

2021 crucial year for cotton, says minister

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhr Imam on Wednesday said that 2021 will be a 'make or break' year for the cotton crop.

The industrial crop has been witnessing a decline in production over the last ten years due to multiple reasons including poor quality seed, absence of new seed technology, heat waves and climate change as well as pest attacks.

The case for 'revival of cotton' was once again discussed at a meeting chaired by Mr Imam. Attending the meeting, a representative of the Pakistan Central Cotton Committee (PCCC) noted that "cotton is changing, we should change too".

It worth noting that in the backdrop of declining cotton production, the PCCC, whose mission is to bring improvement and development of growing, marketing and manufacturing of cotton and cotton by-products through an extensive programme of research and development in all its conceivable aspects, has remained ineffective since long.

Stakeholders believe that survival of the crop lies in the 'revival of cotton'.

During the meeting held on Wednesday, problems such as competency of staff, funds, and yields were discussed. Issues of pests and pesticides were also highlighted while keeping the farmers cost of production and sale in consideration.

It was suggested that the use of biotechnology and genetic engineering was necessary using international support. It was further discussed that the revival of cotton cannot be done without research.

Professor Dr Iqbal Bande-sha of the Islamic University, Bahawalpur, suggested that the sowing of cotton should not be done before mid-May as to avoid monsoon damage.

Pakistan Kissan Ittehad President Khalid Khokhar pointed out that the cost of production has to be reduced and a minimum support price for cotton should be announced by the government.