

Advisories issued for agricultural activities; move to ensure supply of fruits, vegetables during lockdown

TNN | Mar 31, 2020

NEW DELHI: With government allowing certain exemptions to farmers for carrying out necessary farm operations during lockdown period, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) on Tuesday issued advisories for harvesting and threshing of Rabi (winter sown) crops, post-harvest storage and marketing of farm produce in the wake of the coronavirus spread in different parts of the country. The move will ensure smooth supply of essential food items including vegetables and fruits.



The advisories are mainly dealt with how farmers should continue with their operations by taking measures of “personal hygiene and social distancing” during harvesting of all field crops, fruits, vegetables, eggs and fishes before, during and after executing the field operation in the lockdown period.

Wheat, mustard, lentil, maize, pulses and millets are main Rabi crops which are to be harvested by farmers by mid-April which coincides with the current lockdown period. Most of these crops are ready to be harvested. Besides, sugarcane harvesting is at peak and is also time for its manual planting in north India.

Noting that harvesting of wheat is approaching in several northern states through combine harvesters and their movement within state and between states has been permitted, the ICAR said, “Precautions and safety measures of workers engaged in repair, maintenance and harvesting operation is to be ensured.”

The ICAR - India’s main public sector research body under Union agriculture ministry - in its advisories, however, told the farmers that they can delay harvest of wheat in most of the areas till April 20 without incurring any “significant loss” as the temperature in most of the wheat growing areas is still below long-term average.

In case of manual field operations of harvesting/ picking, the research body advised the farmers to accomplish the operation in 4-5 feet spaced strips assigning one strip to one person.

“This will ensure adequate spacing between the engaged labours,” it said, advising that all the people engaged in those operations should use masks and ensure washing of hands with soap at reasonable intervals.

“Maintain safe distance of 3-4 feet during rest, taking of meals, transfer of produce at collection point and loading/unloading, and stagger the field operations wherever possible and avoid engaging more number of persons on the same day,” said the advisories.

It also suggested farmers to engage only familiar people to avoid the entry of any suspect or likely carrier during field activity and advised them to prefer “mechanized operations over the manual wherever feasible”.

Underlining that only essential numbers of people should be allowed to accompany the machine, it said, “All machines should be sanitized at the entry point and at regular intervals. All transport vehicles, gunny bags or other packaging material should also be sanitized.”

Amid demand from farmers, the central government last Friday put farming and procurement operations under a list of essential activities during the lockdown period.

The order, accordingly, put farmers, farm workers, custom hiring centres for farm machineries, procurement agencies, inter-state and intra-state movement of combine harvesters, and manufacturing units and packaging units of pesticides, fertilisers and seeds under the exempted categories so that their movements can be allowed during the lockdown period. The district authorities are expected to regulate these movements.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/advisories-issued-for-agricultural-activities-move-to-ensure-supply-of-fruits-vegetables-during-lockdown/articleshow/74917332.cms>