**TRADE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF PAKISTAN**

**GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN**

**MULTAN**

**SUBJECT: SEMINAR ON IMPORTANCE OF MAXIMUM RESIDUAL LEVEL (MRL) IN RICE IN GLOBAL MARKETS**

 On directions, of Ministry of Commerce, TDAP, in collaboration with ITC and NRSP, organized the third in a series of seminars titled “Importance of Maximum Residual Level (MRL) in Rice in Global Markets” at Bahawalnagar on June 24, 2021. The seminar was attended by more than 60 participants representing rice farmers, exporters, pesticide companies and relevant government organizations. The seminar was chaired by Mr. Saqib Ali Ateel, Secretary Agriculture (South Punjab).

 Mr. Shoaib Zafar, Advisor ITC-ReMIT, who was also the main host of the event, stated that MRL is of critical concern in the exports of rice so as to meet stringent international standards & requirements. ITC is focusing on helping small businesses meet these requirements. Dr. Mubarak Ahmad, Rice Expert, spoke about the pernicious impact of pesticides on humans, plants and animals. He stated that due to injudicious use of pesticide, Pakistan’s exports face the risk of being banned, as the same happened to India. He dilated upon the concepts of Integrated Pest Management and WHO toxicity classes. He further added that Pakistani rice varieties are superb in quality and the only drawback in international markets is pesticide toxicity. Pesticides that are not meant for rice must not be used on rice. Mr. Ali Narang, Rep. REAP, said that rice contributes $2 billion to annual exports. He stressed the need for safe pesticide use to meet the moving targets of constantly changing standards in lucrative markets.

 Secretary Agriculture spoke about the initiatives taken by the Government of Punjab to avoid unnecessary use of fungicide and pesticide in cultivation, and to help with technology up gradation. He issued instructions to the Agriculture Departments of Bahawalnagar to take necessary steps towards checking the excessive use of pesticides. He further suggested that the federal government may also establish Residual Analysis Labs in relevant, rice-growing districts, with a view to increase exports. Advisor ITC assured that collaborative steps will be taken shortly in the future. In closing remarks, Dr. Muhammad Ijaz, Director, Rice Research Station, Bahawalnagar, spoke about research on new breeds of resilient and pest-resistant rice.

 An interactive Q&A session followed the seminar in which farmers voiced their concerns about crop profitability if pesticide use is curtailed. Many attendants spoke about the need for rapid research on new breeds of pest- and disease-resistant rice, especially parboiled varieties that can be grown in Bahawalnagar.

 The seminar ended with a vote of thanks by Mr. Shoaib Zafar, Advisor ITC.