



BASAI News Updates

Sept. 12, 2022

'Dwarf' disease damages paddy, farmers seek relief

PARVEEN ARORA
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, SEPTEMBER 11

Paddy growers are worried as the crop has suffered serious damage due to the "stunting" disease that limits the growth of plant in terms of the total biomass.

According to experts, the disease damages the roots of the plants, turning them black and stunting their growth, not allowing plants to pull nutrients from soil. They are expecting a loss upto 5 per cent, but farmers say the loss is much higher and they demanded compensation for the loss.

As per the data of the department, around 32,000 acres out of the total paddy planted, 4 lakh acres have been affected with the disease in Karnal district. However, farmers say the effect of the disease is on over 50,000 acres.

A team of the Union Ministry of Agriculture has already visited various affected fields for monitoring the disease. As per experts, Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) has found southern rice black-streaked dwarf virus (SRBSDV) behind stunting.

"The stunting disease outbreak has happened for the first time in the state. We are closely monitoring the fields to keep a close check on its esca-



The crop affected by 'stunting' disease in Karnal. TRIBUNE PHOTO

lation. It may cause a loss upto 5 per cent," said Aditya Dabas, Deputy Director Agriculture.

Farmers claimed that last month, the cases were reported to the authorities concerned, but no attention was given. Experts claim that almost all varieties have been affected.

Dr Virender Singh Lather, former principal scientist of ICAR-IARI, suspects the rice grassy stunt virus in north-west India to have transferred from southern India as a result of spurious hybrid rice seed produced by some private companies there. The direct seeding of the rice (DSR) technique and the application of the restricted irrigation, alternatively to the water-guzzling transplantation of paddy crop, must be practiced against the virus growth, said Dr Singh.

After initial jump, price of 1509 basmati variety dips

MANMEET SINGH GILL
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

AMRITSAR, SEPTEMBER 11

Excitement among farmers on getting a high price for the 1509 variety of basmati in the district has suddenly waned as the rates have dropped with the harvesting picking pace. After the harvesting started a week ago, cultivators were on the cloud nine as the variety was fetching a price as high as Rs 3,700 per quintal in the local markets.

A week later, the price has dropped to Rs 3,100-3,200 per quintal. With the initial estimates putting the yield at 25 quintals per acre, which is better than the last season's output, farmers are still satisfied.

The current prices are still



Farmers feel that high prices had forced the farmers to go for early harvesting which is the primary reason for the drop in the rates.

more than the last year's as the highest price last year was around Rs 2,800. However, it is

being feared that price might dip in the coming days as more produce arrives in the markets.

Officials of the Mandi Board and farmers feel that high prices had forced the farmers to go for early harvesting which is the primary reason for the drop in the rates.

Lakhbir Singh Nizampura, president, Vegetable Growers' Association, said, "After the news of high price spread, everybody jumped in to cash in on the situation."

He said traders lowered the rates as the supply in the markets increased. The 1509 basmati variety has been grown on an area of over 50,000 hectares in the district.

Chief Agriculture Officer Dr Jatinder Singh Gill said: "The variety is the foremost choice for vegetable growers as the crop ripens early."

Dr Gill said the hastened harvesting is resulting in more moisture in the grains and as such the prices have dropped. The basmati varieties are not procured by government under public distribution scheme. The market is controlled by private traders.

Of the total 1.80 lakh hectares of land under paddy cultivation in the district, nearly 1.10 lakh hectare is under early-sown and late-sown basmati varieties, including 50,000 hectares under 1509 basmati.

District Mandi Officer Amardeep Singh said a total of 11,175 MT of 1509 basmati had arrived in the market. He added that private buyers had lowered the prices due to more moisture in the grains.

Maximise potential of kharif crop with bulb sets

MANAV MANDER

Improving the productivity of the kharif onion can ensure its availability throughout the year, check the annual spiralling of prices and in turn help in making farmers self-reliant. Farmers mostly grow onions during the rabi season (Jan-April); the kharif onion (August-November) has been planted in a negligible area due to nursery production and storage problems. The kharif crop, if grown by taking precautions and following guidelines, can benefit farmers and consumers.

O NION, one of the most important vegetables, is not only the main ingredient in many dishes but is also used in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries. Growing onions on a commercial basis requires significantly less investment and minimal care. In Punjab, it is mostly the rabi crop that is grown by farmers, but improving the productivity of the kharif onion can ensure its availability throughout the year, check the annual spiralling of prices and in turn help in making farmers self-reliant. Farmers need to keep in mind a few crucial things and adopt the bulb-set technique for the kharif crop of onion, opine agriculture experts.

"Three crops — rabi, kharif and late kharif onion — are being cultivated in the south-western parts of the country, whereas two crops (rabi and kharif) are sown in the north-western parts of India throughout the year. Farmers mostly grow the onion during the rabi season (January-April); the kharif onion (August-November) has been planted in a very negligible area so far due to nursery production and storage problems. Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) has recommended its cultivation in both the rabi and kharif seasons to fulfil the requirement throughout the year, says Amandeep Kaur Dhillon, District Extension Scientist (Agronomy), Farm Advisory Service Centre, Sangrur.

