

Amarinder launches 3 Mobile Apps to combat stubble burning



Chandigarh, October 11, 2018: Intensifying his government's efforts to combat stubble burning, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Thursday launched three mobile apps aimed at checking crop residue burning and creating awareness about its ill-effects.

Underlining the need to strengthen coordination among the various concerned agencies and departments, the Chief Minister called for strict monitoring of the situation at all levels, while stressing the need to create awareness among farmers, and to motivate them, against stubble burning.

Noting that such burning causes irreversible damage to the texture of soil, natural environment and human health, Captain Amarinder Singh directed the Agriculture department to work in tandem with the Science, Technology & Environment department to intensify the campaign to educate farmers about the menace.

The Chief Minister underscored the need for a holistic approach through synergistic efforts of all related departments, such as Agriculture, Revenue, Science, Technology & Environment, Food & Civil Supplies etc, to tackle the problem.

The Chief Minister also emphasized the need to motivate the farmers to make optimum use of subsidized agriculture equipment and machinery being provided to the cooperative societies and custom hiring centres for in-situ paddy residue management, which was the only scientific solution to dispose of the crop residue.

The three android mobile applications launched by the Chief Minister have been developed by Punjab Remote Sensing Centre (PRSC). They are i-Khet Machine for facilitating farmers to have access to the agriculture machinery/equipment for in-situ management of crop residue, e-PEHaL for monitoring tree plantation, and e-Prevent to have prompt and accurate information regarding incidents of crop residue burning. These applications would provide relevant information at district, block and village levels, in English and Punjabi.

Captain Amarinder Singh appreciated the work being done by the nearly 8000 nodal officers appointed at village level, as well as the special campaign launched on social media and involving the school students, youth clubs and NSS volunteers. These initiatives, he said, would go a long way to persuade the farmers to shun the practice of stubble burning.

Additional Chief Secretary (Development) Viswajeet Khanna informed the Chief Minister that the paddy was grown over 65 lakh acres, of which 20 million tons of paddy straw was produced and just 5 million tons was being managed while nearly 15 million tons of paddy straw was being burnt for easy clearance of field. He also pointed out that burning of 1 ton of paddy straw leads to net loss of 5.5 kg of nitrogen, 2.3 kg of phosphorus, 25 kg of potassium, 1.2 kg sulphur, 400 kg organic matter, besides death of useful microbial population.

Apart from this, it also degrades the air quality thus posing a major environmental hazard affecting both life and soil health. Presently, about 4.30 million tons of paddy (21.82% of total paddy straw generation) was being utilized by various stake holders without burning the same in the fields, said Khanna.

Khanna further revealed that the Government of India had sanctioned Rs.665 crore for in-situ paddy straw management technical measures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. A sum of Rs. 269 crore had already been received on account of 50% subsidy to individual farmers and 80% subsidy to groups and cooperatives. Till date, 13,290 agriculture machines/equipments have been distributed amongst the customer hiring centres, cooperative societies and farmers, against the target of 24,000 machines/equipments.

Prominent amongst others who were present in the meeting were Chief Secretary Karan Avtar Singh, ACS-cum-FCR MP Singh, Principal Secretary Food & Civil Supplies KAP Sinha, Principal Secretary to CM Tejveer Singh, Special Principal Secretary to CM Gurkirat Kipal Singh, Principal Secretary Science, Technology & Environment Rakesh Verma, Director Food & Civil Supplies Anindita Mitra and Director Punjab Remote Sensing Centre Dr. Brijendra Pateriya.