

Govt keen to promote agriculture, livestock sectors on modern lines

The present government is paying special attention to the uplift of agriculture and livestock sectors on modern lines and has designed an Rs309 billion Prime Minister Agriculture Emergency Program.

The program is envisaged to boost local agricultural production, reduce dependence on imports, improve the lives of poor farmers and lead the country towards sustainable development by exploring new agricultural markets, introducing initiatives for soil and water conservation and promoting aquaculture farming in potential areas of the country.

The emergency program to be formally commenced by next month will revolutionize the output of major cash crops including wheat, rice, cotton, maize, and sugarcane.

The initiative would also help in promoting the cultivation of minor crops like oilseed, pulses on which the country is spending billions of dollars every year, besides, it would also help in promoting the culture of growing high-value fruit, vegetables, and development of livestock sector to fetch handsome foreign exchange reserves for the country.

In this regard, the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) in its recent meeting has accorded approval to 13 mega-development projects conceived under the emergency program, whereas the final approval is likely to be given by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) in its next meeting.

Commenting on the salient features of the program, Focal Person of Prime Minister Emergency Program Muhammad Ali Talpur said that out of the total Rs309 billion package, the federal government would provide Rs84 billion while the remaining amount of Rs225 billion would be shared by the provincial governments.

He said the current government, after assuming the power, had attached high priority to the development of the agricultural sector and had enhanced overall allocations for this sector.



The federal government had increased its spending from Rs1 billion in its annual Development Plan last year to Rs12 billion and the same was followed in Punjab and other provinces, adding that the government intended to take up the spending up to the record level of Rs70 billion during next four years.

He said that the program was a revolutionary step of the government and besides promoting the agricultural sector it would also be beneficial for the local farmers as the special efforts would be made to enhance the per acre yield of all major crops.

Special measures, he said would also be introduced to enhance per acre yield of wheat from 35-40 maunds, rice by 10-20 maunds, sugarcane by 650-800 maunds, adding that incentives were announced for the cultivation of oil seeds like canola and sunflower.

PM's agriculture emergency program: Backyard poultry initiative program kicks off in Punjab

The federal government recently launched the 'Backyard poultry initiative' under the Prime Minister's National Agriculture Emergency Program under which 5 million desi (local) chickens will be distributed among public across the country at subsidized rates aimed at to provide adequate animal protein to undernourished population and alleviate poverty.

The government has launched Prime Minister's National Agriculture Emergency Program (NAEP) of Rs 309 billion in different areas of agriculture sector on a cost-sharing basis between the federal and provincial governments. The program



includes conservation of water, an increase in yields of major crops, livestock initiative for small and medium farmers, the transformation of the agriculture produce market, and increased access of farmers to finance.

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan while speaking at the launching ceremony of 'Backyard Poultry Initiative' at Poultry Research Institute Rawalpindi said that under this program, 5 million pre-vaccinated high laying desi chickens will be distributed throughout the country in the rural areas including Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

He said that the total cost of the project is Rs 1,635.471 million. Of the total cost, 30 percent would be borne by the federal and provincial governments while 70 percent would be the beneficiary's share, he said.

Sultan said that the program is one of the steps for the provision of animal protein and other food nutrients to the undernourished population. "The provision of cheap poultry products is a good step to address the issue of malnutrition," he said.

He said that according to National Nutrition Survey 2018-19, 40 percent of children up to five years of age in Pakistan have different physical and mental health issues, and according to the survey conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Pakistan ranks 3rd in this menace. "We need to take concrete steps to address the issues in small children and achieve zero hunger targets," the minister said.

He said that under this program, the government will bear 30 percent cost of a set of five chickens (four females and one male) and 70 percent will be paid by the beneficiary. As per the program, the price of a set of five chickens (four female and one male) 80 to 85 days old is Rs 1,050 while its actual price is Rs 1500, he said.

The minister said that the program has been launched in Punjab province and will soon be started in other provinces.

Pakistan, China to launch 13 mega projects in the Agri sector

The government is mulling 13 mega projects in the agriculture sector across the country in collaboration with China, while it has also sought technical assistance from New Zealand to improve dairy production and value addition, food minister.

