

# Cash Incentives To Tackle Farm Fires?

*CM Supports Punjab Proposal, Seeks Centre Backing*

---

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

## New Delhi:

Supporting Punjab government's proposal to incentivise paddy farmers for not burning harvest stubble in the winter, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said Delhi government was "ready to do whatever it can" to reduce air pollution.

Kejriwal said the proposal made by Punjab government to the Commission for Air Quality Management, which oversees anti-pollution measures in Delhi-NCR, if accepted, will provide farmers cash incentives for not burning the remains of their paddy crop.

"As per Punjab government's proposal to the air commission, the farmers will be given a cash incentive of Rs 2,500 per acre for not burning their paddy stubble. They are free to use the technology of their choice," said Kejriwal.

The CM added that the Punjab and Delhi governments would contribute Rs 500 each per acre of the Rs 2,500, while the central government could chip in with Rs 1,500. "Whenever CAQM takes a decision on this, Delhi government will implement the incentive scheme. We are ready to do everything possible to protect the environment," Kejriwal said.

Paddy straw burning in Punjab and Haryana is a major cause of the alarming spike in air pollution levels in the capital in October and November. Farmers set their fields on fire to quickly clear the rice crop residue before sowing wheat and potato. According to an estimate, Punjab generates around 20 million tonne of paddy straw annually.

Though no paddy straw is burnt in Delhi, the capital is worst affected by this annual ritual because the smoke and pollutants from the farm fires are brought by winds to the city.

Sources said the Punjab and Delhi governments would implement the scheme even if the Centre didn't agree to participate. While farm machinery was earlier provided to farmers at a

subsidised rate for insitu management of the stubble under a Centre-sponsored scheme, farmers said a cash incentive could help them cover the cost of fuel used in operating the machinery.

Delhi government also tested and promoted a bio-decomposer developed by the ICAR Indian Agriculture Research Institute (Pusa) to manage the stubble but it didn't yield the expected results.

According to reports, Punjab recorded 71,304 farm fires between September 15 and November 30 in 2021 and 83,002 farm fires in the corresponding period in 2020. The share of farm fires in Delhi's PM2.5 pollution was at a peak of 48% on November 7 last year.

## Times View

It's good to see that the two state governments have worked out an arrangement to pay subsidies to farmers for not burning stubble. However, the move will only bear results if farmers really stop doing so. That means the governments must also be strict in dealing with violations.

# CLEARING THE AIR

---

► Under the plan, the farmers will be provided a cash incentive of 2,500 per acre for not burning their paddy stubble

► CM Arvind Kejriwal says Punjab and Delhi governments will be giving 500 per acre each, the central government can

contribute 1,500

► Paddy straw burning in Punjab and Haryana is a major reason behind the alarming spike in air pollution levels in the capital in October and November

► Farmers set their fields on fire to quickly clear the crop residue before cultivating wheat and potato

► According to an estimate, Punjab generates around 20 million tonnes of paddy straw annually

► Though there is no paddy straw burning in Delhi, the capital is worst affected since smoke from farm fires badly impacts its air quality