

ht readers' take

United approach need of hour

STUBBLE TROUBLE Readers call upon the govt and the farmers to realise their responsibilities towards the environment. Some urge agricultural researchers to invent farmer-friendly and economical machinery, others demand more funds, rewards for farmers



Figures by the Punjab Remote Sensing Department in Ludhiana reveal that 7,326 fire incidents in wheat crop were recorded across the state from April 15 to May 19 this year.

HT FILE PHOTO

IMPOSE HEAVY PENALTY ON DEFAULTERS

The authorities concerned should frame Punjab Prohibition of Burning of Crop Residue Act as there is no specific law to stop the burning of straw. Eminent academicians, agricultural and research scientists should come up with innovations to put an end to the burning of straw. Stringent punishment and heavy penalty should be imposed on violators and the electric supply of the tubewells of farmers who burn straw, should be disconnected. There is little effort to sensitise the farmers on the issue. They must be made aware that burning of straw causes huge loss of nutrients and pollutes the environment, besides killing useful microbes in the soil.

Harpreet Sandhu

BE RESPONSIBLE TOWARDS ENVIRONMENT

Burning of straw is a common sight, there are only 366 reported cases but the actual number will be much more than that. Blaming the authorities for the problem is not the only way out. I have observed that the government has tried to create awareness among the farmers regarding the harmful effects of burning straw. We also know how harmful it is for our environment and our health, still we are not taking our social responsibility seriously. Each one of us should try to do our bit so that our planet get greener and pollution-free.

Ruchika Arora

TAKE INITIATIVES AT PANCHAYAT LEVEL

Any solution for the straw burning problem will have to be rooted in the diversification of agricultural land use (wheat and rice crops) and cropping pattern in the state. In addition to this, every gram panchayats should take a resolution that they won't let any stubble burning cases take place in their areas. In fact, every person should make it an individual responsibility to ensure that straw burning is not carried out in their respective areas.

Damanjeet Singh, Rakh Bagh

TIME FOR NEW PARLIAMENTARIANS TO ACT

If it's a matter of the political will. This year, there has been a rise of straw burning cases due to the delayed harvesting and elections at the same time. Now, the new elected candidates should keep up their promises of bringing development in their respective areas which should also include taking measures in controlling straw burning and reducing pollution. Like any other development issue, the problem of paddy straw needs to be taken seriously.

ously and be discussed on various social platforms.

Balvinder Lakhewali,
BRS Nagar

MPs SHOULD COME FORWARD TO END MENACE

Every possible step shall be taken on part of the administration to eliminate the practice of stubble burning. However, the increase of wheat straw burning is said to be a result of the engagement of administration officials in elections. Now, as the election results are out, the administration must work hard to educate the farmers. Even the new elected members of Parliament (MPs) should come forward and actively participate to curb the wheat straw menace in the city.

Sumit Mishra, Mundian Kalan

REWARD ENVIRONMENT CONSCIOUS FARMERS

Farmers lack the access to subsidies, related farm machinery, technical alternatives and even their rights, hence, are rendered helpless as to whom they should consult. Selected government officials need to be deployed purely to hear them out. Punjab Agricultural University has been a major support to farmers in this context. People with practical solutions or farmers who have used judicious alternatives should be highly rewarded, motivated and brought into light for others to get inspired.

Kripa Seth

LACK OF POLITICAL WILL A MAJOR CAUSE

Stubble burning has become a major cause of air pollution but the government refrains to take action against the defaulters as there is no political will. The government fears that if they take up the matter and initiate action against such people, it will hit their vote banks.

Anoop Gupta, New Sarabha Nagar

ORGANISE AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

If the farmers are educated on the right usage of stubble, it will not only prove beneficial for them but also the administration in reducing the number of such cases in the state. The congregated stubble can be used as fuel in generating power. In addition to this, it can also be used as fodder. Awareness programmes for farmers can prove beneficial in tackling the problem.

RSTung, Rajguru Nagar

ADOPT MULTIPLE FARMING METHODS

Farmers resort to burning the stubble as it is easy and the costs are low. Also,

they detest paying an additional charge for hiring combine harvesters to remove the stubble. There is a need for the government to create more awareness and also price all inputs appropriately so that farmers internalise some of the cost of burning crop stubble. The additional funds required for providing incentives should be recovered, at least in part, from the increased cost of inputs. Farmers can also opt for multiple farming methods so as to lower the risk of the loss of crops.

Prabhneet Kaur,
Model Town Extension

PROVIDE SIMPLER, AFFORDABLE TECHNIQUES

Punjab and neighbouring states have been suffering from pollution and the problem of stubble burning. The government avoids taking action against the defaulters. The officers in-charge should educate farmers for not burning stubble and should provide simple and affordable techniques.

Ravinderpal Singh

SCHEDULE MORE INSPECTIONS IN VILLAGES

The agricultural universities should work for more easy ways to get rid of straw. The officers in-charge should regularly visit the farming sites in villages. Further, the guilty should also be punished as per the law.

