

Corteva Agriscience takes initiative to popularise DSR system in rice planting

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Corteva Agriscience has a business model in promoting the much-talked about Direct Seeded Rice (DSR) planting technique, which never received mass adoption despite having the solution to save depleting groundwater table of Punjab and Haryana. As the DSR system helps farmers save around 30 per cent water, private sector participation is seen as a game changer as its promotion was so far limited to government incentives under certain schemes.

Sensing a business opportunity, Corteva, having presence in both seeds and agrochemicals, has taken a lead on DSR as farmers have to

buy hybrid seeds every year and also need to use a tad higher amount of agrochemicals. Further, herbicides need to be specific products so that the plants remain unaffected when sprayed to kill the weeds.

Jaskaran Singh Walia of Kotbhai village of Muktsar district of Punjab has been using the DSR method in 5 acres of his total land area of 20 acres and hopes to increase the area under it next year.

"In DSR, around ₹15,000/acre can be saved. Though I started it three years back, the herbicides available earlier were affecting the paddy plants when sprayed to kill weeds. But now that these chemicals are said to be effective, I will see the results this year and will in-

crease the area next year," Walia said.

CHALLENGES

Asked why he is not taking up DSR in all the 13 acres of paddy he is growing, Walia said, "DSR is good since in the conventional transplanting system there is need of manual labour and availability of it is a problem. But it is also a risk particularly when temperature is very high."

But, there are some villages where all the farmers have opted for DSR as the water is saline, according to Daljit Singh, another farmer of Muktsar. "The benefit of hybrid is that it can yield 25-26 quintal per acre even where the water quality is not good or even availability is an issue," said Navdeep Walia.

Out of about 46 million hectares of area under rice in the country, 10-12 per cent is under DSR, which also includes the area where farmers traditionally use broadcasting, said Subroto Geed, president of the company's south Asian region. He said the potential to increase the area under DSR is huge as it is the way forward for sustainable agriculture.

Raman Babu, head of Seeds R&D in Corteva's south Asia operation, said farmers can get extra 10-12 days between paddy harvest and wheat sowing as DSR helps cut the duration of rice crop, potentially curbing stubble burning incidents.

The correspondent was in Punjab recently at the invitation of Corteva Agriscience