

Growers cry out against govt wheat policy

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By A Correspondent

MULTAN, May 5: Farmers belonging to various parts of South Punjab staged a rally here on Friday to protest against what they described as the anti-grower policies of the government.

The rally was organised by the component organisations of the Sustainable Agriculture Action Group. The protesters' march started from Allama Iqbal Park and ended in front of the Multan Press Club.

The participants had held placards and banners inscribed with the slogans against "defective agriculture policies." They were particularly critical of the plummeted wheat procurement prices this season.

Khwaja Muhammad Shoaib of the Farmers Vision Forum, Abdul Majeed Cheena of Pakistan Kissan Ittehad and Tariq Mehmood of Savera Foundation said the government had fixed the minimum wheat procurement price for the year 2006 as Rs415 per 40kg, but the growers had no choice to sell the commodity at a price fluctuating around Rs370 owing to insignificant buying of the public sector operators.

They said it was ironical that the private sector players had been procuring wheat at low prices by creating a cartel but the prices of wheat -flour had not come down. They said the federal agriculture ministry officials had been touting of a wheat production less than the country's requirement but it seemed that the golden rules of economy regarding "demand, supply and price mechanism" had failed to work in the Pakistani environment.

They ascribed the situation to unabated free import of wheat in the country when in fact there was no shortage. They said the price being offered to them by the private sector could not even match the cost of raising the crop.

The farmers demanded that instead of issuing hollow statements that the official wheat procurement price would be ensured at any cost, the government functionaries especially the agriculture ministry should immediately take remedial steps to pull out the growers from financial crunch.