

CM vows to facilitate farmers, the agriculture sector

Terming agriculture credit cards scheme as an innovative step of the PTI government, Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar said that farmers will be directly paid the price of wheat, sugarcane, and other crops. "The farmers will also be provided agriculture services on subsidized rates while high-value crop culture will be introduced in villages," the CM said while chairing a meeting regarding the agriculture department at his office.

The CM said that cultivation of olive trees will be encouraged in hilly areas of D G Khan. "Farmers will be educated about the latest innovations in the agriculture sector so that they can get good earnings through floriculture and foreign exchange can also be earned by increasing the production of honey," he said.

The CM said that medicinal crops will not only promote local pharmaceutical industry but the foreign exchange will be earned as well. The farmers are given necessary protection through the launch of insurance policy and the steps taken by the PTI government are proving meaningful, he added. Principal Secretary to CM, secretaries of information and agriculture departments along-with concerned officials attended the meeting.

Govt reserves Rs. 309 bn for agriculture, aims at lifting 'neglected' sector

The government presented an Agricultural Emergency Program worth Rs309 billion. The plan was revealed by PTI leader Jahangir Khan Tareen and Minister for National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan during a press conference in Islamabad.

During the presser, the leaders said that the program will specifically focus on small farmers, announcing that the federal government will give Rs15 to Rs20 billion to Sindh province. Tareen, an agriculturalist himself, said neither he nor the sugar mills in the country would benefit from the government's increased tax on sugar in the new budget.



He noted that the "country cannot progress without a developed agricultural sector". "The previous governments had adopted wrong policies which resulted in increased agricultural cost and decreased revenues", the sugar baron said.

Tareen also disclosed that the "center will reserve Rs84 billion for the agricultural sector in the next federal budget [2020-2021]", adding, "Different groups have been established for the growth of this sector". He further said that Prime Minister Imran Khan has asked to construct high-rise buildings instead of vast structures.

Sultan also slashed former governments for neglecting the agricultural

sector and said that timely completion of development projects will surely bring revolution in this sector. He said that PTI is the only government that actually thinks about the general masses and ready to launch different projects for their relief. Jahangir Tareen has come forward on my request as no one knows about the local agricultural sector better than him, he stated.

Pakistan and the US for enhanced agri cooperation

Ahead of Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to the United States of America, the two sides discussed measures for enhanc-



ing cooperation in the agriculture sector. In a meeting, Minister for National Food Security and Research, Muhammad Mehboob Sultan and US Ambassador Paul Jones agreed that the forthcoming visit would be very important to highlight the preferred areas of cooperation especially in the field of agriculture.

Mr. Sultan highlighted that the scope of Pakistani mangoes to the US market could be enhanced since the product meets all the international standards and is exported to almost 48 countries after vapor treatment.

This will give a great boost to mango exports and the US could also work in collaboration for value-addition of mangoes in Pakistan which will be mutually beneficial. Mr. Sultan further said that dates from Pakistan may also be granted market access in the US. In view of the visit of the prime minister, dates and other products may also be granted market access on reciprocity. US ambassador was of the view that Pakistan could import meat from the United States to which the federal minister explained that it could be explored after mutual consultation.

The agriculture minister said the two countries must explore avenues for mutual cooperation especially when the prime minister's agriculture emergency program has already been launched. He said the present government is making every effort to strengthen the agriculture sector, especially after the devolution. The government has identified few areas to be developed on priority and important of those areas are agriculture mechanization, to augment the yield of cotton, development of oilseed and decrease the import bill.

He said the government, as well as the agriculture ministry, is open for cooperation from all provinces and friendly countries for mutually beneficial work in the agriculture sector. Ambassador Jones said the United States is well aware that Pakistan is an important agricultural country, and exchange of technologies in the field of agriculture including cooperation in value-addition, and public-private partnership would be welcomed by both the sides.

Food, health investors meet PM Khan

A group of investors from the fields of food and health called on Prime Minister Imran Khan at the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington DC, during his recent visit of USA.

The investors included Aslam Khan, Mobashir Chaudhuri (from Texas), Dr. Basit Javed, Dr. Abid Sheikh, and Dr. Mobashir Chaudhary.

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Haider Zaidi, Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood, Adviser on Finance Dr. Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, Special Assistant on Overseas Pakistanis and Special Assistant on HRD Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari were present during the meeting.

