



## Depleting Groundwater

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Water depletion in Haryana over the years has led to 60 dark zones in the State, which include 21 critical ones in 10 districts.

### Reasons for Depletion

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- **Increased demand:** for water for domestic, industrial and agricultural needs and limited surface water resources lead to the over-exploitation of groundwater resources.
- **Limited storage facilities:** owing to the hard rock terrain, along with the added disadvantage of lack of rainfall, especially in north-central Indian states.
- **Green Revolution:** enabled water-intensive crops to be grown in drought-prone/ water deficit regions, leading to over-extraction of groundwater.
- **Frequent pumping:** of water from the ground without waiting for its replenishment leads to quick depletion.
- **Subsidies:** on electricity and high MSP for water-intensive crops are also leading reasons for depletion.

**Dark zone:** The dark zone is an area where groundwater depletion exceeds the rate of recharging.

The report of the **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)** shows that 1,034 of 6584 assessed blocks in the country are over-exploited, and these blocks are usually referred to as 'dark zones'.

### Government has taken various measures

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- **Discouraging sowing:** of water-intensive crops like rice sowing from the upcoming season. Planting of the water-guzzling rice (paddy) crop, threatens to deplete the groundwater.

- **Haryana Government has launched a pilot project** intending to diversify non-basmati paddy to maize and pulse in seven blocks of Yamunanagar, Ambala, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind and Sonapat district.
  - Sowing of maize and 'tuar' pulse would be promoted by giving incentives to farmers.
  - Under the new scheme, identified farmers will be provided seed free of cost and given financial assistance for Rs. 2000 per acre in two parts.
  - The maize crop insurance premium of Rs. 766 per hectare will also be borne by the government. Also, maize production will be procured by government agencies at MSP.
- **Atal Bhujal Yojana:** Central government has decided to implement an Rs. 6000 crore plan to manage the available water resources efficiently, and boost the recharge mechanism, by involving the community.
  - The **World Bank** is funding half this initiative, with the rest of the funds coming from the government, via budgetary support.
  - The scheme will focus on recharging groundwater sources and propagate the efficient use of water, involving people at the local level.

## Farmers Concern

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- Farmers have various concerns like:
  - There is no dependable mechanism of government procurement for crops on MSP in the State.
  - Problems like delay in setting up of procurement centres.
  - Exploitation at the hands of commission agents (arthiyas), who most of the times buy the produce from farmers below MSP.
- Farmers have asked the government to first come out with a mechanism to procure alternative crops at the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

## Solutions

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- There is a need to develop a mechanism to purchase the **alternative crop** at MSP. The State government should enact a law, which guarantees that the produce of farmers is purchased at MSP.
- The **people's participation** needs to be ensured in replenishing groundwater level.
- The subsidies on the electricity for an agricultural purpose need to be rationalized and efficient water use practices need to be developed and promoted among farmers.