



BASAI News Updates

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Crops on 84K acres in Jhajjar villages damaged

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TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

JHAJJAR, SEPTEMBER 26

The crops of paddy, bajra and cotton, spread over 84,000 acres in over 100 villages in the district, have reportedly suffered losses due to the incessant rains that lashed the region last week.

As per a preliminary survey conducted by the local office of the Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Department, the bajra crop in 40,000 acres, paddy in 30,000 acres and cotton in 14,000 acres have been affected due to waterlogging, sources said.

The sources said the bajra crop, spread over 18,000 acres, suffered loss between 50 to 75 per cent, while 25 to 50 percent loss had been estimated in 22,000 acres. Similarly, the paddy crop recorded 50 to 75 per cent loss in 18,000 acres and 25 to 50 per cent damage in 12,000 acres; the cotton crop in 9,000 acres suffered 50 to 75 per cent loss and 25 to 50 per cent in 5,000 acres, the sources added.

"Mundsā, Amadalpur, Akheri Madanpur, Dhana, Neelahi, Jahajgarh, Mangavaas, Palda, Baghpur, Dubaldhan, Chhochhi, Barhana, Dimana, Lakariya,

Farmers' union seeks immediate girdawari



Damaged bajra crop at a village in a Jhajjar village. TRIBUNE PHOTO

Sheria, Dujana, Surheti, Majra, Khuddan, Naula, Utlodha, Silani and Silana villages are the worst affected. Extensive damage to the paddy, bajra and vegetable crops have been reported from these villages," said Ram Chander Yadav, district secretary, All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS).

Yadav added that a team of the AIKS was on a visit to the affected villages to estimate actual losses suffered. "Since farmers have suffered extensive losses due to heavy downpour, we demand immediate girdawari and a compensation of Rs 50,000 per acre," he said, adding that the state government should

TEAMS VISITING AFFECTED VILLAGES

“Farmers are lodging their complaints regarding the losses. Various teams from his office were also visiting the affected villages to assess the damage to prepare a report.

Dr Inder Singh, DEPUTY DIRECTOR (AGRICULTURE)

GOVT SHOULD BAIL FARMERS OUT

“Since farmers have suffered extensive losses due to heavy downpour, we demand girdwari and a compensation of ₹50K per acre. The govt should come forward to bail farmers out.

Ram Chander Yadav, SECY, ALL-INDIA KISAN SABHA

come forward to bail farmers out of this crisis.

Dr Inder Singh, Deputy Director (Agriculture), said farmers were lodging their complaints regarding the losses, adding that various teams from his office were also visiting the affected villages to assess the damage to the crops to prepare a report.



Farmers show damaged crops in a Rohtak village on Monday.

Paddy crop submerged in Rohtak, Karnal villages

TRIBUNE REPORTERS

ROHTAK/KARNAL, SEPT 26

Crops on thousands of acres in Rohtak were damaged by accumulated rainwater in the fields following the recent spell of rain.

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The local authorities are making efforts to drain out

HOODA SEEKS RELIEF

Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Hooda on Monday has demanded the grant of relief to the farmers whose crops have been damaged due to heavy rain and waterlogging. He has also sought the provision of pending compensation to the affected farmers and prompt procurement of paddy crop at the grain markets.



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The local authorities are making efforts to drain out rainwater from the waterlogged fields. They said owing to practical limitations, it might take two to three weeks to complete the operation.

Farmers are apprehensive that by the time the fields are drained, the remaining crop would also get damaged.

"Accumulated rainwater in the fields is damaging our crops. The bajra and cotton crops have been extensively damaged and the standing paddy crop is now submerged," said Amrajit, a farmer of Sundana village.

The officials of the Agriculture Department said the losses suffered by the crop were being assessed for the grant of relief to the affected farmers.

"A survey is also being conducted to assess the damage caused to the insured crops of the farmers who have submitted applications claiming compensation for the losses," said Mahavir Singh, Deputy Director (Agriculture), Rohtak, adding that farmers, whose crops were not insured, had pinned their hopes on the special girdawari announced by the government.

Meanwhile, the Karnal chapter of the All-India Kisan Sabha has demanded that the girdawari be conducted

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and due compensation should be provided to the affected farmers.

Meanwhile, After a heavy rainfall of six days, the farmers in Karnal are worried for their paddy crop which cannot be now used as a seed as grains have started sprouting in the earhead itself in the waterlogged fields.

The sprouting of waterlogged paddy has become a cause for worry for the farmers.

"I have cultivated the 1508 variety on 8 acres and it was at the harvesting stage. The untimely rain has flattened it, due to which the grains have started sprouting. It will affect the production and quality of the grains," Raman Mehta, a farmer, said adding that he would not be able to use the 'sprouted grain as seed next year.

