AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

With a view to encouraging mechanised transplantation/direct sowing of paddy and cultivation of maize during Kharif season, the Punjab Government has decided to provide subsidy upto 50% on machinery used for this purpose, which will immensely benefit the state in saving ground water and helping the farmers to tackle the problem of labour scarcity amid COVID-19 restrictions. 50% subsidy would be provided to women/ scheduled castes and 40% to other farmers. Farmers had been asked to submit their applications to avail the benefit of subsidy on machinery required for paddy and maize cultivation till 10 May.

Machinery on which subsidy would be given include direct seeding of rice machines with or without spray attachment, paddy nursery sowing machines, paddy transplanting machines and equipments used for maize sowing, threshing and drying. Agriculture Department had simplified the entire process to facilitate the farmers to avail maximum advantage of the subsidy in view of the COVID-19 restrictions. The farmers interested to avail the benefit of subsidy could get more information at toll free no 1800-180-1551 of ‘Kisan Call Centre’ from 6 am to 10 pm.
Agriculture Department

The Agriculture Department of Punjab has decided to increase the area under maize cultivation from 3.95 lakh acres last year to 7.41 lakh acres in this season, with the twin objective of shifting towards water resistant alternate crops to conserve the fast depleting ground water and coping with the shortage of labour amid Covid-19. It may be recalled that the Punjab Government had earlier set a goal to enhance the area under cotton cultivation from 9.7 lakh acres to 12.5 lakh acres in the state during the Kharif-2020-21, as part of its ambitious crop diversification programme.

The cultivation of maize would help the state combat the scarcity of migratory labour amid Covid-19. In the present circumstances, the chances of farmer opting for alternate crops like maize and cotton were higher. All the requisite arrangements were in place to provide nearly 6000 tonnes of hi-yield maize seed from the country’s renowned seed producing companies as per PAU’s recommendations. All the Chief Agriculture Officers at district level, along with other departmental officers/officials at block level, had been asked to further intensify their efforts in motivating the farmers to achieve the desired target set by the state government by shifting from the conventional, water-guzzling paddy crop.
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SUPPLY (WHEAT PROCUREMENT)

With a bumper production of wheat crop in the state, the Punjab has successfully crossed 100 LMT mark in wheat procurement despite several challenges during curfew/lockdown amid COVID-19. Besides, pass system for farmers and impeccable arrangements put in place for procurement operations in over 4000 purchase centres has led to the smooth and hassle free procurement.

Nearly 78 percent of total procurement operations had already been accomplished within 22 days after commencement. Out of total estimated arrival of 135 LMT of wheat, the state Mandis recorded arrival of 105.14 LMT till May 7, of which 104 LMT had been procured during ongoing Rabi Marketing Season (RMS). 13.71 lakh passes have been issued so far to the farmers through arthiyas to ensure staggered movement of wheat in mandis.

RMS was not only entirely different from previous seasons but also full of arduous challenges as to avert crowd and congestion in the Mandis was a major responsibility amongst other restrictions amid coronavirus and the state had successfully achieved the desired goals in this regard further ensuring seamless procurement operations.

Punjab Mandi Board introduced safe and hygienic mechanism for the well-being of farmers, arthiyas, labour, staff and other stakeholders. Mandi Board had established over 4000 purchase centres, which were more than double as compared to 1834 of the last year. There were 30X30 boxes had been demarcated in the mandis to unload the wheat being brought by the farmers to avoid crowd in the mandis besides strictly maintaining social distancing to ensure the health protocol.

34000 litre of sanitizer had also been provided in Mandis for farmers besides installation 1300 water tanks operated by foot for the health safety of all stakeholders in the purchase centres. State Government has also provided 1.60 lakh masks and 18,000 bottles of sanitizers for the officers/officials deployed for procurement operations so as to ensure their healthy safety.