

# UNIONS CHALLENGE DELAY IN PADDY PROCUREMENT

Relevant for: Economy | Topic: Food processing and related industries in India: scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements and supply chain management

Harvested paddy has started arriving at markets in Punjab and Haryana.

A number of farmer unions from Punjab and Haryana have raised objections to the Centre's decision to postpone procurement of paddy in both States until October 11, citing higher moisture content due to rainfall. The unions have called on farmers to protest the move outside the homes of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) legislators from Saturday.

Procurement of paddy at minimum support prices (MSP) for the 2021-2022 kharif marketing season was originally scheduled to start on October 1 in Punjab, and from September 25 in Haryana.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha platform of protesting unions, the majority of which are based in Punjab and Haryana, plans to hold protests against the postponement from Saturday, by gheraoing legislators from the BJP and its ally the JJP, as well as District Commissioners' offices. "The government's excuse that it is being done due to delayed rains has no validity because the government itself has sanctioned short term varieties of paddy which are ready and which are waiting in the markets," said a statement.

"From 10 o'clock [on Saturday], Haryana farmers should take their paddy to the homes of BJP-JJP MLAs and demand that their paddy be weighed right there," said Rakesh Tikait, leader of another faction of the BKU.

The Food Ministry stated, "Procurement of paddy at high moisture content is fraught with risk of increase in damage percentage of rice grain. Also the grain will become vulnerable to shrivelling, blackening, discolouration and prone to infestation. This may lead to rejection at procurement centres and would lead to distress sale of paddy and consequent loss to the farmers." "The better course would be to harvest the paddy crop offered after a period of 10 days i.e. after proper maturity then the problem of moisture can be minimised," it added.

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