As per the experts, sprouting of grains may reduce the production and quality.

"Every seed is grain, but every grain is not seed. Only those grains are seed which can germinate normally and give a normal plant. The grains which have been germinated in the fields cannot be used as a seed and the quality of the grains will be poor," a crop science scientist said.

8,000 apple-laden trucks stranded on highway, farmers hold protest

Truckers say fruit rotting | Wholesale markets shut during agitation

SAMAAN LATEEF

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 26

Fruit growers on Monday began a two-day protest across Kashmir as they said 8,000 trucks carrying apples were stranded on the Srinagar-Jammu highway for the last two weeks. Truckloads of apples are rotting on the highway, triggering anger among fruit growers over the losses.

Roadworks are being carried out on the highway that is also witnessing shooting stones. All 10 major wholesale fruit markets in the Kashmir valley were shut on Sunday and Monday as farmers protested against what they said was traffic mismanagement.

"At least 8,000 trucks carrying apples worth Rs 100 crore are stranded on the highway for the last two weeks," Bashir Ahmad Basheer, the head of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers and Dealers



Fruit growers burn boxes used for packing apple during their protest at the Parimpora fruit market on Monday. PTI

BEYOND HUMAN CONTROL

“There's difficulty in traffic movement due to shooting stones. It is beyond human control. PK Pole, DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER

Union, told *The Tribune*.

Stranded truckers allege that they are not being allowed to move even as the road is open for other commuters. Almost the entire 40-

km roadside stretch of the highway from Mir Bazaar in Anantnag to Banihal in Ramban district is occupied by stranded trucks.

Drivers say the foul-

smelling juice is oozing from the boxes of rotting apples in the stranded trucks, which otherwise take two days to reach the Delhi fruit mandi.

Kashmir Divisional Commissioner Pandurang K Pole said the stranded trucks would be cleared by Monday night. "As many as 3,995 apple trucks moved towards Jammu on Sunday as intermittent shooting stones are causing regular stoppages. Over 29,000 apple trucks have crossed the highway from September 1 to 25," he added.

Former CM Mehbooba Mufti alleged that the halting of trucks on the highway was a deliberate attempt to make the people of Kashmir suffer.

Kashmir's Rs 8,000-crore apple industry faced a major crisis after the Valley saw back-to-back lockdowns in 2019 after the suspension of Article 370 and later due to the Covid pandemic.

Rain stops, farmers heave a sigh of relief

KURUKSHETRA, SEPTEMBER 26
As the sun came out and the weather remained favourable on Monday, the paddy farmers, who had been restless for the past few days, heaved a sigh of relief. They have started draining out water from their fields.

The incessant rain in the region has left the paddy fields waterlogged and the crop flattened in many villages. Besides the delay in the season, the untimely rain will have an adverse effect on the yield and the quality of the crop too.

Krishan, a farmer from Kalal Majra village, said: "I have cultivated paddy in 5 acres. I was waiting for the

Weighing, filling start at grain markets



Farmers at the Shahabad grain market on Monday. TRIBUNE PHOTO

procurement to start, but due to rain, my fields are completely waterlogged. The crop has started to germinate

again. Now the weather has turned favourable and I am trying to get the excess water drained out to save my crop."

Deputy Director (Agriculture) Dr Pradeep Meel said: "There are reports of loss in about 10 to 15 per cent paddy crop in 40,000 to 50,000 acres, in the district. The exact situation will be clear in two to three days."

Meanwhile, the weighing and filling of the already arrived produce in the grain markets started today. Some farmers, who had harvested their crop, but were waiting for the procurement to start, have started reaching the grain markets.

The stocks that have got drenched are being dried again. The paddy procurement season will officially commence on October 1. — TNS

Lessons from the past: Why Punjab govts have been unable to end the stubble crisis



Farmers burn paddy stubble at a farm near Amritsar.

PTI

Gurpreet Singh Nibber
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CHANDIGARH: Widespread rain over the past week has delayed paddy harvesting in Punjab by 10 days, leaving farmers with a smaller window to clear their fields, in what will likely compel them more to burn crop remnants, and, trigger a pollution crisis.

Experts say that a host of unresolved issues anyway make farm fires inevitable, despite Punjab

now being run by the AAP that is also in power in Delhi.

At the heart of the problem are two core issues: First, a large part of the state sticks to a rice-wheat formula for farming. The second concerns how farmers harvest paddy, using a machine that leaves behind stubble that is cumbersome to remove. A combination



AIR WE BREATHE

of bad planning and lack of political will have ensured the measures to address the issues have not come to fruition.

→P5

Punjab's stubble fire response hit by gamut of issues over the years

Gurpreet Singh Nibber
gurpreet.nibber@hindustantimes.com

CHANDIGARH: Widespread rain over the past week has delayed paddy harvesting in Punjab by 10 days, leaving farmers with a smaller window to ready their fields for winter sowing, in what will likely compel them more to burn crop remnants, and, yet again, trigger a pollution crisis.

