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## Lifting Ban on Cotton Exports

# It's too late, say farmers

MEGHA MANN/TNS

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The Centre's decision allowing cotton exports has failed to bring cheer to farmers who say the decision will primarily benefit traders and exporters.

District president, BKU Ekta (Ugraha), Shingara Singh Mann, said farmers had nothing to gain from the government's decision.

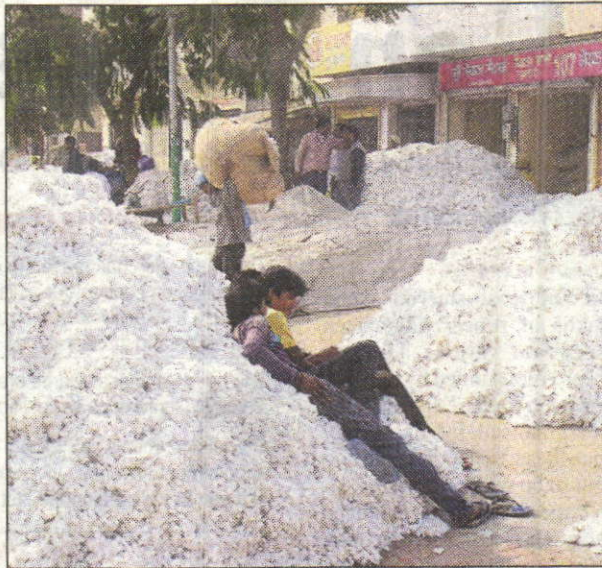
"The ban on exports should have been lifted in September-October to provide farmers an opportunity to sell their produce for exports in the open market. Under globalisation, the rich alone are being empowered," Mann said.

Small-time traders feel cheated too. State president of the Beopar Mandal Ashok Dhunike said only those traders who had bought cotton in bulk and stored it in anticipation of the ban being lifted would benefit.

"Had the government taken this decision in September-October, cotton growers would have earned rich dividends," he said.

Ginner Sukhdev Singh Chahal from Talwandi Sabo said the Centre's decision would enable big export houses to mint money. "The entire North India has sold its cotton. Some farmers in Gujarat may have held back stock which can now be exported," he said.

He said while the ban had been lifted weeks ago the



**"The ban should have been lifted in September-October to provide farmers an opportunity to sell their produce to exporters in the open market"**

— SS Mann, BKU Ekta (Ugraha)

until now. "Cotton farmers in the state did not gain much this year as there was plenty of cotton but few buyers," he said.

Sources in the regional office of the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), which oversees procurement in seven cotton-producing districts of Punjab, said the prices of cotton had not picked up even after the Centre's announcement.

"Cotton is being sold at

Rs 4,200 per quintal. Hardly 1,800 to 2,000 bales of cotton arrived in the market today," said officials.

But Dr GS Romana from PAU extension centre said instead of short-term gains, one should look at the bigger picture. "The move will be beneficial in the long run. The Agriculture-Marketing Intelligence Centre (AIMC) has predicted cotton prices hovering around Rs 4,500 per quintal," he said.