MHA within 10 days. There is likely to be a review meeting soon held by the Prime Minister's Office in this regard, according to the minutes of the meeting seen by HT.

"Instead of awards, government should ensure timely release of funds for research as most prestigious awards globally are not given by governments but philanthropic organisations. Having said that, the idea of creating a topmost award is a good idea," said Dr Avadesha Surolia, senior biologist and professor, Indian Institute of Science.