

By Shakeel Ahmed

Cotton production declines to 8.3m bales

MULTAN: Cotton production fell by 20.26 per cent to 8.303 million bales till Jan 15 this season against 10.456m bales in the same period last year, the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) said on Saturday.

In its fortnightly report, the PCGA noted that the production of cotton bales went down by 2.119m in the current season. The country is likely to miss the target of 9m bales.

According to the PCGA figures till Jan 15, Punjab suffered cotton production losses by up to 22.99pc, followed by Sindh with 16.09.

Punjab produced 4.859m bales against last year's 6.325m bales, highlighting a shortfall of 1.454m bales.

Sindh produced 3.467m bales against last year's 4.139m bales, with a shortfall of 0.665m bales. Till January 15, ginning factories produced 8.22m bales during the current season. Textile sector and exporters purchased 7.34m bales and 55,984 bales, respectively.

Total 232 factories remained functional in Sindh and Punjab.

Of these, 208 units are in Punjab where 4.765m bales were produced.

A decline in cotton cultivation area during the last couple of years, denial of reasonable return to farmers, use of poor seeds and pesticides coupled with harsh weather and pest attacks has taken its toll on the cotton crop.

The production of all four priority major crops including cotton, wheat, maize and rice is declining due to anti-farmer policies of government, Khawaja Muhammad Shoaib of Farmers' Vision Forum claimed.

'Cotton has been removed from the list of priority crops and instead sugarcane has been added,' he further added.

'Pakistan used to export 2-2.5m bales but now the country will import at least 4.5m bales to meet demand. This situation has happened because the farming sector has been overlooked for years by the policymakers,' he said.

Cotton crop stakeholders have been stressing that crop production would suffer drastically unless measures are taken to address the issues hampering its cultivation.