Punjab and Pulses Cultivation

Why in News?

Punjab Agriculture Department is distributing moong dal seed kits to farmers during the ongoing sowing season to push pulses cultivation in the state.

What is the total area under pulses in Punjab?

- While Punjab is the highest contributor of wheat and paddy to the national pool, it lags behind in cultivation of pulses.
- In Punjab, mainly green gram (moong), black gram (mash) and pigeon pea (arhar) pulses are grown.
- In 2019, there was 11,700 hectares (0.74%) area under pulses in the state, out of around 39.69 lakh hectares under agricultural crops.
- This is a further decrease of 27% from the previous decade.

Why Punjab wants to increase its area under pulses?

- Farmers are already reeling under an agrarian crisis and this can boost their income.
- Punjab is a leading state in wheat and paddy production but it is totally lagging behind in pulses and dependent on the other states.
- So, there is a want to **increase their self-dependence** in the pulses cultivation and to **increase the farmers' income**.
- Sources in the Agriculture Department said that Punjab is not even growing 3% of pulses against the total requirement of the state.

How pulses cultivation can help Punjab farmers?

- Moong cultivation provides farmers with an opportunity to have a third crop in a year.
- Moreover, moong being a leguminous crop, it helps in nitrogen fixation and contributes to improving the soil fertility.
- In Punjab, the most suitable time for cultivating pulses is during spring/summer months (March to May).
- This is the same time when hectares of land in Punjab remain vacant after wheat and potato harvesting for over two months.
- Farmers will be able to take advantage of this period.

How much a farmer can earn from growing moong dal?

- Farmers can get 5-6 quintals moong per acre which translates to Rs 35,000 to Rs 42,000 per acre if he gets the Rs 7000 per quintal MSP of moong decided by the Centre.
- While the input cost would be around Rs 8000-9000 per acre including seed, labour, and other expenditure.
- This can maximize the farmers' profits even from small landholdings.
- But farmers feel that the state government must make a system for local procurement, so that the produce can be consumed in Punjab.

What is government doing on the ground?

- The government is distributing 4-kg kits to the farmers free-of-cost to multiply the seed.
- It is also holding awareness and training camps for farmers to demonstrate the use of the latest techniques for sowing pulses.
- These kits will help farmers cover two-fifth of an acre and will give a yeild that can be used as seeds that can be sown in around 20 acres.

Source: The Indian Express

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