

Agriculture production in Pakistan by green revolution to boost

Vice President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik have called for Green Revolution keeping in view the declining economy and growing food insecurity in the country. Research and investments will be extended to best solutions to boost yields.

He also demanded the government to grant interest free agricultural loans on soft terms and conditions to farmers at their doorsteps besides especial relief in water and power consumption.

Iftikhar Ali Malik made this observation in context with the 70th Independence Day during his meeting with a delegation of progressive farmers headed by Muzaffar Ali Sial here at his residence

He asked farmers to adopt scientific methods to enhance food grain production and reduce imports by using one-fifth of their farming land to cultivate lentils.

Underlining the greater readiness to take the bold steps needed to build a prosperous future of Pakistan he has given the call for "Green Revolution", in the country "which implies productivity improvement in perpetuity without ecological and social harm.

He emphasized that over half of the food produced today is lost, wasted or discarded as a result of inefficiency in the human-managed food chain. "Unless we prepare a balanced and a comprehensive integrated plan, we will not be able to change the lives of farmers," he added.

Stressing the urgent need for use of scientific methods for farming to increase productivity, Iftikhar said it was high time that the country goes for green revolution.

He said the import bill of oil, machinery and food rose 21 % year-on-year in the first half year of 2016-17 despite drop in global prices.

He said Pakistan can save over \$1.2 billion annually by encouraging the domestic edible oil sector. He was of the view that proper farming, production,



processing and marketing of oilseeds can not only reduce dependence on imports but also help earn foreign exchange as Pakistan is located in the food deficient region.

Pakistani farmers' using new tools for irrigation progress

Pakistan's water research agency is sending rain forecasts to 10,000 farmers, helping them irrigate more efficiently. It is still beyond farmer Mohammad Ashraf's comprehension that people in Islamabad can predict that it will rain in the next two days in his village.

He is also astonished that, based on this prediction, they can tell him how much he should water his rice and sugarcane plantations. "I marvel at this science of being able to predict something that is unknown and in God's hands," says the 36-year-old farmer.

Every Friday, he reads the simple Urdu messages sent to his phone, saying things like: "Dear farmer friend, this is to inform you that between 21 and 28 July 2017 in your area (Bahawalnagar) the crops used this much water (cotton 1.6 inch, sugarcane 1.7 inch). Next week, rain is predicted in some parts of your region. Therefore please water your crops accordingly."

The text messages are sent by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water

Resources (PCRWR), a government agency that carries out water research. Ashraf would be even more flabbergasted if he knew the scientists get this information from space.

"Using satellites and models that take the pulse of the earth, we can identify the amount of water a given crop requires at a specific location and a specific time," says Faisal Hossain, head of the Sustainability, Satellites, Water, and Environment (SASWE) research group at the University of Washington which developed the programme for, "estimating crop water requirement in a cost effective and sustainable manner for the whole country".

Ashraf, who lives in Hayatpur met water experts from the PCRWR who were doing a field survey to explore how to improve groundwater conservation and crop yield.

During their surveys, the experts found that farmers were over-watering their crops. They installed a water meter on Ashraf's 12-acre farm and explained that if the arrow turned towards the green on the dial, it meant that his land had enough water.

When the arrow turned towards the red mark, it was time to water. "Like every farmer in the village, I did not believe them. We have been farming for generations and know what works and

what doesn't," Ashraf said. But the following year, he decided to only water his field when the marker pointed towards the red.

That season he produced more, spent less on diesel to run the tubewell, and made more profit than anyone in the village.

"The others watered their sugarcane fields three times more than I did and not only did my plants grow taller, I had less disease in my crop than the rest."

Since last year, the PCRWR has sent weekly information to farmers like Ashraf through text messages, telling them how much water their crops need. They also send them weather forecasts.

"We started with 700 farmers in April 2016, all across Pakistan, and since January this year the number of farmers receiving the messages has increased to 10,000," says Ahmed Zeeshan Bhatti, deputy director of PCRWR.

Horticulture products: Unfair trade practices hinder exports to Russia

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has identified Russia as a potential destination for fruit exports from Pakistan, noting, however, that barriers to trade are making the exercise difficult.

FPCCI Horticulture Exports Committee Regional Chairman Ahmad Jawad said trade relations between the two countries, despite growing substantially, have never been amiable and have a tendency of suddenly becoming sour.

He emphasized upon a 2012 incident as an example when a Russian quarantine team visited Pakistan's horticulture growing areas and showed its reservations about the quality of crops.