Rice exports reach \$2.07bn mark in FY19

Rice exports from Pakistan maintained upward momentum and touched the all-time high level of \$2.07 billion marks in the last fiscal year (FY19). According to rice export statistics, in term of quantity,

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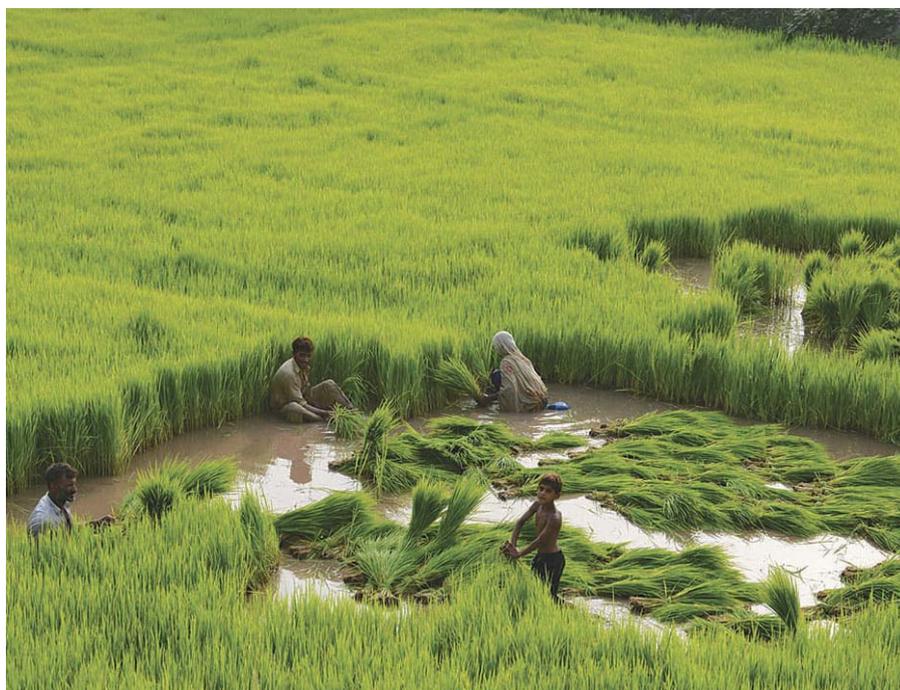
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Pakistan exported a total of 4.097 million metric tons of rice during July-June of FY19 compared to some 4.082 million metric ton in the corresponding period of FY18. During the last fiscal year, some 537,133 tons basmati rice and 3.545 million tons other varieties of rice were exported.

In term of value, Pakistan earned all-time higher foreign exchange amounting to \$ 2.074 billion in FY19 up from \$ 2.035 billion, showing 2 percent growth.



Convener Rice Export Committee of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and former chairman Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) has said that Pakistan's rice exports have posted growth in a difficult time when the country's remaining major exports were on the decline.

He said that there is a need for the development of new seed varieties to earn more foreign exchange, but unfortunately, it requires a regulatory framework. "Pakistan has exported over \$ 2 billion worth rice in absence of Research and Development (R&D). We can export over \$ 5 billion rice in the next five years with some concrete efforts towards the introduction of new rice seeds and varieties," he added.

Presently, Pakistani rice exporters are importing hybrid rice seeds from China on a self-made basis to get better yield, however, these hybrid seeds are not successful in the long term, Rafique mentioned. The regulatory framework should be devised for the development of high yielding and commercially viable varieties and accordingly intern registering them for Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), he suggested.

China, Kenya, and European Countries were leading importers of Pakistani rice. While, during the last fiscal year, exports to Indonesia also resumed and some 70,000 tons of non-basmati rice was exported, he informed.



Pakistan loses \$76-90m every year because of inadequate wheat storage facilities

About 80 percent of Pakistani farmers grow wheat every year. A majority of them have landholdings of up to five hectares. The crop covers about 40pc of the total cultivated area in the country.