"The government is resolved to uplift the agriculture sector and is going to launch 13 mega projects across the country and the technical cooperation with China would help us in the field," Minister for National Food Security and Research Mehboob Sultan said talking to a delegation of China Machinery Engineering Cooperation (CMEC). The food ministry is processing a memorandum of understanding between the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council and CMEC.

"Due to the lack of requisite technology we are lagging behind in value addition and processing hence the joint venture in this regard and adaption of best practices from China in the field of agriculture would help tap our agro resources/commodities in a befitting manner," Sultan said in an official statement.

"Under CPEC both Pakistan and China have gone beyond the traditional level of cooperation from assistance in crop farming, cattle farming, mechanization to food storage and export. This

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assistance will be mutually beneficial and bring two countries closer."

The delegation said the CMEC is eagerly looking forth to extensively collaborate through Pak-China modern agriculture comprehensive development project and under the project, China would assist in the field through technical and financial support. This will help in poverty alleviation in the country.

The delegation said Pakistan has the best environment, water reservoirs, and abundant labor, which could be exploited to get maximum agriculture output. The delegation said the CMEC has expertise in wasteland reclamation, high tech, deep processing, and trading. They presented their long-time plans for the halal meat market, enhancing cotton production and improving access to Chinese and Middle East markets.



Chinese Academy, UAF ink MoU for agriculture research

Chinese Academy of Tropical Agriculture Sciences and the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) recently inked a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate in the area of academia and research, especially in agriculture. The MoU was duly signed by Chinese Institute Vice President Dr LIU Guodao and UAF Vice-Chancellor Dr. Muhammad Ashraf.

Dr. LIU Guodao said that through collaboration, we will be able to learn from each other's experiences. He said that the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) is the national institution engaged in tropical agricultural research and development as well as graduate student education. He said that it is engaged in researches on tropical fruits, tropical biofuel crops, tropical vegetables, tropical textile fiber crops, tropical oil crops, and crops, tropical medicinal crops, agricultural machinery, environment and plant protection, biotechnology, genetic resource conservation and development for tropical agriculture, as well as agro-product quality and safety standards formulation and monitoring and test technology for tropical agriculture.

Dr. Muhammad Ashraf said China has adopted a model of small-scaled implements for small farmers, he said, adding that the university had taken up the challenges of developing small implements as more than 90 percent of our farming community consisted of small farmers. He stressed upon the need to learn from the Chinese experiences in farm machinery



value addition and seed. He said that Pakistan was producing abundant and good quality agri produces, but we could not be able to earn foreign exchange. It was because of the lack of value addition and not following modern trends and international standards.

He said that China is Pakistan's fair-weather friend as she always stands with us in difficult times. He said that the UAF research portfolio had touched to 3 billion. The meeting discussed fruits, vegetables, and crops. UAF Dean Agriculture Dr Muhammad Aslam, Institute of Horticulture Science Director Dr Aman Ullah Malik, Director Research Dr Zahir Ahmad Zahir, Director External Linkages Dr. Rashed Ahmad and other notables attended the meeting.

Trout fish farming program inaugurated in Swat

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan inaugu-

rated trout fish farming program under Prime Minister's Agriculture Emergency Programme in Swat recently.

The task force for the development of the fisheries sector after consultation with provinces formulated a program that comprises three projects namely; Shrimp Farming, Cage Culture/ cage farming and Trout Fish Farming in KP and Gilgit-Baltistan. About Rs1350 billion have been allocated for the above-mentioned projects.

Federal Minister Sahibzada Mehboob said that Pakistan is blessed with vast reservoirs of freshwaters in the form of rivers, canals, and lakes, therefore, there is an ample opportunity for the development of aquaculture/fish farming, but unfortunately, the area has so far been neglected.

"It is unfortunate that per capita annual fish consumption is only two-kilogram in comparison with 20 kg in the world. Pakistan is the only country where the 1100 km coastline has not been utilized for coastal/marine culture/farming," he added.

The minister said that the government has given due importance to the development of the fisheries sector and hence going to formulate the first fisheries policy with the technical support from FAO.

Mehboob Sultan said that the KP and Gilgit-Baltistan are blessed with natural water resources and those waters were a haven for trout farming.