Experts say that a host of unresolved issues going back decades are anyway likely to make farm fires inevitable, despite Punjab now being run by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) that is also in power in Delhi, where the winter air pollution crisis is a massive public health issue.

At the heart of the problem are two core issues: First, a large part of the state's agriculture sector sticks to a rice-wheat formula for farming. Rice, sown in summer season, and wheat, sown in the winter, are covered under the government's minimum support price (MSP) guarantee. This effectively leads to farmers choosing paddy over other crops in the kharif, or summer, season.

The second concerns how farmers harvest paddy, using a machine known as the combine harvester. This farm machine slices away the part of paddy that contains the rice grains, leaving a roughly 12-inch stalk, or stubble, embedded in the field. Most commonly used seeding machines are then unable to navigate a farm full of stubble to sow the winter (rabi) crop, in most cases wheat, which has to be put in the ground by the second week of November. This leads to the farmers setting the stubble on fire.

Over the years, the administration has tried to address these issues, especially the second. But a mix of bad planning and lack of political will have ensured they have not come to fruition. Listed below are some of the measures and why they failed. The question is, will the AAP, with higher stakes than previous regimes because it is also in government in Delhi, do better this year?

Stubble-free machines
Between 2018 and 2021, a total of ₹1,145 crore has been spent to distribute 90,422 subsidised systems to farmers and to centres from



where farmers hire farm equipment. These include machines and attachments that deal with the stubble in-situ, or in the field itself. Some of these, like the paddy straw chopper, shred the stalks, while others, like the happy seeder, help plant seeds even when the ground is covered in paddy stalks.

But in those four years, there was little difference in the farm fire count. A part of the reason was that many of these machines never made it to the farms — a survey by the Punjab government this July and August, after being prodded by the Enforcement Directorate, found that 14% of these machines never reached farmers or were disposed off as junk.

Even the machines that were found were likely not used. "There were about 78,000 operable machines but results were not encouraging. It seems these were not used optimally as the farmers who were given the machines restricted the usage to their farms and did not help others," an official in the state agriculture department said, asking not to be named.

New varieties of seeds
To address the failure of the stubble-free machines, experts said that farmers must be transitioned away from paddy to, at least, from the late-growing varieties such as PUSA-44, which takes 160 days to harvest, to those with a shorter, 120-130-day lifecycle. This could allow for the harvesting to be done sooner, leaving farmers with more time to clear their fields before

they need to sow wheat. Former agriculture secretary KS Panu said, in particular, nine districts may hold the key. "In my opinion, the problem of stubble burning is more pronounced in the nine districts of Patiala, Sangrur, Barnala, Mansa, Bathinda, Muktsar, Ferozepur, Faridkot and Tarn Taran since these districts grow PUSA-44 variety that has higher biomass content and is a late-maturing variety," said Panu.

"Farmers are left with no option but to burn their fields to ready it for the next crop," Panu added.

PAU vice-chancellor Dr Satbir Singh Gosal said that work on such varieties are underway. "We are doing research and have launched short duration varieties such as 125 days PR 126." But, Gosal added, "simultaneously, efforts for in-situ (mixing in soil) management of stubble should continue as it improves soil fertility and saves water".

Gosal suggested innovation to bring simpler and cost-effective happy-seeders for sowing wheat directly after harvesting paddy without tilling and setting crop residue on fire.

Off-farm solutions
Off-farm, or ex-situ, measures — a scenario in which the stubble is removed and sold for other uses — was among the solutions sug-

gested, especially by directions of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM).

Latest data by Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB), analysed by HT, shows that there are 11 privately owned biomass-based power generating plants in the state, which are the only ones that will process the crop remnants. Their capacity of 0.8 million tonne is enough to process only 6% of the total stubble generated in the state.

Gosal told HT last week that the state needs an infra-structural push to improve ex-situ methods. "It's a cheaper proposition but needs infrastructure for which big budget is required," he said.



AIR WE BREATHE

Incentive schemes

The Amarinder Singh-led Congress government too sought to give cash incentives of ₹100 per quintal of stubble from the Centre to nudge farmers into giving away the crop remnants for a profit. Those funds too, however, did not come through.

The Union government pointed to the funds it provides for the subsidies of the farm equipment to defend its decision to not offer any of the other incentives as sought by the states.

This year, the AAP government attempted to offer farmers ₹2,500 per acre, of which ₹1,500 was to come from the central govern-

ment, as cash incentive for farmers to turn over their paddy stubble. But the proposal was turned down by the Union government over cost factors. The plan has now been abandoned altogether.