It also set conditions for exporters to get their products certified from a certain private laboratory in Lahore before exporting them to Russia, apart from the routine phytosanitary certification from the Department of Plant Protection (DPP).

Exporters were hardly satisfied with the decision at the time since the pre-

scribed lab was neither registered with the DPP, nor did the DPP have any credentials for this lab.

FPCCI officials state that lack of understanding on quarantine controls between Russia and Pakistan is the main reason behind incidents like these.

Jawad said the latest problem between the two countries relates to the valuation of import duty on Pakistani kinnow and potatoes by Russia Customs, which is 'unfair and biased'.

Exporters believe that if the valuation issue is quickly resolved, there can be an immense increase in exports.

The problem arises because Pakistani kinnow is being compared with that of Spain and Morocco, which are highly priced due to their seedless and aesthetic qualities.

Jawad said he had raised the issue with Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Alexander G Khozin in a recent meeting, with the latter giving assurances of reviewing the matter in detail.

More competitiveness to become part of Pakistani mango exporters

At the (USAID) "Mango Gala", Director Jerry Bisson and Chairman Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) Dr. Yusuf Zafar paved the way for 13 mango farmers to receive mango graders worth more than \$750,000, which will greatly increase Pakistan's

mango production and exports.

Nepalese Ambassador Sewa Lamsal Adhikari also attended the event, held in Islamabad, to learn more about the Pakistani mango sector.

The Mango Gala showcased USAID's commitment to supporting Pakistan's mango sector. The event also brought together public and private mango sector stakeholders to discuss export trends and explore new opportunities. Leading mango producers and exporters displayed Pakistan's many mango varieties.

"The U.S. Government, through USAID, is determined to increase access to new markets for Pakistani mango farmers, while ensuring compliance with international grading standards and export protocols," Mr. Bisson said. "We want to make Pakistani mangoes as competitive as they can be in the international markets."

USAID launched the U.S.-Pakistan Partnership for Agricultural Market Development in 2015 to increase Pakistan's commercial agriculture and livestock sectors competitiveness in international and national markets in four product lines: meat, high-value and off-season vegetables, mangoes, and citrus.

Under the project's grant program, USAID has provided 13 state-of-the-art, custom-made, automated mango graders. These mango graders are being utilized for the first time to grade export quality mangoes during the 2017 season.



Project launched for livestock protection

Ravi Foundation Pakistan (RFP) an NGO in TOBA has launched a project titled "Community Preparedness for Disaster Risk Reduction for Livestock and Pet Animals in District Tharparkar, Sindh."

RFP Chairperson Rafia Ashfaq told the media on Wednesday at Press Club that the project launching seminar was organized a few days ago at Dhabi village of Union Council (UC) Mithrio Bhatti, Mithi tehsil in Tharparkar district. The seminar was attended by a large number of locals and the government officials.

According to her, animals' rights were highlighted at the seminar and the participants were told their duty in this regard. She added that Mithi Veterinary Officer Dr Ashok Kumar informed the participants aims and objectives of the project. "A briefing session was also held by Dr Mevaram, a livestock expert, wherein the participants were taught treatment of different diseases of the livestock," she added.

UAE's International Halal Accreditation Forum's partners with with Pakistan Halal Authority

The newly established Pakistan Halal Authority (PHA), a central body mandated to oversee the Halal sector, has opened up a wide range of opportunities for the country, allowing it to make the most of its advantages when it comes to Halal trade and production.

Pakistan's Halal industry is poised for a promising future with centralized accreditation recently established, and a robust market potential waiting to be maximized.

Commenting on the partnership, HE Mohammed Saleh Badri, Secretary General of International Halal Accreditation Forum (IHAF), said, "Pakistan is relentlessly working to build and develop its Halal network. With the efforts that its government, the private sector and stakeholders have put into crafting the national strategy, it's only a matter of time before the country sees a



spike in Halal exports and local production."

Years prior to the establishment of PHA, in 1998, the country's Ministry of Science and Technology has already established the Pakistan National Accreditation Council (PNAC) as a national apex agency to accredit conformity assessment bodies.

A firm proponent of universal standardization, PNAC is one of the founding members of IHAF.

"Having Pakistan on board through the PNAC is a significant boon to the IHAF membership. Its extensive experience and wide exposure on accreditation can certainly help us achieve our target of creating a solid international Halal network," said Badri.