"This will not only address the poverty but also meet the food requirements," he said, adding, the initiatives under the Prime Minister's Agriculture Emergency Programme would bring economic revolution by addressing the menacing issue of poverty.



Pakistan is World's 5th Largest Milk Producing Country: Food Minister

The newly appointed High Commissioner of New Zealand to Pakistan Hamish MacMaster called on Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan. The high commissioner apprised the minister that after taking office this is his first visit to any ministry and that shows how much importance New Zealand gives to agricultural cooperation between the two countries.

Pakistan exports hides and skins of buffalo, cow to New Zealand. The hides export brought Rs7.9 million in the year 2017-18. Pakistan's agro-import from New Zealand consists of animal feed, feed premixes, animal products (bovine semen, edible offal, tallow) dairy products and sheep.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister told the high commissioner that Pakistan is the world's 5th largest milk-producing country and annually produces 60 million metric tons, while only 6% could be processed.

He said New Zealand has a very strong dairy sector farming area along with processing and value addition, Pakistan would welcome any substantial cooperation in the field from production to value addition.

He further told that cow fattening and enhanced meat production is one of the programs of PM's Agriculture Emergency Project and we are looking forward to getting technical assistance, machinery, technology and equipment from New Zealand.

Federal Minister Mehboob Sultan said Pakistan is desirous of expanding its mango market as it is already exported to 48 countries of the world and even it is exported to Australia due to its unique taste and aroma. We are hoping that New Zealand will consider importing mangoes from Pakistan along with other fruit and vegetables like dates, citrus, guava, onion, and potato, he added.

Mehboob Sultan said ease of regulations may also be negotiated for the

enhancement of bilateral trade, as the current volume of trade between the two countries does not reflect the potential agro-products; this may also be negotiated for mutual benefits.

New Zealand high commissioner told the minister that to facilitate and enhance the agro-trade between the two countries he will play his role effectively and expressed his gratitude for speedy processing of pea seed consignment to Pakistan case at the Ministry's level and thereby resolving it amicably.

Pakistan develops seven new rice varieties

The Variety Evaluation Committee of Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) has approved 7 new rice varieties for commercial cultivation across the crop sowing areas of the country. The Committee discussed the characteristics of different varieties of rice seeds for commercial cultivation and their impact on per-acre yield.

So far, 130 different varieties of rice have been developed of which at least twelve varieties are currently sown by farmers in rice-growing areas of the country. Punjab is the largest in terms of the crop's production, followed by Sindh and then the remaining parts.

Rice is an important cash crop of Pakistan and the overall national economy. Rice accounts 2.7% of the value-added in agriculture and 0.6% of GDP. Rice ranks second amongst the staple food grain crop in Pakistan and it has been a major source of foreign exchange earnings in recent years.

There are 3 kinds of rice varieties in Pakistan, which are produced for local consumption and export. These are Basmati (aromatic), IRRI variety (medium-long grain) and bold grain (cold-tolerant varieties). Throughout the world, Basmati rice is quite famous for its pleasant aroma combined with eating qualities and perfect cooking. The medium long-grain rice varieties are usually produced in the Sindh region and provide superior yield than basmati rice varieties.

The rice exports from Pakistan in fiscal 2012-13 crossed 3.4 million tonnes, valued at \$1.19 billion at an average price of \$936.6 per tonne for Basmati rice, and \$460.8 per tonne for non-basmati rice, which is an important achievement despite tough international competition with India.

On average the country produces around 6.0 million tonnes of rice annually and after meeting domestic consumption of around 2.0 million tonnes, some 4.0 million tonnes are exported. The government should intervene and ensure that rice prices should remain close to regional competitors, particularly India so that exporters could keep their share in the world market.

Like India, Pakistan exports both high-quality Basmati rice which sells at a substantial premium in high-income markets as well as intermediate and low-quality non-aromatic long-grain milled rice to developing countries, mostly in East Africa where it competes with China and Vietnam, and in South Asia. Pakistan's Basmati rice typically sells at a lower price than India. For all rice, Sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Middle East, and the EU are leading export markets for Pakistan. ♦

