

Bayer to expand its regenerative agriculture initiative to over 16,000 hectares this year

Vishwanath Kulkarni
Bengaluru

After the initial success, Bayer plans to expand its Sustainable Markets Initiative (SMI), which focuses on scaling up regenerative agriculture in basmati rice systems in India to over 16,000 hectares this year.

SMI is a global initiative of King Charles and Bayer is one of the companies part of the Workstream 5 that focused on basmati rice with an aim to accelerate the adoption of regenerative agriculture practices.

India was one of the targeted regions where the SMI focused on the basmati rice system in the key producing States of Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar



GROUND STUDY. A rice field where SMI is being implemented

Pradesh.

During 2024, SMI solutions were implemented with some 2,500 farmers covering about 12,000 hectares in these States. The company found that adoption of regenerative practices led to improvement in soil health, yields and profitability while reducing water usage, resulting in an overall

positive impact on farmers' livelihoods. Basmati rice systems are highly water-intensive, requiring an average of 2,500 l of water to produce 1 kg.

HIGHER YIELDS

In 2024, the initiative improved farmer livelihoods through training, technology adoption, and market access.

Around 55 per cent of farmers using methods like alternate wetting and drying and IoT sensors cut their water use by about 6 per cent.

Farmers reported up to a 9 per cent increase in yields and also realised a 20 revenue boost by selling in export markets.

As part of the initiative, SMI partners purchased around 23,000 tonnes of basmati rice from the participating farmers for export markets.

Natasha Santos, Head of Sustainability & Strategic Engagement at Crop Science Division, Bayer, said, "Through our collective efforts under the SMI umbrella, we've seen farmers boost their revenue by up to 20 per cent and improve yields by 9 per cent."