"The planting of onions must be done commonly through the nursery during the rabi season,

ONION DOSSIER

India is the second-largest onion-growing country in the world (after China). Indian onions are famous for their pungency and are available round the year.

INDIA EXPORTED
1,537,497.89 MT (METRIC TONNES)
OF FRESH ONIONS WORTH
₹3,432 crore
DURING 2021-22

Indian onions have two crop cycles: first harvesting starts from November to January and the second from January to May.



SOURCE: AGRICULTURAL AND PROCESSED FOOD PRODUCTS EXPORT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (APEDA)

but the kharif crop may be planted both through bulb-sets and nursery. But the period of peak summer and rainfall poses a major bottleneck for successful nursery production. Therefore, PAU's bulb-set technique works wonders for the successful cultivation of this seasonal crop," says Buta Singh Romana, Senior Extension Specialist, Farm Advisory Service Centre, Sangrur.

Bed planting of sets improves the bulb size of the kharif onion. Instead of tears, onions bring cheers to Patiala-based Sandeep Singh. "The rabi season is the best one for onions, but the kharif crop, if grown by taking precautions and following guidelines, can benefit not only the farmers but also the consumers," he says.

He adds that if farmers start

growing the kharif onion, it will result in the availability of onion to the consumers at affordable prices. "Usually, it is seen that the prices of onions soar around Diwali and crash at the end of the rabi season. This price rise in Punjab can be checked if farmers start growing the kharif crop of onion. Commercial cultivation of the kharif crop should be popularised," he says.

Onion production has also augmented the crop diversification programme and favourably impacted the economic conditions of small and marginal farmers. Sukhjinder Singh Sidhu from Burj Kalara village in Jagraon has proved that the approach works. "There was an initial hitch. Growing the kharif onion is a little difficult due to weather and storage issues faced by the farmers in general during

this time of the year. I took the plunge with the help of agriculture experts and today I am supplying onions not only to the domestic market but also exporting them," he says.

Climate and soil type

Farmers have to be very precise regarding the time of planting of this crop because the prolonged winter can create a bolting problem (when a crop prematurely grows stalks and produces seeds) and high temperature can decrease the bulb size. The soil should be rich in organic matter and well-drained with a weed-free environment.

Planting time and method

Plant the 6-8-weeks-old healthy nursery or bulb-sets from mid-August to the first week of September in a well-prepared field.

MAJOR ONION-PRODUCING STATES



In 2020-21

Maharashtra on top in onion production with a share of **39%**

followed by Madhya Pradesh (**17%**)

MAJOR VARIETIES

Agrifound Dark Red, Agrifound Light Red, NHRDF Red, Agrifound White, Agrifound Rose, Agrifound Red, Pusa Ratnati, Pusa Red, and Pusa White Round. There are certain varieties of yellow onion which are suitable for export to European countries: Tana F1, Arad-H, Suprex, Granex 55, HA 60 and Granex 429.

MAJOR EXPORT DESTINATIONS 2021-22



"The planting distance should be 15 cm between rows and 7.5 cm from plant to plant for getting good returns. The planting of the kharif onion on the raised beds improves the size of the bulb.

Manures and fertilisers

Apply 20 tonnes of well-rotted farm yard manure (FYM), 40-kg nitrogen (90-kg urea), 20-kg phosphorus (125-kg superphosphate) and 20-kg potash (35-kg MOP or Muriate of Potassium) per acre. Apply full dose of FYM, phosphorus, potash and half of nitrogen at the time of field preparation before nursery planting and broadcast the remaining half nitrogen just after four weeks of the nursery planting.

Hoing and weed control

Apply 3-4 hoeings to control

weeds. The first weeding should be done after three weeks of planting and the others applied at 15 days' interval. Weedicides may also be used to control the weeds at the proper stage. Apply 750-ml stomp 30EC (Pendimethalin) or 380 ml of Goal 23.5 EC (Oxyfluorfen) using 200 litres of water per acre within one week of planting; it should be supplemented with one weeding after 60 days, if needed.

Irrigation

The first irrigation should be applied just after the planting of the nursery or bulb sets. If planting has been done on beds, the water should not overflow the beds and the irrigation should be applied in the channels. The second irrigation should be applied after 7-8 days' interval, depending upon the climatic conditions. A total of 10-12 irrigations are required during the cropping period. The last irrigation may be applied three weeks before uprooting the crop.

Harvesting & marketing

Harvesting may be done in the last week of November or the first week of December. It should not be delayed, otherwise bolting may occur and the bulb quality will deteriorate. The green bulbs may also be marketed if there is any green onion market. The uprooted crop along with the stem leaves should be kept in store having 28-30°C temperature with a thin layer. The bulbs should be turned after some days and injured and rotted bulbs should be sorted out. The leaves should be chopped at the time of marketing.