Vikas Sharma, Kitchlu Nagar

MAKE ITEMS OF DAILY USE WITH STRAW

Instead of burning it, the straw should be dumped inside soil for increasing its fertility water retention. It can be used for making various types of things such as bags, furniture and mats. The administration too should take initiative to sort out this problem by implementing some strict rules and regulations.

Ekta Kaur

RESOLVE ISSUE OF GROUNDWATER DEPLETION

The government should take steps to stop the illegal practice of straw burning but simultaneously, should also make sure that such steps do not harass the farmers as they cannot be held solely responsible. Not only burning of straw, but the depleting level of groundwater is also a major concern but the government should have thought of this decades back.

Gursimran Kaur, Shastrri Nagar

MAKE APT USE OF TECHNOLOGY

There are certain alternatives available to tackle the problem of crop remains. One can use technology to handle the disposal of crop residue which is produced in large quantities. There are machines which can harvest crop residue and convert it into bundles mechanically for onward transportation and sale to thermal plants for generation of electricity. Technologies which can convert crop residue valuable manure can also be used.

Khushboo Singla,
Government College for Girls

EXECUTE NGT ORDERS

The authorities should be strict in imposing fine against any individual who flouts norms and burns stubble. People will only adhere to the rules if they know that they will be made accountable by the government for it. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has already asked the government of various states to impose fine on the erring farmers; it's a high time when the

administration executes the orders on the ground to regulate the rising air pollution. This is the only way we can bring positive changes.

Amandeep Singh, Moti Nagar

OPT FOR RESIDUAL MANAGEMENT

Rather than stubble burning, the farmers should shift to crop residual management approach. It will not only protect the environment from the increasing pollution but also help in retaining soil fertility and important nutrients which get damaged in the process of stubble burning. There are several other uses of stubble like for animal rearing. The residual can be used for making sheds of animals, their fodder and can also be used as insulators.

Ravi Mishra, Mundian Kalan

USE HAPPY SEEDERS MACHINES

Awareness on the ill-effects of stubble burning can be created among farmers to change their attitude towards the issue. The government of Punjab, besides the Centre, must take coordinated steps that go beyond preaching. Making Happy Seeders — machines that cut and lift the crop stubble, should be promoted. If the farmers are offered an easy alternative with cost saving methodology, they would certainly adapt to the change.

Ishneet Sharma, Pakhowal Road

REDUCE COST OF MACHINES

While the government has banned stubble burning, there is a need to provide alternatives to the farmers. The effectiveness of the machines made available to farmers, such as Happy Seeders, choppers, Super Straw Management System (Super-SMS) is not enough. The farmers have mostly stated that they are forced to spend a lot of money to use these machines for a month.

Aakriti Mangar,
Government College for Girls

HOLD COUNSELLING SESSIONS

The need of the hour is generation of more awareness and reduce the prices of inputs so that farmers internalise some of the cost of burning crop stubble. The additional funds required for providing incentives should be recovered from the increased cost of inputs, whose use goes up with burning crop residue. If farmers still refuse to make use of available alternatives to crop burning, penalties should be imposed on them. The authorities can hold counselling sessions for farmers to create awareness regarding the harmful effects of burning stubble.

Ishneet Sharma

PRODUCE BIO-CEMENT

A permanent solution to the problem of straw burning can be achieved through modification in the existing machinery design which can be organised in single cutting pass filtering. Since this modification can take some time to implement on the ground level, the most immediate step is to carry waste straw to the nearest collection centre employing supply chain design. At the collection centres, it can be processed into manufacturing of bio-cement which can also fetch good income to the farmers.

Neeraj Bhanot, South City

PROVIDE SUBSIDY TO FARMERS

We reside in Basant Avenue, We chose this place, little away from the city, with the only reason of inhaling fresh air away from pollution but the menace of straw burning shattered our hopes. Besides leading to several respiratory

or heart problems, at times, it leads to road accidents. There is a need for the authority to implement strict rules to prevent the paddy burning practice. Instead of waiving loans for the farmers, the government must provide subsidy to them for managing their residual crops.

Badish Jindal, Basant Avenue

EDUCATE FARMERS

For preventive measures, one must first understand why the farmers burn stubble in the first place. According to the farmers, stubble burning makes their land more fruitful. But this is just another ancient farming myth. Now, there has been a change in weather patterns which is affecting crops. In order to put an end to this problem, the farmers should be educated about it.

Kanwarpreet Singh, Model Town

DISCOURAGE SOWING OF PADDY

In the long run, the major straw producing crop — paddy which also is the major ground water guzzler, must be discouraged and phased out under some farsighted policy planning and their implementation. Secondly, straw consuming industry must be introduced at the earliest for its optimum, safe and productive usage. Lastly, related laws must be enforced seriously.

PS Bhogal

IDENTIFY UNDERLYING CAUSE

Penal action against stubble burning is a short-term measure. The underlying reasons for stubble burning have to be identified and solutions be developed accordingly for a long-term solution. Stubble burning is not an intrinsic issue, it is rather one of the outcomes of fundamental issues that agriculture sector is suffering from in India. It is a symptom, not the disease.