Unfortunately, torrential rains hurt the crop at harvest time. According to press reports, 150,000 tonnes of the crop were lost owing to the recent hailstorms across Punjab. It will reduce agricultural GDP. Furthermore, the meteorological department has forecast another spell of torrential rains in the coming days. Farmers are also going to face post-harvest grain storage problems throughout the country

because of traditional methods used for seed storage.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) says 16 million tonnes of wheat need proper storage facilities. Assuming an overall 15pc loss in cereals, it is estimated that Pakistan is annually losing as much as 5.6m tonnes of cereals worth \$1.7 billion and 2.1m hectares of cultivated land resources.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, our economy loses Rs6-7bn (\$76-90m) every year because of inadequate wheat storage facilities. Improper storage along with erratic rainfall and the upcoming monsoon cause additional losses in grains.

Media reports indicate that wheat stocks in the warehouses of the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco) and provincial food departments were partly damaged by heavy rains last year. This occurs at the cost of the farmers' poor-quality carry-over seed and expensive production as 65-75pc of produced wheat is stored at farms. Farmers should avoid the storage of moist bulk seeds and never expose grain to humid air.

High humidity is the main reason for the loss of quality in wheat during production and storage stages. Another upset was the decline in the crop's yield because of the yellow rust attack. Late sowing owing to the prolonged humid weather did not help either.



The quality of the product was compromised because of high seed moisture contents at harvest time. Wheat is harvested at 10pc seed moisture contents every year and remains safe from insects and fungus if stored properly. But the existing weather conditions, such as high relative humidity (RH), will raise seed moisture contents, making the product more vulnerable to insect and fungal infestation during storage.

The University of Agriculture in Faisalabad has developed cost-effective hermetic Anaaji bags and drums that are useful for the storage of cereals, oilseeds, and pulses and do not affect seed and grain qualities. An Anaaji drum is a hermetically sealed plastic drum having a capacity of 160 liters. It can prevent both moisture and oxygen and thus reduces storage losses. A hygrometer is attached with it to monitor moisture contents of seeds indirectly by measuring equilibrium RH inside the drum.

SBP report shines a light on food insecurity

In its third quarterly report on the state of the economy, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) noted provincial disparities in terms of food security in Pakistan. In Balochistan, at least 30 percent of households experience hunger on a chronic basis. On the other hand, Gilgit-Baltistan has the most food-secure households (nearly 80pc) in the region, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (70pc). Alarming, of the 36.9pc “food insecure” households in the country, 18.3pc face “severe” food insecurity.

Only 63.1 percent of the country’s households are “food secure” despite the fact that Pakistan is self-sufficient in major staples. According to the Ministry of Health and Unicef’s National Nutritional Survey, 2018, Pakistan is ranked at 8th position in producing wheat, 10th in rice, 5th in sugarcane, and 4th in milk production. Pakistan is among those seven countries that cumulatively account for two-thirds of the world’s under-nourished population

According to the SBP, almost a quarter of Pakistan’s population lives below the

poverty line (set at Rs3,030.3 per adult equivalent per month). This means that around 50 million people in the country are unable to access basic needs given their incomes. Most of these people dwell in rural areas where the poverty rate is 30.7pc. High population growth and unfavorable water and climatic conditions in the country mean that concerns regarding food security may increase manifolds over the next two to three decades.

Nestlé to continue its investments in Pakistan’s mango farming practices

The interest of Nestlé, a billion dollar multinational food and beverage giant, to invest in Creating Shared Value (CSV) programs in Pakistan is helping different communities to incorporate best global practices in their business.

Nestlé is reportedly planning to continue its investments in the farming practices of mangoes amid growing concerns around the decline of mango growth in Pakistan. Climate change has affected mango crop in Pakistan by 20 percent this year particularly in Sindh and Punjab. The country may get late arrival of crop in

both the provinces with less production.

In Pakistan, total area under mango cultivation is 170 million hectares with the production of 175 million tonnes being the second major fruit crop of Pakistan. The country produces 8% of world’s mango and mainly exports to Middle East, Germany, Japan, Italy and UK, making its valuable contribution as an important foreign currency earning fruit crop.

Pakistani mango is recognized as the best of its kind in the world market. Pakistan is now the 4th largest producer in the world behind India, China, and Thailand. However, it has been observed that in the past few years the production of quality Mangoes is on the decrease. Pakistan’s horticulture has been badly hit by global warming and extreme weather patterns.

Nestlé Pakistan, a leading nutrition, health, and wellness firm with special expertise in the dairy industry, has been contributing largely to help develop sustainable farming communities in the rural areas of the country. Under its initiative Creating Shared Value (CSV), Nestlé in Pakistan is helping different communities to incorporate best global practices in their business. ♦

