

Wheat crop worth billions destroyed in rains in Punjab, Haryana

Wheat crop in thousands of acres in Punjab and Haryana has been destroyed in untimely rains. Agriculture ministry officials Tuesday said the losses to farmers could run into billions of rupees.

Wheat crop in over 50,000 acres of land has been flattened in Punjab itself, the officials said.

The rains, accompanied by hailstorm in several areas across Punjab and Haryana, have been continuing since Sunday. Though the skies opened up Tuesday morning, the dry spell lasted only a few hours before moderate to heavy rains came back.

The loss of fully-grown crop of farmers in both states would run into billions of rupees, the officials said.

'I have lost everything. There is no chance my crop will stand again,' rued farmer Zorawar Singh as he watched the damage to his crops in his field near Zirakpur, on the outskirts of Chandigarh.

The wheat crop, which needs a prolonged dry and sunny spell at this time of spring, has been damaged at most places. Officials say that all calculations of having a bumper wheat crop this year will go awry because of the rain.

The Punjab government Tuesday ordered all deputy commissioners to send daily updates of the loss of crop of farmers to the state agriculture department.

Special 'girdawri' (calculation of loss to award compensation) has been ordered in all 20 districts across Punjab.

Agriculture Minister Sucha Singh Langah reviewed the crop damage situation here and assured farmers that they would be compensated for the loss of crops.

Langah said that wheat crop in 14,000 acres had been destroyed in Patiala district alone. He added that reports from 19 other districts in Punjab were coming in.

Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal had Monday reviewed the damage to crops.

In neighbouring Haryana, Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Agriculture Minister Harmohinder Singh Chatha said that compensation would be given to farmers whose crops were damaged.

In Chandigarh, the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana, intermittent rain and hail were witnessed throughout Tuesday.

People in cities and towns across the region were inconvenienced due as the rain brought back a renewed spell of winter.

'After Holi, it is generally warm weather. But this year has broken all records. People are wearing full winter clothing in mid-March. This climate is surprising,' said government employee Keshav Thapar.

Chandigarh being the city of gardens, many plant lovers said that the unseasonal rains could spoil their chances of sowing flower seeds and other plants that is normally done at this time of the year.

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