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## PepsiCo promotes 'direct seeding' for paddy

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In a scenario, where Punjab is facing a crunch of farm labourers, and also faces water shortage, PepsiCo India plans to promote direct seeding methodology, for paddy cultivation among farmers.

In 2007, the company had covered 100 acres of land under direct seeding and seeing the success rate, the company is aiming at covering 1,000 acres this year including areas in Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu and Karnataka reaching out to 600 farmers. Enthused by the response PepsiCo has set in target to cover 4,000 acres in

Punjab alone covering all major districts under direct seeding by next year. Currently the company is focussing only cover basmati varieties but will also try the methodology to cover normal course rice from the next year.

PepsiCo India carried out trials in their own R&D farms in Jallowal in 2004 using direct manual seeding of paddy rather than transplantation of paddy saplings. With the help of local vendor based in Amritsar, the firm has also developed a seeding machine of worth Rs 40,000 for paddy, which can sow the seeds uniformly at a specified gap and at a uniform depth. To promote this



methodology, PepsiCo will provide machines and seeds besides technical help to farmers to take on this new methodology. Though farmers can avail

these facilities for free this year but will have to shell out money next year in case they want to opt for the technology.

Talking to FE, Sushil

Sankhiyan, general manager-Agriculture, PepsiCo India, said, "Paddy cultivation is known to be very water intensive. Over a period of time, this has resulted in a decline of the water table in Punjab. During our experiments we saved 30% (900 kl/acre) of water in the region and has also reduced the production cost by Rs.1,250 to Rs.1,450 compared to traditional paddy cultivation. In initial trials, PepsiCo also studied the advantage of sowing the seeds, followed by herbicide treatment and thereafter irrigation. Pre-treatment with a herbicide helped reduce de-weeding labour from five times to two times in direct

seeding compared to puddle irrigation".

Giving his expert opinion on the direct seeding methodology, consultant with Punjab Farmers Commission, PS Rangi, said, "Punjab Agriculture University has been experimenting on this methodology from last tow years So far the main problem, which comes up in, this method is of eruption of weedicide in the crop. Agriculture experts are working on to solve this problem".

Ludhiana-based farmer, Gurinder Singh Pandher who is using the technology from the last three years on his five acres land said that it has successfully saved water.