

‘Mera Pani Meri Virasat’ scheme for crop diversification in Haryana

Water use efficiency in agriculture is one of the important ways to conserve water, especially when about 70% of freshwater is withdrawn for agricultural purposes in India. Crop diversification with provisions of incentives is pivotal to augment water use efficiency. In this backdrop, Haryana government has launched a scheme titled ‘Mera Pani Meri Virasat’ for replacement of paddy by maize/cotton/bajra/pulses in 1 lakh hectare in targeted blocks having water table more than 40 meters. In addition to this, paddy cultivation will be restricted in gram panchayat agriculture land with groundwater level above 35 meters. The identified blocks where ground water table is more than 40 meters are Ratia in Fatehabad district, Siwan and Guhla in Kaithal district, Pipli, Shahbad, Babain and Ismailabad in Kurukshetra district and Sirsa in Sirsa district whereas blocks where water levels are above 35 meter have been identified as Thanesar and Pehoma in Kurukshetra district and Fatehabad and Jakhal in Fatehabad district.

As per the letter written by Director General, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Department, Haryana on 9th May 2020, the farmers will be provided Rs. 7,000 per acre to those farmers who will diversify more than 50% of their *kharif* season (2019-20) paddy area. Also, farmers will not be allowed to cultivate paddy in any new areas where paddy was not grown the preceding year.

According to the letter, in agriculture lands of gram panchayats in various blocks where ground water level is 35 meters, the Panchayat will not be permitted to grow paddy. Additionally, all those farmers who are operating their tube well with 50 horse power electric motor will not be allowed to grow paddy.

The farmers who will diversify more than 50% of their paddy area in the identified blocks will be able to sell all their diversified crops to the government at Minimum Support Price (MSP). It has also been provisioned to install ‘Maize Dryer’ in related grain markets for reducing moisture content of maize grain produced by the farmers. Moreover, 85% subsidy will be provided for installation of Drip Irrigation System for the alternate diversified crops.

In an attempt to motivate the farmers to take up maize cultivation, which requires much less water, the state government has decided to empanel about 5-6 seed companies with High Productivity Maize Hybrids from which the farmers will be able to purchase high quality seeds and promote mechanization by providing pneumatic/normal maize seed planter for sowing of maize crop in the targeted blocks. The awareness regarding this scheme will also be generated through IEC activities besides a dedicated web portal for the convenience of the farmers. The ‘demonstration plots’ will be established in each targeted block for showing best agriculture practices to the farmers for getting good yield of their crop.

Importantly, National Water Mission, had organised a workshop on ‘Increasing Water Use Efficiency in Agriculture’ in Kurukshetra in Haryana on 14th February 2020 as part of its campaign to nudge the farmers to shift to crops which use less water but more efficiently, have high nutritional quality and are economically remunerative to farmers, based on an integrated and holistic strategy. This scheme by Haryana government is a step in the right direction to serve the twin purposes of water conservation and rural development.