

In death, little son gifts Cameron a bridge with Britain's masses

State to build low-cost polyhouses and offer micro-irrigation means like sprinkler and drip irrigation to help farmers grow cash crops round the year

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THE Himachal Pradesh Government has decided to fund farmers, especially those in the hills, to build polyhouses—modern greenhouses, in other words—for growing cash crops through the judicious use of resources like land and water.

The polyhouses will be heavily subsidised and funded at a cost of Rs 352 crore.

State's principal secretary (Agriculture) Dr P C Kapoor says, "This is the first time that the state has decided to invest such a huge amount in the agri-



LALIT KUMAR

What is a polyhouse

Polyhouses are based on the greenhouse concept to let in heat and light, while preventing the heat from getting out. But instead of glass that greenhouse roofs are built of, polyhouses are made of cheaper polythene or plastic.

culture sector in one go. The project that has two components—building low-cost polyhouse structures and use of micro-irrigation means like sprinkler and drip irrigation—will help farmers grow vegetables round the year and get assured incomes.

The gains are also going to be two-fold. Firstly, cultivation in polyhouses will not be affected by weather changes like excessive rains, dry spells or harsh winters. Secondly, higher production of quality crops will bring better returns. Lack of snow and rains this winter has already hit Himachal badly. The polyhouse experience in select areas like Bilaspur, Chamba and Shimla has already been successful.

In next four years, the Himachal Government will extend a subsidy of Rs 117.32 crore towards building low-cost polyhouses by the farmers as part of

a project to be funded by NABARD. Another Rs 37.6 crore will be shared by the beneficiaries. Another Rs 198 crore will be invested towards micro-irrigation like sprinklers and drip irrigation for cash crops grown in the polyhouses. In all, 14.7 lakh hectares of land will be covered under polyhouses and 12,320 sprinklers will be installed.

The state agriculture department, the nodal agency to implement the scheme, has issued guidelines to field officers and farmers. "The guidelines will prove very handy for the farmers while seeking subsidy and

adopting the low-cost models of polyhouses. The farmers have already started submitting their proposals," Director, Agriculture, J C Rana said.

Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal says, "If the targets are achieved in two years, instead of four years, the government will pump in more money to sustain the scheme for four years. It will all depend on how farmers respond to the scheme.

The annual income from vegetables and cash crops in Himachal Pradesh is around Rs 800 crore, which the government proposes to increase at least to Rs 1400 crore in the next five years.

HP's polyhouse project to benefit 30,000 farmers

PC Lohumi ■ Shimla

The Rs 352.58-crore Pandit Deen Dyal Kisan Samridhi Polyhouse project launched by Himachal Government would benefit 30,000 farmers in the State and supplement their income substantially, Chief Minister PK Dhumal on Monday said.

Addressing a public meeting after laying the foundation of Rs 2.4-crore hospital building at Kandaghat, he said that 28,080 polyhouses would be set up in the State for which the farmers would be provided 80 per cent subsidy.

He said that water efficient drip handpumps, mini and micro irrigation projects had also been included under the project to fully utilise the available natural resources

and adopting an integrated approach. He said that with the implementation of the project, the agriculture sector would get major boost and farmers would get ample employment and self-employment opportunities at their door-steps.

Listing employment generation and social security as priority areas, Dhumal said that all efforts were being made to generate employment and self-employment by creating jobs in Government sector, private sector and industrial and hydropower projects. The focus of the Government was on promoting labour-intensive environment-friendly units and the mandatory provision to employ at least 70 per cent Himachalis was being strictly enforced, he added.