



Pepsico has hi-tech plans for paddy crop in Punjab

Direct Seeding Tech Will Reduce Water Consumption By 40% Claims Co

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FARMERS in Punjab are adopting innovations fast. In one of the first experiments of its kind, PepsiCo India plans to introduce direct seeding technology for paddy cultivation.

With the new technique, water consumption will be reduced by 40% (1,000 kl/acre) and the production cost by Rs 1,000 per acre.

The company also plans to set up the world's largest horticulture project wherein four million seedlings per annum will be planted to make large quantities of juices available. It is set to grow 32 varieties of citrus fruits. For this, the company will be procuring germplasm from Florida, Brazil and other places for its joint venture with the Punjab government near Ja-

landhar (Jallowal).

Punjab is already facing the problem of water depletion, and if the company's claims prove correct, the direct seeding technology can prove to be a boon for the farmers. In some pockets the water level is as low as 800 meters and as per the surveys after 5-6 years the farmers will have no option but to diversify.

Talking about the direct seeding technology, PepsiCo India Holdings ED Exports & External Affairs Abhiram Seth, says: "We hope to raise the area to 4,000 acres from the present 20 acres in an year. It will also solve the problem of water depletion to a large extent."

As per PAU, some other companies can also come up with similar innovations in the agriculture sector.

Punjab Agriculture University, is also recommending that

farmers adopt this technology.

PAU director of extension education Dr Sarjit Singh Gill, says: "This will ensure optimum plant population, that is 33 plants per square meter. At present it is 25 plants per square meter. These steps will help farmers."

The company's agriculture-related product exports from India are likely to reach \$60 million this year. It's also providing technical knowhow to the Punjab government and two citrus plant projects at Hoshiarpur and Abohar each costing Rs 50 crore. "Both these projects will be commissioned by 2007," says Pepsi Foods executive vice-president exports Amit K Bose.

At present, almost 45,000 acres of area is under citrus fruit cultivation. The Punjab government plans to raise it to 1 million acres by 2015.