Punitive action
Efforts by the erstwhile Congress government to curb farm fires by taking punitive action against farmers also proved futile. In 2019, 327 cases were registered against farmers under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (for violating government orders). A total of 196 farmers were arrested and 850 red entries were made in their revenue records for burning crop residue. But the problem persisted, forcing the government to pull back owing to the fear of a backlash, especially ahead of elections.

"Whenever we try to tighten the noose, political considerations come into play. In such a scenario, why should government employees put themselves at risk," said a second retired officer.

During the 2019 kharif harvest, enforcement was relaxed since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections were around the corner. The following year, farmers were protesting at Delhi's borders against the (now repealed) three farm laws, which too prompted the state to go easy on its crackdown. In 2021, a similar attitude was in play since the state headed for polls in early 2022.

This season, paddy was cultivated in over three million hectares and as a season's average, about 18.5 million tonne stubble is likely to be produced.

State agriculture minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal said the number of farm fires will be drastically lower this time. The minister cited the state government's initiative to give 32,800 machines for in-situ management, more than the number distributed in the previous four years, and an aggressive campaign to dissuade farmers from burning the crop remnants. "At least 5,000 officers of the agriculture, rural development and revenue departments besides students of four state universities are reaching out to rural Punjab to dissuade farmers from burning paddy stubble," he said.

The AQI numbers this season, and the share of stubble smoke in the pollution levels, will reveal the real story.

past 11 days in protest against the creation of the Badli Municipal Committee. All three villages have also been brought under the purview of the MC, leading to resentment among the people.

A notification about the formation of the Badli MC was issued over a year ago, but the agitation was launched after the MC

notices on villagers for assessing their property tax. "The government has ordered a public referendum as regards the ongoing row over the formation of the Badli MC. There are separate representations by delegations of villagers in favour and against the move. The voting, to be held at all polling booths in Badli, Pah-

Saturday, will decide whether the majority of villagers want the MC status or not," said Shakti Singh, Deputy Commissioner. Vishal Kumar, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Badli, said a notice regarding the voting had been issued while patwaris and other employees had been roped in to motivate residents of all

On Hooda's appeal, arhtiyas suspend strike, for now

To start procurement of paddy from Wednesday

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, SEPTEMBER 26

On the eighth day of their indefinite work suspension and fourth day of fast at the Karnal grain market, arhtiyas of the state on Monday suspended their strike following an appeal made to them by former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who came to meet them.

Hooda said he had appealed to the arhtiyas to suspend their strike in the larger interest of the farming community, which they accepted and ended their protest. The former CM also assured them that he would raise their issue at appropriate platforms, including the Assembly.

Hooda offered juice to Haryana State Arhtiyas Association president, Ashok Gupta, chairman Rajnish Chaudhary and others who had been on fast since September 23 against the procurement through e-NAM, fixing of Rs 46 per quintal as commission instead of 2.5 per cent given earlier and to press for their



Ex-CM Bhupinder Hooda offers juice to state president of Arhtiyas' Association Ashok Gupta in Karnal. PHOTO: SAYEED AHMED

TO RESUME AGITATION AFTER SEASON

"In the larger interest of the farmers, we accepted the appeal of the former CM and have suspended our indefinite strike. We will start procurement from Wednesday. After the season, we will resume our strike.

Ashok Gupta, PRESIDENT, HARYANA STATE ARHTIYAS ASSOCIATION

other demands.

"In the larger interest of the farmers, we accepted the appeal of the former CM and have suspended our indefinite strike. We will start procurement from Wednesday. After the season, we will resume our strike," said Gupta, state president.

Hooda demanded the government to find a solution to

their demands. He said the e-NAM system imposed by the government was neither in the interest of arhtiyas nor farmers.

Hooda said farmers and labourers were also facing problems due to the strike along with the arhtiyas. Hooda said the arhtiyas should start the procurement work in the mandis along with the struggle for their demands.

Soon all households in state to have

VIJAY C ROY
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

All households in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh will soon

tribute to the Government of India's efforts towards the adoption of smart meters. The Vi IoT-enabled smart meters minimise human intervention



Compensate farmers for losses: Selja

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

Member of the Congress Working Committee Kumari Selja today said the BJP-JJP alliance government in the state should compensate farmers for the damage caused to the crops due to rains at the earliest.

In a statement issued today, Selja said in the past few days, water had accumulated in the fields due to the recent spell of rain, causing heavy losses to farmers across the state.

"There has been major damage to other crops, including cotton, millet, paddy, moong and sugarcane, owing to which farmers are facing a financial crisis. Farmers have been bearing the brunt of incessant rains for many seasons now, for which they have not yet been compensated. The BJP-JJP alliance government is deliberately ignoring the welfare of farmers," said Selja.



Biological Agri Solutions Association of India