

Rich dividends for Punjab farmers expected from bumper cotton crop this season

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Written by Anju Agnihotri Chaba | Jalandhar | Published: September 5, 2019



A huge consignment of cotton arrived at Abohar Mandi in Jalandhar Wednesday. (Express Photo)

Cotton crop is expected to pay rich dividends to farmers this season as Punjab is expecting a bumper production. Though cotton crop season starts from October 1, bales of cotton already started coming in to Abohar Mandi on Wednesday. Full-fledged harvesting will start after September 15.

Farmers got around Rs 5,611 per quintal as the “opening rate” of ‘Kapas’ (raw cotton along with seed) against the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs 5450 per quintal set by the government. ‘Kapas’ is later ginned to separate the cotton seed, which is used to make cattle feed, oil, oil seed cake etc., while lint is used to make yarn.

Abohar Mandi, one of the of biggest cotton markets in Fazilka district of Malwa region, received 125 bales on Wednesday with each bale weighing 170 kg.

“Farmers have brought around 500 quintals cotton to our mandi today. The main crop will start coming in mid-September. We are expecting a bumper crop along with good price,” said Anil Nagori, president of the Arthiya Association Abohar Cotton Mandi, adding that they purchased the cotton at a rate around Rs 5,611 to 5,650 per quintal on Wednesday.

“In Fazilka mandi too, around 15 quintals cotton had arrived and farmers got more than the MSP rate per quintal,” said Vinod Gupta, a commission agent of Fazilka Mandi.

“I have sown cotton on 10 acres land. The first round of plucking has started, and 2-3 more pickings will take place in October, November and December,” said cotton grower Ram Kishan from Abohar, adding that the weather is quite favourable for the crop this time and the yield will also increase if the same weather continues.

“If the crop is good then a farmer can get 10 to 13 quintals raw cotton from one acre,” said farmer Vinod Jyani of Abohar, adding that this year a bumper crop is expected and MSP is also good.

Going by Wednesday’s rate, which is around Rs 160 above the MSP, sale of raw cotton per acre at a rate of Rs 56,000 to Rs 73,000 in the market and can earn farmers Rs 36,000 to Rs 53,000 per acre after meeting all expenses.

Cotton is a good alternative to Paddy in punjab, and the state government is keen on diversifying paddy area under cotton. The MSP of paddy is Rs 1,835 per quintal this year and a farmer gets around 28 to 30 quintals paddy from one acre which can be sold at Rs 52,400 to Rs 55,050 at the MSP rate. The earning would be Rs 34,000 to 38,000 after meeting production cost — which is lower than cotton.

This year 3.91 lakh hectares area is under cotton crop against 2.83 lakh hectares last year, while paddy (parmal rice) area is still around 23 lakh hectares if basmati rice (around 6.29 lakh hectares this year) is excluded.

Director, Punjab Agriculture department, Dr Sutantra Airy said that the opening rate is much higher than the MSP and they hope to increase it further.

Punjab’s cotton belt includes Bathinda, Mansa, Mukatsar Sahib, Fazilka, Barnala Moga, Faridkot and Sangrur.

Following the white fly attack on crop in 2015, farmers in Punjab had decreased area under cotton drastically and since then, Punjab could not touch the 4 lakh hectares figure.

Officials in the agriculture department said that farmers should not be worried about the crop now as the Cotton Corporation of India is ready to purchase the crop at MSP rate if the rate goes down in the market.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/rich-dividends-for-punjab-farmers-expected-from-bumper-cotton-crop-this-season-5968364/>