

CII ADOPTS 50 VILLAGES IN PUNJAB TO MAKE THEM STUBBLE BURNING FREE

Industry members help farmers adopt sustainable farm practices, reduce air pollution, improve yield and more

Ludhiana, 04 September 2019: To promote sustainable agricultural practices and mitigate effects of crop residue burning, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has initiated work in 50 villages in Ludhiana, Patiala and Barnala districts in Punjab, supporting 7000 farmers adopt improved straw management practices in over 50,000 acres of farmland. Implemented in partnership with the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) and Department of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, Government of Punjab, the initiative aims to make the adopted villages free from the practice of stubble burning.

To mark the launch of the initiative in this year in Ludhiana and Barnala districts, CII in partnership with BPCL organized a Farmer Field Day event on 4th September 2019 in Daddahur Village, Raikot Block, Ludhiana bringing together over 1000 farmers from 25 villages. Representatives from CII, BPCL, PAU, Department of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare and government officials addressed the farmers.

CII Foundation, with field support from a local volunteer youth group, GBDSGNS Foundation, is working towards creating largescale awareness in the villages involving progressive farmers, school children and youth volunteers, encouraging farmers to adopt sustainable farming and improved stubble management practices. In partnership with Punjab Agricultural University, CII plans to organize a number of training events in the villages to help farmers learn about the scientific aspects of improved straw management practices. The initiative is also supporting farmers to procure and use farm machineries collectively, to enable them to undertake “mulching” and other improved in-situ straw management methods at a largescale.

The initiative is a continuation of CII’s work undertaken last year, engaging with 3000 farmers across 19 villages and 16000 acres of farmland. Post the intervention, 80% farmers adopted no stubble burning approach and a total of 12,000 acres of farmland (75% of the total area under paddy in the adopted villages) became free of stubble burning in 2018, compared to 550 acres (3.5% of farm land) in 2017. About 25,000 tonne of rice straw was recycled back into the soil under the project. This not only led to avoidance of environmental impacts on local, regional and global scales but also led to nutrient savings worth more than INR 1 crore and improved farmer’s resilience to adverse impacts of climate change due to water conservation, improved farm biodiversity, and resilience of crops to extreme climatic events.

Encouraged by the inspiring response of pilot intervention, CII aims to expand the programme in a multi-stakeholder partnership to about 100 villages in 2019 across districts of Ludhiana, Barnala, Patiala and Sangrur in Punjab and Rohtak and Fatehabad in Haryana. The initiative is actively supported by Farmer Producer Organizations and Farmer Cooperatives.

These results make a strong case that the problem of stubble burning can be tackled while making the farming more sustainable and economically beneficial to farmers. Based on the

findings and learnings of the pilot intervention, CII gave its recommendations to the PMO recently.

CII has partnered with a number of industry players such as Cummins, BPCL, Birlasoft, ONGC, Royal Enfield, ReNew Power, RAU Study Circle CLP India, and the industry association Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) to promote ground level action in Punjab and Haryana against the menace of stubble burning that is causing major environmental concern in the region.

“We are thankful to have worked with over 3000 farmers last year, as they successfully demonstrated that alternative technology to stubble burning can be adopted and scaled up,” said Seema Arora, CEO, CII Foundation. Addressing over 200 students present in the launch, she said that the younger generation is playing a critical role in spreading the word on crop residue management in their communities.

“CII Foundation’s project has given evidence that improved crop residue management can not only reduce pollution, but also benefit farmers by increasing yield, reducing weedicide; without increasing the cost and time for sowing. I would encourage farmers for open discussions on issue, share experiences and motivate others to not burn stubble.” Dr Himanshu Gupta, SDM, Raikot, Ludhiana

Dr Jaskaran Singh Mahal, Director, Extension Education at PAU said, “PAU through their technical assistance will be training farmers to operate the machines and adopt relevant technologies.”

“We are delighted to be a part of this initiative and we hope that the farmers will come forward & adopt zero crop residue burning approach. We will be supporting the initiative in all possible ways.” Said Sh. Ankur Gambheer, Manager Sales, BPCL, Ludhiana