Pakistan is nestled on a strategic export spot that is close to the Muslim world's vibrant markets like the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

"About 80 per cent of Pakistan's Halal meat exports go to the Middle East and Gulf countries, with major destinations being Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The other potential markets for Pakistani meat are the Asia Pacific region, North-Africa and the Far East," according to a Pakistan Food Journal study of the Pakistani Halal meat market.

Strong bilateral relations between the two countries further support this geographical advantage. Just recently, the

UAE has begun allowing the transport of Halal products from Pakistan via sea, slashing freight costs by one third.

The PHA mandate aside, experts believe that Pakistan can play pivotal role in the growing market just by considering that it has more than 160 million quality livestock including 71 million cattles and buffalos and 89 million goats and sheep.

Chinese delegation interested to invest in Pakistan's agriculture sector

Islamabad Chamber of Commerce was visited recently by a delegation of Chinese entrepreneurs led by Lee of Ministry of Commerce, China and Industry (ICCI). The delegation showed interest to make investment in Pakistan's agriculture sector to produce silk worms, mulberries and many other agro products.

Speaking at the occasion, Lee said that Chinese entrepreneurs were looking for suitable land to set up an agriculture farm in the first phase and in the second phase they would set up a factory in Pakistan to produce silk.

He said their investment was likely to create 30,000 new jobs in Pakistan. The Chinese delegation discussed many possibilities of investment in local agriculture sector as they considered Pakistan a potential country for business and investment in this sector.

Speaking at the occasion, ICCI President Khalid Iqbal Malik said that Pakistan was an agricultural country and it offered huge investment opportunities to foreign investors in various sectors of agriculture including crops, seeds and tree farming, livestock, dairy farming, milk processing.

He stressed that Chinese investors should bring in latest machinery and technology in agriculture sector that would help in improving Pakistan's agricultural productivity and enhance its per acre yield.

He said by investing in Pakistan, Chinese investors could export agricultural products to Middle East, Central Asia, Europe, Afghanistan and many other countries.

He said Potohar region and District Chakwal were suitable for production of many agro products including silk worms, olive oil, mulberries, grapes and others. He assured that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry would fully cooperate with Chinese investors in identifying land for agriculture investment in this region.

Farmers to get smartphones under e-agriculture scheme

According to Provincial Finance Minister Dr Ayesha Ghaus Pasha 75,000 smart phones will be given to the farmers in the first phase under E-Agriculture Credit Scheme which will have already installed basic applications.

She said that access to necessary information like receipt and payment of loans under online system, look after of crops, pesticides, protection against seasonal effects and increase in production will be made easy through smart phones. E-Agriculture will become a source of green revolution, she added.

She expressed these views while presiding over 13th meeting of steering committee of E-Agriculture Credit Scheme at new Minister Block Peoples House. The minister said that economy of Punjab depends largely on agriculture that is why provincial government is ready to take all out steps for increasing local production and satisfaction of farmers.

Chief Planning and Evaluation Cell of Agriculture Department Mahmood Akhter Rana, Member Punjab Agriculture Commission, representatives of National Rural Support Programme, Punjab Land Record Authority, National Bank of Pakistan, Agriculture Development Bank, Tameer Bank, NRSP Bank, Akhuwat, State Bank of Pakistan and Bank of Punjab were present on the occasion.

Policy Adviser to Agriculture Department Irfan Razzaq, while giving briefing to the meeting regarding progress on E Agriculture Credit Scheme, said that rate of recovery of loans being provided to small farmers under the scheme is about 100 % and Akhuwat Foundation and NRSP are displaying best performance in this regard.

Razzaq informed the minister that services of Telenor Communication have been acquired for the provision of smart phones to the farmers. He said that after the approval of conditions and strategy, this scheme will be launched soon.

Dr Ayesha directed partner banks to ensure timely provision of amounts of loans to the farmers so that their confidence could be increased in the institutions and they could pay full attention to increasing production.

Chief Planning Officer Mahmood Akhter Rana told the minister that the department is also considering acquiring services of more banks for the provision of loans so that access of farmers to the banks could be made easy.

Punjab govt to provide latest field machinery to farmers

The Punjab government is launching a project worth 1.2 billion rupees to provide

latest field machinery to farmers on affordable price.

A spokesperson of Punjab Agriculture Information Department told our Multan correspondent that the project would be initiated in 36 districts of the province with collaboration of the Bank of Punjab.

He said initially, the government is establishing one centre each in 36 districts which would be expanded to tehsils level.

The spokesperson said the initiative will help the farmers to attain hi tech machinery for progressive farming.

