

‘50pc fall’ in cotton production rattles growers, textile industry

LAHORE: A massive decline in cotton production has severely impacted the industry associated directly and indirectly, leaving growers, ginneries, the textile industry and others with no option but to face the tough situation.

This, coupled with inflation, has resulted in a rise in prices of the locally manufactured garments, hosiery, fabric, finished fabric and other products by 20 to 25 per cent.

‘Pakistan continues facing a massive decline in cotton production for some years, dropping to almost 50pc. At present, our cotton bales production ranges between seven and 7.5 million bales that was at least 13 million previously. This has left us with no option but to import raw cotton from the US, Brazil and Egypt,’ All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Punjab) Chairman Adil Bashir told Dawn on Saturday.

The textile industry (the single major buyer of the locally produced cotton) imported cotton each year irrespective of the increase or decrease in local production. The industry is of the view that since the local cotton quality is declining fast besides a fall in production, it had no option but to import.

‘The rates of imported and locally produced cotton are almost the same now, and sometimes we feel the cost of imported cotton is a bit less than the local one. But frankly we wish to first buy our own cotton (if available) since its shortage is disturbing the entire chain,’ Mr. Bashir added.

He said the situation was very tough for the small textile exporter, who was unable to import and dependent on local production.

Pakistan Textile Exporters Association Secretary General Azizullah Goheer told Dawn that the massive decline in cotton production had disturbed the small exporter as well as the end user.

‘While you have no capacity to import cotton, you will have no option but to buy the locally produced cotton that is already very costly due to a shortage. Moreover, if you buy the cotton from abroad through commercial exporters, it will also cost you very high. Ultimately, it will increase the cost of production of various finished goods for local consumption, he maintained.

Pakistan Kissan Ittehad President Khalid Khokhar termed the farmer and end user ‘losers’ in the whole scenario. He criticised the government for doing nothing to upgrade the existing mechanisms from cotton sowing to production to selling at good price.

‘In the whole world, there is a support price for cotton. But unfortunately not us,’ he deplored.

He said most countries, including India, preferred research, use of innovative technology related to germination and sowing of best seed and other methods to avert various environmental and other impacts on the cotton crop. `But the situation is quite opposite in Pakistan.

He dispelled the impression created by the millers of low quality and accused them of blackmailing the growers by not buying their produce despite its availability.

`I admit that cotton production has reduced to at least five million bales due to various issues (seed, pesticides, technology). But that doesn't mean it is either not available or substandard. Our cotton is handpicked and of good quality.

But they (the millers) prefer to import to force growers to sell cotton at a low price.

Khokhar urged the government to immediately announce a fair support price of cotton, and help growers use innovative technology for sowing and production.

Cotton Commissioner Khalid Abdullah was not available for comment.