

## Press Release

### Foundation for Development Initiative (FDI) and NatWest Group India Partner to Support Farmers in Haryana to Mitigate Crop Residue Burning under 'Harit Dhara, Saaf Vayu' Project

**Jind, Haryana, Monday, January 29, 2024:** The Foundation for Development Initiative (FDI) and NatWest Group India have partnered and launched a wide-scale project, 'Harit Dhara, Saaf Vayu' to mitigate crop residue burning in the district of Jind, Haryana.

The initiative was launched at a farmer outreach field event today at Hameti Auditorium in Jind, Haryana. At the launch were Dr. Ranpal Singh, Vice Chancellor, Chaudhary Ranbir Singh University, Mr. Nihal Singh, Controller of Examination Chaudhary Ranbir Singh University, Dr. Girish Nagpal, Deputy Director of Agriculture (DDA), AAE, Jind and senior members of NatWest Group namely, Mr. Saurabh Gupta, Mr. Ross Douglas, Ms. Kiranmayi Guduru, Mr. Dhiraj Anand, Ms. Tania Chatterjee, Mr. Vijay Singh, and Mr. Pooran Chandra Pandey from Foundation for Development Initiative (FDI), along with over 150 farmers and other stakeholders.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Ranpal Singh expressed the urgency to cease stubble burning due to its extensive implications on public health and the environment. Lauding the initiative, he stated that the project will provide farmers with alternatives, as burning stubble often becomes the sole recourse due to a lack of options.

Adding to this, Mr. Saurabh Gupta – Chief Financial Officer & Head of Finance Hub, NatWest Group India, spoke about NatWest Group's strong commitment to addressing climate change issues by emphasizing on sustainable practices, reducing carbon footprint, and fostering environmental awareness to contribute positively towards a greener future. Mr. Gupta further shared insights on the environmental initiatives led by the Group, which actively engages in implementing strategies such as ecological restoration, waste reduction, and other eco-friendly practices to promote and deliver sustainable, responsible, and long-term returns for its beneficiaries.

Furthermore, Ms. Tania Chatterjee – Head of Sustainability, NatWest Group India, appreciated the continued efforts of FDI in this subject and emphasised on the immediate need to prevent crop residue burning as burning of farmland between crop cycles is a pervasive problem across Northern India, which has a significant negative impact on the environment. Mitigating this would not only curb the prevailing issue of air pollution but also enhance soil quality and improve public health. Ms. Chatterjee further added that through this project and association with FDI, the goal will be to work with farmers and local communities of Jind, encourage the uptake of economical and environmentally conscious use of stubble and lastly, build awareness around adopting sustainable precision farming methods to foster a healthier environment for both agriculture and ecosystems.

Mr. Vijay Singh – President of the Foundation for Development Initiative (FDI), said, "Air pollution levels have been increasing over the years, exacerbating global warming, and affecting economies. We are pleased to announce our partnership with NatWest Group, India. Through 'Harit Dhara, Saaf Vayu' initiative, we aim to assist farmers in adopting environment friendly alternatives to stubble burning using a successful project model, which will lead to improved soil health and reduced air pollution levels."

The FDI and NatWest Group India partnership will promote and demonstrate sustainable agriculture practices - Crop Residue Management and Direct Seeding of Rice in Jind. 'Harit Dhara, Saaf Vayu' project will cater to the complete Rice Wheat Cropping System (RCWS) encompassing 7 blocks, 96 villages, and 18,708 acres of farmland in Jind, Haryana, benefitting more than 5,492 farmers through sustainable interventions.

In the event, the beneficiary farmers, who adopted Crop Residue Management in 2023, were also honoured by presenting certificates and providing some seeds.

Stubble burning has been a persistent problem for several years during the onset of winters in North India, which leads to a host of environmental problems. In 2021, Jind had the third-highest number of fire incidents amongst all districts in Haryana, with 505 cases of Active Fire Locations (AFLs), accounting for nearly 14% of the total AFLs in the state.

### **About Foundation for Development Initiative (FDI)**

The Foundation for Development Initiative (FDI) is a society incorporated in 2003 and is registered under the Ministry of Home Affairs. FDI holds an FCRA license that enables the implementation of development projects at the grassroots level using international funds from donors. Over the past decade, FDI has been operating in 10+ Indian states, bringing forth positive impacts through its initiatives in agriculture, education, and skilling. The organization's efforts have reached thousands of farmers, school-going students, and women, among others. FDI's significant contribution to the state of Haryana includes extensive work in farmer training programs, capacity building in the application of scientific agriculture practices, education, and promotion of preventive healthcare.

<https://www.developmentinitiatives.org/>

### **About NatWest Group India**

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