
PM sees mobile app as solution for transparent wheat procurement

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ISLAMABAD:

Amid the ongoing wheat procurement row, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed on Monday to develop a mobile phone application to ensure transparency in the wheat procurement process.

The premier presided over a meeting held to review the demand, supply, and procurement of wheat by the federal government. Moreover, the premier suspended the managing director and the general manager of the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) for “negligence” in implementing directives for utilization of technology in wheat procurement. In addition to suspending the two senior officers, the PM emphasized the need for crop insurance and a third-party audit of PASSCO’s stock. However, the PM instructed PASSCO to procure an additional 400,000 metric tonnes of wheat through a transparent process. The premier

underscored the government's commitment to preventing economic losses for farmers and ensuring food security in the country. He also pledged to implement measures to enhance farmers' prosperity and assured that exceptional PASSCO centres and officers would be duly recognized during the procurement process. The meeting was attended by several federal cabinet members including Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister of Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Coordinator to PM, Rana Ehsan Afzal, as well as other relevant senior officers. Earlier today, Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru stated that wheat procurement in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) was proceeding without impediments, and disclosed the initiation of procuring 300,000 metric tons of wheat, amounting to Rs29 billion. A day earlier, on May 12, Federal Minister for Industries, Production, and National Food Security & Research Rana Tanveer Hussain stated that the target of wheat purchase could have been further increased to ensure fair prices to growers. On May 11, it was revealed that the Sindh Food Department had allegedly mixed 379,000 sacks of defective wheat with dirt following the devastating floods of 2022, resulting in a staggering loss of more than Rs3.022 billion to the public treasury. Last week, a Lahore High Court (LHC) division bench, led by Justice Ali Baqar Najafi,

directed the federal government to respond by May 14 to a plea challenging the wheat price policy and seeking a new pricing mechanism.