Paramvir Singh Bhogal

SET MINIMUM CROP PRICES

Machines which can cut and lift the crop stubble, should be made in large numbers. Government must set minimum crop prices to ensure that the farmers are given a fair deal. I think the farmers understand the action of burning crops but not the direct implications of this practice.

Manmeen Kaur

FIND ALTERNATE USES OF STRAW

The farmers must be told about the alternative uses of straw so that they stop burning it and make an optimum use of it. The farmers must be made aware about the extensive uses of straw in industries with which they could also increase their income.

Arshia Sood

SEIZE LAND OF DEFAULTERS

An agreement must be signed between land owners and the authorities concerned, mentioning that the land can be confiscated by the government in case of the practice of stubble burning. The agreement must be compulsory and its proper implementation can be a solution for eradication of the problem from its root.

Jappanot Singh, Dugri

INSTALL BIOGAS PLANTS

A biogas plant that works with crop residue, is a much useful and reliable alternative to straw burning. Despite this alternative, no project has been initiated by the government to encourage farmers to take their wheat straw to biogas plants. The farmers can easily transport their crops' straw by packing

debate of the week

EFFECTIVE STEPS

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO STOP STRAW BURNING?

There has been a rise in wheat straw burning. Over 366 such incidents have been reported in the last one month in rural areas of Ludhiana district. The rise in cases is being attributed to the fact that the officials were busy in elections and could not take stock of the situation. What steps should be taken to prevent farmers from burning straw?

reader of the week



USE STRAW FOR MAKING CARDBOARD

Even after a ban imposed on stubble burning since 2013, farmers of Punjab continue to violate the law. The obvious reason is that this method is easier, convenient and requires lesser manual labour. But the farmers shouldn't forget the harm they are doing to the environment. The practice not only releases toxic particulate matter and other noxious gases into atmosphere, but also causes many fatal respiratory problems. There are two clear solutions for straw remains. It can either be ploughed back in fields or be used for bio mass power plants. It can also be used for making cardboard.

Dimple Gupta, Samrala

it with a bailer. The new elected parliamentarians should provide at least five bailers each to their constituencies. In fact, NRI people and social bodies should also come forward to help the farmers avail other machinery.

Jaspreet Singh

ADMN MUST PLAN IN ADVANCE

Before farmers resort to paddy straw burning this year, the administration has enough time and hence, should start working proactively to put an end to the problem. They should place the order of machinery required well in advance and intensify awareness programmes among the farmers.

Rohit Saini

ADOPT UNITED APPROACH

There is a ban on the burning of straw, but the conditions still remain out of control. Laws are there but their implementation is on stake. Everyone has to cooperate to curb this problem and there is a need to provide some funds to the farmers so that they can also make fertilizers from the residue.

Deepali

PRESERVE GREEN ZONES

The government should take the matter of stubble burning seriously and initiate action against the violators because it is question of the survival of future generations. Government should take steps to preserve green area and water resources and a policy should be made for environment.

Jagjit Singh, Gill Road

DON'T PLAY VOTE BANK POLITICS

Officials concerned, including the police force, do not care to stop anybody from burning straw. Moreover, politicians also have a soft corner for the guilty on account of their vote banks. Now, the solution lies with the farmers themselves who must be counselled not to burn the straw to avoid pollution.

Mahesh Chander, Model Town

ADOPT A POLITE APPROACH

The farmers must be politely told about the harms of stubble burning to the land and also to the environment. They must be given incentives in the form of cash rewards to transport the stubble to biofuel plants across the state. Stubble can also be transported as animal feed to various gashalash / dairy farms and money be paid to the farmers for this.

Vishal Sharma, Sham Nagar

DON'T OVERBURDEN FARMERS

Awareness drives should be organised in villages. There are many plants/units in which straw is used as a raw material. The government should come up with such plants and a mechanism be developed to shift the straw from fields to such plants. If the governments leave it on the shoulders of farmers alone, it will never be able to stop the illegal practice.

Chanpreet Singh, Kundan Nagar

HOLD OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE

More laws should be brought to the fore to make sure that people follow guidelines and don't put the climate on stake. Meanwhile, the administration should also keep a tab on the results of their awareness drives. Officials responsible for monitoring the rules and regulations should also be made answerable. The government should make amendments in their plans on what works and what does not work for the farmers.

Kritika Buddhiraja,
Jamalpur Colony

expert take

GROW SHORT-DURATION VARIETIES OF PADDY

The season of wheat straw has finished but still if farmers have wheat straw in their fields, they should not burn it. The paddy cultivation will start from June 20, hence, they have enough time to manage the crop remains. The stubble can be decomposed in the fields using disc harrow or rotavator machines after collecting wheat straw as fodder for animals. In Rajasthan, many animals have died due to the non-availability of fodder at cheaper rates. If farmers store the wheat straw, they will get good price for it. Apart from this, the paddy stubble is mainly burnt in November but to control it, one has to start preparations from today. Grow short duration varieties such as PR-121 and PR-126. These varieties have same productivity as those of long duration varieties but produce less straw. Moreover, being a short duration variety, farmers will get enough time to manage the paddy straw and it will help in reducing stubble burning incidents.

JS Mahal, director extension education, PAU