Pakistan needs latest farm-tech to achieve food security

In a statement, the LCCI president Abdul Basit said that the agriculture sector was suffering due to multiple reasons.

The government should encourage and facilitate the farming community to adopt modern technologies to avoid post-harvest losses and increase agriculture production.

He stressed the need for increasing the cropped area because the country is already running well short of per capita food availability.

The country's almost 43 % labour force is dependent on agriculture, the yield gap in the four major crops is three times from the best producers in the world such as China and Egypt.

He said the fact should be an eye-opener that China produces two times more cotton and wheat per hectare and Egypt produces around three times more rice and sugarcane per hectare as compared to Pakistan.





Factors that are recommended to improve the yield are through large-scale introduction of hybrid seeds and mechanized farming, high efficiently irrigation systems such as drip irrigation and reduction in wastage of crop through introduction of privately owned storage facilities and cold storage facilities.

He further said, "The 21st century belongs to biotechnology and Pakistan has tremendous potential to emerge as biotechnology leader but to achieve the goal private sector, scientists, researchers and government will have to work hand-in-hand".

PMAS-AAUR launches Commercial ostrich farming training

A two-day training on Commercial Ostrich Farming under the theme of Ostrich Diseases and Prevention commenced at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR) recently in August.

The prime objectives of the training are to provide technical knowledge as well as expertise for health and diseases, handling, management and marketing of ostrich meat and its by-products.

The training will also covers various techniques that can result in enhanced meat yield and high liveability at the young age under local farm environment.

The inaugural session was attended by deans, directors and ostrich farmers Vice Chancellor while PMAS-AAUR, Prof. Dr Rai Naiz Ahmed was the chief guest.

Over thirty Ostrich farmers from all over the Pakistan are participating and will get training on handling, restarting of

ostrich, rearing of ostrich chicks for meat, skin & feather production. This will also include medication & vaccination for the successful ostrich production for meat and eggs with reference to health issues.

Prof. Dr Rai Niaz Ahmed, while addressing, called Ostrich as Millennium Bird and said, Pakistan has the most favorable environment for Ostrich Farming. He highlighted the benefits of ostrich farming and said, "Ostrich farming is the only way out to overcome the shortage of meat in the country."

Poultry sector looks for share in global halal segment

While policymakers in Pakistan may have, time and again, committed themselves to pursuing an export-led plan for rapid economic growth and reduction in the country's external account vulnerabilities, no government has ever formulated an effective policy to boost exports.

It is not an accident that exports have more than halved to less than 7% of the size of the economy from 15% in the mid-2000s.

Owing to a policy emphasis on import substitution, Pakistan's export base remains narrow and skewed in favour of textiles and clothing, which have historically contributed between 55%-60% of total overseas shipments.

If we add leather/products and rice to the equation, the three commodities together constitute three quarters of the country's total export sales.

With Pakistan's exports plunging by a fifth to around \$20bn over the last four years, the calls for exploiting the potential of and helping non-conventional sectors

like poultry meat and value added products for boosting the nation's export are gaining momentum in Karachi and Punjab.

"With the country facing a steep decline in exports because of narrow product range and markets, it is imperative that the government start broadening the exportable products base and developing strategies to increase exports of unconventional items," a spokesman for the Pakistan Poultry Association said.

He further added, "Poultry can prove to be major foreign exchange earner if proper facilities and incentives are given to this industry for a level playing field in the international market."

They base their argument on the fact that the global halal food trade now amounts to \$300bn, and is growing at an average rate of about 5% annually. The halal trade is expected to double in the next few years.

According to K&N's CEO Khalil Sattar, the Middle East, Central Asian states and Russia are markets of our interest because of close proximity and higher poultry imports, These countries imported chicken meat to the tune of \$5.79bn during 2013, and their imports are growing at a rate of around 8pc to 10% a year.

"Similarly, the demand in Europe is likely to accelerate at a much faster rate as the Muslim population is expected to shoot up from 52 million at present to 104m in 20 years," he said. "So imagine the kind of export revenues we are talking about if we facilitate our industry to tap the foreign markets."

Only 5% of the total poultry production in Pakistan is done and processed for value-addition in the organized sector because of adverse tax policies and a lack of a regulatory framework to control poultry trade.

The poultry association underlines the need for restoration of zero-rated status for the industry for enhancing its competitiveness in the overseas markets.

"We are not asking for subsidies. We just want the government's help in reducing our cost of doing business to be able to compete with our rivals in the halal poultry market," Mr Sattar said. ♦