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HDFC Bank, CII Launch Crop Residue Management Project in Punjab

The goal is to create awareness on prevention of farm stubble burning

Ludhiana, November 9, 2023: HDFC Bank, India's leading private sector bank, under its CSR brand Parivartan and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), today announced the launch of a field initiative – a crop residue management project - aimed at mitigating farm stubble burning at Ludhiana district in Punjab. The initiative, which will focus on two blocks, Jagraon and Khanna in Ludhiana, aims to propagate the adoption of improved biomass management methods among farmers.

With this purpose in mind, the Bank and CII with the support of the District Administration of Ludhiana organised two workshops over a period of two days to spread awareness on the prevention of stubble burning in Jagraon and Khanna. Sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Jagraon, Ms. Manjeet Kaur inaugurated the workshop at Jagraon while Mr. Tarunpreet Singh Sond, MLA, Khanna and Mr Baljinder Singh Dhillon, SDM Khanna, inaugurated the workshop at Khanna.

Around 500 farmers, who attended the workshops were trained on the adoption of environment-friendly methods of stubble management. In addition, the initiative will support farmer co-operative societies by providing farm machinery to address machinery requirements of small farmers. The project will also promote better straw management techniques through baling, aggregation, and supply of straw to nearby industries and will set up small village level plants to process straw into pellets and organic fertilisers.

Nusrat Pathan, Head-CSR, HDFC Bank said, *“Every year, open field stubble burning adversely affects Punjab and its surrounding areas. HDFC Bank Parivartan aims to familiarise Punjab farmers with better techniques of managing stubble and shifting to more environment-friendly practices. Awareness and better supply of modern machinery will go a long way in keeping our surroundings clean and green.”*

Ms. Manjeet Kaur, SDM, Jagraon said, *“I have often discussed stubble burning with farmers, and they have said that they burn the stubble because there is no suitable alternative solution - machines are expensive and every farmer cannot buy them easily. I appreciate the work of HDFC Bank and CII in the sphere of crop residue management. Making machinery available*

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to farmers in adequate numbers will enable farmers to shift to better stubble management practices.”

Mr. Tarunpreet Singh Sond, MLA, Khanna said, *“We often think that stubble can be easily managed by setting it on fire with an inexpensive match box, but we are unaware of the damage it causes, including various skin and respiratory diseases. Stubble burning is both difficult and dangerous for our collective health as a society. I appreciate the efforts of HDFC Bank and CII which are making this effort to make our environment clean.”*

Mr. Baljinder Singh Dhillon, SDM Khanna urged farmers to change their perception of straw and said, *“Straw is a treasure for farmers. I request all the farmers not to burn this treasure. By using the in-situ machines which are being provided by CII and HDFC Bank today, farmers can manage the stubble in a proper way. I also appreciate the efforts of these organisations because this will benefit many farmers.”*

Mr Chandrakant Pradhan, Lead – Climate Change, CII said, *“Our experience has shown that when farmers, instead of burning stubble, recycle it in the soil, it improves the farm ecology in multiple ways. By facilitating a public-private partnership, CII is trying to galvanise the adoption of environment-friendly practices in the farm sector so that the stubble burning problem is solved in the long-term.”*

HDFC Bank's CSR is implemented under the aegis of Parivartan, which is the umbrella brand for all its social initiatives. It focusses on five areas: Rural Development, Education, Skill Development and Livelihood Enhancement, Healthcare and Hygiene, and Financial Literacy and Inclusion. As on June 30th, 2023, Parivartan has so far cumulatively impacted over 34 lakh lives in Punjab.

HDFC Bank was among the top CSR spenders in the country for the financial year ended March 2023. As on March 31st, 2023, the Bank spent Rs 820.89 crore on CSR initiatives. The Bank also expanded its impact by reaching more than 9.93 crore beneficiaries cumulatively as of March 2023.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is playing a facilitative role to bring industry resources to address the issue of stubble burning and air pollution in northern India region since 2018. This year, in partnership with multiple leading corporates, CII has adopted 430 villages across Punjab and Haryana and a gamut of activities are being undertaken to create awareness and promote sustainable agricultural practices. CII is partnering with HDFC Bank

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for the first time on this issue and expects to play a constructive role in promoting environment-friendly solutions.

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