

Webinar on
Agricultural residue management: Solution to achieve better air quality

October 16th 2020

Air pollution is a serious concern in India, which becomes even more severe during post-harvest seasons. Agricultural residue burning has emerged out as an important contributor to very high pollution levels during the months of October and November. In a city like Delhi, this has a major role to play in the high episodic pollutant concentrations observed in this time of the year. In past, several efforts have been made by the central and state government to manage the residues including banning burning of crop residue, subsidy to farmers to acquire farm machinery, use of paddy straw in power plants and incentives to retain paddy residue, however, ground level implementation still remains a major challenge.

Punjab has set up 7,378 custom hiring centres (CHCs) to provide equipment for crop residue management and is in the process of establishing 5,200 more CHCs this year. Similarly, Haryana has set up 2,879 CHCs and 2,000 more will be established this season. But providing machinery is just one part of the solution, farmers also need training to run these machines to get optimum results. Similarly, considering high O&M costs, it remains to be seen how the business model play out in the coming season. There are several issues which remain unaddressed in strategies planned for in-situ as well as ex-situ management of agricultural residues. Finally, issues of crop-diversification are also being talked about in context of agricultural residues.

Last year, Punjab and Haryana produced around 20 million tonnes and 7 million tonnes of paddy residue respectively. Out of which 9.8 million tonnes and 1.23 million tonnes was burnt in the states. This year, health experts fear that the effects of COVID-19, which primarily causes respiratory problems, would be worsened by heightened air pollution due to smog and smoke from the annual stubble burning.

TERI has been working on the issue of air pollution control and more specifically on agricultural residue management. With support from the Bloomberg Philanthropies, we came out with a discussion paper earlier this year highlighting various ways by which huge volumes of agricultural residues can be managed and open burning of residues is reduced. We are now entering the post-harvest period and it is important and timely to discuss the new strategies and plans put in by various agencies for better management of agricultural residues this year.

TERI is organising a webinar on 16th Oct 2020 3:00-4:30 PM to discuss the pertinent issues related to agricultural residue management, current scenario, and possible way forward. The webinar looks forward to invite regulatory agencies in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh; energy development agencies, farmer associations, research institutes, power plants, and private entrepreneurs to discuss key issues related to management of agricultural residues. The draft agenda of the webinar is attached herewith for your kind reference. We look forward to your kind confirmation and presence in the workshop. We also would like your suggestions to invite other important stakeholders in the event.