CM ASSURES FARMERS OF SMOOTH PROCUREMENT, ALSO REVIEWS ARRANGEMENTS FOR POTATO HARVESTING

CAPT AMARINDER ORDERS CONCERNED DEPARTMENTS TO ALLOW HARVESTING & MARKETING OF HORTICULTURE PRODUCE WITH CONDITIONS · WHEAT HARVESTING TO START BY APRIL 12-15 IN VIEW OF WEATHER, GUIDELINES EXPECTED BY MARCH 31 · CM ASSURES FARMERS OF SMOOTH PROCUREMENT, ALSO REVIEWS ARRANGEMENTS FOR POTATO HARVESTING

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 27: Even as he ordered the concerned departments to allow harvesting and marketing of horticulture produce by farmers, with necessary restrictions relating to COVID-19 precautions, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday announced that wheat harvesting in the state will commence around mid-April on account of weather conditions but assured smooth procurement and timely payments. The wheat harvesting is delayed due to weather conditions and is likely to start only by April 12-15 in the state, the Chief Minister said after reviewing arrangements for harvesting of potato and wheat crop. Proper harvesting arrangements were being put in place for harvesting and storage of potato crop, said Captain Amarinder, adding that the government would also ensure smooth procurement and release of timely payment to wheat farmers. Detailed guidelines for wheat harvesting were expected to be issued by March 31, 2020, said an official spokesperson. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister has directed officials of Horticulture Department, Punjab Agro Industries Corporation and Punjab Mandi Board to work out the modalities, in coordination with the respective district officials, to allow farmers to harvest and transport their horticulture produce for seamless marketing without putting them to any more hardship. A spokesperson of the Chief Minister’s Office said that a detailed list of District Mandi Officers, along with their contact numbers, has been issued by Punjab Mandi Board so that farmers can contact the concerned officer. In line with the Chief Minister’s directive, the Additional Chief Secretary Development-cum-Financial Commissioner Horticulture has also issued an advisory asking all Deputy Commissioners to grant the relevant permissions/relaxation to the farm labour and farmers for harvesting and transporting the horticulture produce, including vegetables and fruits to the markets, as well as cold storage. Underlining the importance of maintaining regular supply chain of essential commodities of horticulture produce in these critical times, Khanna directed that the necessary restrictions relating to the health advisories of social distancing, use of masks, hand-wash etc may be included in the permissions. The Deputy/Assistant Directors Horticulture have also been directed to assist the Deputy Commissioners for this purpose. Director Horticulture Shailender Kaur has provided a comprehensive list of farmers who require labour for harvesting and need transportation of their produce to the markets as well as cold stores. Also, 69 FPOs comprising nearly 600 farmers have been contacted and assured full cooperation from the government in this regard. The fruit growers, especially in the citrus belt of Hoshiarpur, Fazilka, Sri Muktsar Sahib & Bathinda districts, the potato
growers in the districts of Jalandhar, Kapurthala, SBS Nagar, Moga, Ludhiana and Bathinda districts and vegetable growers in the state were facing problems in harvesting and marketing due to the orders of the National Disaster Management Authority on March 24, regarding measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. However, it may be recalled that Para 4 of the subsequent guidelines dated 24th March, 2020 issued by the Home Secretary, Government of India, in his capacity of Chairperson, National Executive Committee of the Authority, exempted the shops dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, along with cold storage and warehousing facilities from the commercial and private establishments.