

CII AND ROYAL ENFIELD COME TOGETHER TO MITIGATE STUBBLE BURNING IN 10 VILLAGES IN LUDHIANA, PUNJAB

Industry players encourage farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices

Ludhiana, 27 September 2019: To promote sustainable agricultural practices and mitigate effects of crop residue burning, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has initiated work in partnership with Royal Enfield and local volunteer youth group GBDSGNS Foundation in 10 villages in Raikot block of Ludhiana District, Punjab. This project is technically supported by Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) and District Agriculture Department, Ludhiana and District Administration. The initiative aims to make adopted villages free from the practice of stubble burning.

A Farmer Field Day event on 27th September 2019 in Halwara village, Raikot was attended by 300 farmers.

CII Foundation, with field support from large number of volunteers of GBDSGNS Foundation, is 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. 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.

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 and village Panchayats.

Among present were farmers, the Sarpanch, representatives from Punjab Agricultural University, Royal Enfield, CII Foundation, GBDSGNS Foundation, and several enthusiastic volunteers.

Dr Gursahab Singh from Punjab Agricultural University said, “Incorporating the crop residues in the soil enhances the soil fertility and retains farm friendly insects”.

Gaurav Sharma, Project Manager–CSR, Royal Enfield addressed the farmers and shed light on the health and environmental implications of crop residue burning. He encouraged community participation model to make the project successful. Instead of donation model, the CSR projects by Royal Enfield focus on partnership model through involvement, regular field level monitoring and inputs sharing for project strengthening. Under this partnership with CIIF, Royal Enfield is supporting the project by providing 45 different agriculture machineries, awareness programs, trainings, etc. Youth groups will become part of project monitoring at village level. He also mentioned the CSR activities Royal Enfield is carrying out under Community Development, Skill Development, and Road Safety programs in different geographies.

Harjinder Singh Nikka, Sarpanch, village Halwara said, “The farm inputs required reduced due to the use of Happy Seeder and Combine SMS on the field.” He added, “We should learn from the children and youth to work towards the environmental crisis faced by us all.”

Baba Gurmeet Singh from village Khossa Pando thanked the youth clubs for their enthusiasm towards cause and encouraged them to holistically address the environmental challenges.

“Along with technical training, we will also focus on awareness among the communities and behaviour change communication to bring about transformation at fundamental level”. Said Dr Harminder Singh Sidhu, Director, GBDSGNS Foundation addressing the gathering.