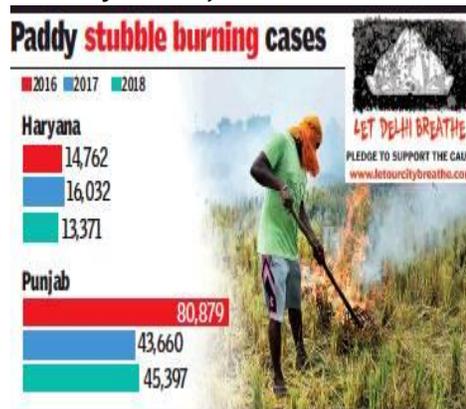


## Farm fires: Farmers seek cash incentives

**Chandigarh:** Ahead of the paddy harvesting season, when stubble burning chokes the region, many farmers in Punjab have said they cannot do away with the polluting practice totally without cash incentives from the government. Several farmers in the state said they were aware of the hazards of stubble burning but since they have just a small window between the paddy harvest and the sowing of the winter wheat crop, from the fourth week of October to the second week of November, burning the paddy residue was the most viable option for most small and medium farmers. They said the government should play a more proactive role in tackling the problem than just providing subsidy on machines that help in managing crop residue. These machines were still not widely available, they added. “So far, the machines like happy seeders, mulchers/ choppers, mould board (MB) ploughs, zero till drills and rotavators are available only in about 5,000 out of 13,500 villages in Punjab. As a majority of the farmers have small or medium holdings, they don’t have the means to spend extra on managing the crop residue,” said Avtar Singh Sandhu of Qadian in Gurdaspur district of Punjab.



Sandhu said farmers need to be given some incentive, say a bonus of Rs 100 per quintal on paddy, which can be spent on managing the stubble. “This way, the farmers will feel the responsibility of managing crop residue in a scientific manner rather than setting the fields on fire,” he said. Sandhu has formed an organisation, Young Innovative Farmers Group, which has been organising camps and events against stubble burning for the past five years. Farm experts also feel that the farmers are aware of the means and methods to manage crop residue. However, they need the extra push from the government. Raminder Singh Ghumman, who works as district extension specialist (agronomy) in the Farm Advisory Service Centre (FASC) of Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) in Ropar, said most of the farmers are receptive to the idea of managing the crop residues. “I have rarely come across a farmer who is opposed to crop residue management. They are bit wary about weed growth in wheat if it is sown using a happy seeder or zero till drill, though. Nevertheless, stubble

burning is being debated and farmers have started asking for ways and means to manage crop residue,” he says. Some farmers, who have been leading the campaign against stubble burning, say mindset of the growers needs to change to adopt healthier ways. Said Hardeep Singh of Pilkhani village in Ambala district of Haryana, “As this practice has become common over the years, farmers are finding it difficult to give up stubble burning. Those who have taken the lead in this campaign should be recognised for their efforts. They could be made brand ambassadors for the anti-stubble burning campaign.”

Source: [The Times of India, October 04, 2019 \(verbatim reproduced\)](#)