



Haryana Wins SKOCH Gold Award

Why in discussion?

On December 19, 2022, at a function held at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, the Department of Agriculture and Horticulture of Haryana received the SKOCH Gold Award for its remarkable achievements in Soil Health Card and Crop Cluster Development Programme.

Key Points

- This award was given by Dr. K.K. Sharma, Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Department, Haryana. Sumita Mishra and Director General of Horticulture Department Arjun Saini received the award.
- Haryana, which is the **second largest contributor of food grains to the national pool**, has taken several policy initiatives to promote diversification and agri-business in the field of horticulture. The state has mapped around 400 horticultural crop clusters and formed 700 **Farmer Producer Organizations**.
- In order to strengthen backward and forward linkages in clusters, the state has launched an ambitious scheme 'Crop Cluster Development Programme (CCDP)' with an outlay of Rs 510.35 crore for setting up on-farm integrated pack-houses through FPOs. So far, 33 integrated pack-houses have been set up in the state and 35 are in progress. A total of 100 such integrated pack houses are targeted to be set up by the end of the current financial year.
- Further, in order to ensure final value chain for farmers and agricultural produce, 37 companies in the agriculture sector have executed 54 MoUs with 34 FPOs for trading and marketing of FPOs with buy-back mechanism to promote agri-business activities.
- CCDP was launched to address a number of issues including collection of produce such as cluster formation, farmers' groups and pack-houses, collection centers, grading-packing and standards such as market linkages.
- In addition, it also aims to resolve sanitary and phytosanitary measures, including pesticide residues, and microbiological contamination including pests, diseases, aflatoxins and heavy metals.
- Under the '**Har Khet-Swasth Khet**' campaign, around 75 lakh soil samples will be collected and tested in 3-4 years and Soil Health Cards (SHCs) for each acre will be distributed to farmers, a state government spokesperson said.
- In order to increase people's participation and awareness about soil testing, the work of collecting soil samples and distribution of soil health cards is being done through **Farmer Helpers** (local villagers) and science students of Government Colleges, Government Senior Secondary School under the '**Earn While You Learn**' program.
- Farmer assistants and science students are also provided an incentive of Rs 40 per soil sample. They were trained by the department to collect soil samples. With this strategy, the state has collected 30 lakh soil samples in the year 2022-23, which is eight times more than the previous years (2015-2020).
- The spokesman said that the state of Haryana has an extensive network of soil testing laboratories where farmers have easy access to soil testing. There is availability of soil testing laboratory within a radius of 20-25 km.
- Prior to the year 2020-21, the department had 35 static soil testing laboratories, which could test 7.4 lakh soil samples annually. During the years 2021-22 and 2022-23, the department has created 60 new STLs (13 stable + 47 mini).

- At present, the department has a total of 95 (48 static+47 mini) soil testing laboratories which can test 30 lakh soil samples annually.

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