Stubble management for addressing air pollution

What is the issue?

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- The air quality index for Delhi, Ghaziabad and Noida were in the ‘severe’ category with values of 469, 500 and 500 respectively according to the Central Pollution Control Board.
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- Incentivising alternative uses of stubble and promoting technological solutions to recycle it can help check pollution.
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What are the factors contributing to air pollution?

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- Stubble burning by farmers in neighbouring Punjab and Haryana is the prime reason.
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- Stubble burning is still continuing in this regions despite it being banned by the Punjab Pollution Control Board.
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- Construction dusts and high traffic had also aggravated air pollution in Delhi and surrounding cities.
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- This coincides almost each year with the onset of foggy winters in North India.
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What measures need to be taken to address stubble burning?

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- **Stubble management -**In most rice growing regions of Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, farmers get economic value for paddy straw by selling it as

cattle feed.
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- Both Punjab and Gujarat are home to sizeable dairy co-operatives, which can follow South India’s model.
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- There is a huge agri-business opportunity for the farmers in this region by trading nutrition-rich stubble for livestock and unlocking a potential value-added chain.
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- **Economic incentives -**Investment by State governments in ramping up mechanisation with built-in incentives for farmers will help generate additional income for farmers.
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- It will also create additional employment opportunities in this region.
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- **Private partnership -**In much of the US and Europe, crop stubble is cut into bales, and is a much sought after by mushroom growers, livestock owners, and for pulp.
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- Crop stubble can be repurposed to create another value chain around low-cost, eco-friendly wood products.
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- For all this private sector and its expertise can be roped in to create necessary infrastructure and transport links to connect the farms to retail markets.
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- **Encouraging Innovation -**Punjab Agricultural University had invented a Super-Straw Management System (SSMS).
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- It works to cut, take out stubble, drill wheat seeds, and evenly deposit any loose crop residue over the farm.
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- SSMS deposits crop residue over the farm, adding organic matter over time, retaining nutrients, water and replenishing soil structure.
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- Such innovations need to be encouraged by the government till it reaches every farmers of this region.
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Source: Business Line, the Hindu

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