

Punjab turns to bamboo as new diversification option; Centre approves Rs 2.49cr



Punjab is set to take its first organised step towards bringing bamboo into its crop diversification strategy, with the Centre approving Rs 2.49 crore [for the state under the National Bamboo Mission \(NBM\) for 2026-27](#).

The allocation, Rs 2.49 crore, was approved under the 60:40 Centre-state funding pattern, with Rs 1.49 crore as the central share and Rs 99.94 lakh as the Punjab government's share.

The Agriculture Department of Punjab has drawn up a roadmap under which bamboo will initially be planted on more than 857 acres — the land has already been earmarked — across the state as government demonstration plantations. The exercise is intended to assess the crop's performance under Punjab's agro-climatic conditions and, importantly, to demonstrate to farmers that bamboo can be a commercially viable alternative to the traditional paddy-wheat cycle.

The director of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (Punjab), Gurjit Singh Brar, said: "There is a huge scope for bamboo in Punjab. At present, around 10,000 metric tonnes of bamboo is brought into the state for industrial use, so there is already a market that we can tap by developing cultivation here. It is also a useful crop for waterlogged areas and riverbanks where other crops may not be suitable, and its plantation can help check soil erosion. A farmer who plants bamboo will start harvesting from around the third year, and a well-established plantation can potentially give Rs 7-8 lakh per acre, while

harvesting can continue annually... for decades without the need to replant every year. This year, we have [taken funds for a government pilot project](#) and will plant bamboo in scattered demonstration plots so that farmers can see its performance themselves. Since this is the first organised effort, we will initially procure planting material from outside the state and subsequently establish our own nurseries. From the next season, we plan to seek 50 per cent subsidy support from the Centre for farmers who want to take up bamboo cultivation.”

He also said the department plans to work on the crop from end to end — from providing planting material to ensuring that the produce reaches the market.

From crop to bamboo economy

For Punjab, the agriculture department’s interest in bamboo is not limited to replacing one crop with another.

Brar said, “The larger objective is to create an entire bamboo-based economic chain — beginning with nurseries and plantations, and extending to harvesting, aggregation, processing, manufacturing and marketing. Bamboo can be used for pulp and paper, furniture, handicrafts, flooring, panels, construction material, fencing, packaging, baskets and other endless household products with huge demand. It is also increasingly being used in lifestyle products and as a substitute for some conventional materials.”

The department’s end-to-end approach is therefore aimed at addressing a problem that has repeatedly held back crop diversification in Punjab.

However, farmers may be willing to experiment with an alternative crop, but without a reliable buyer, processing facility and remunerative market, the shift is difficult to sustain. Brar said the department intends to ensure that farmers are not left to find markets on their own.

A water-saving diversification option

The move comes against the backdrop of Punjab’s continuing struggle with groundwater depletion and its dependence on paddy — a crop that requires substantial irrigation.

Bamboo is a perennial plantation crop, meaning that unlike paddy or wheat, it does not require farmers to undertake a fresh crop cycle every season. Once established, bamboo can continue producing culms (stems) over several years, potentially creating a longer-term farm income stream.

Rs 2.49 crore could be the beginning

An agricultural expert said that the Rs 2.49-crore allocation is modest, but its significance lies in the fact that Punjab is attempting to establish a new commercial crop and its associated value chain.

Punjab’s challenge, therefore, will be to ensure that bamboo does not remain confined to government demonstration plots.

For a state that has spent decades trying to move farmers away from the paddy-wheat cycle, bamboo offers a different model of diversification — not merely another seasonal crop, but a potential plantation, industrial and rural-enterprise ecosystem, said the expert.

What is the National Bamboo Mission?

The National Bamboo Mission (NBM), launched in 2025, is not a new scheme. It was originally started as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) in 2006-07, with the initial focus largely on propagation and cultivation of bamboo. It was subsequently subsumed under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture.

The mission was restructured in 2018 following the amendment to the Indian Forest Act, which removed bamboo grown outside forests from the legal definition of “tree”. The restructured NBM shifted the emphasis from merely increasing bamboo cultivation to developing the complete bamboo value chain and linking growers with markets and industry.

As of December 2025, the Union government said the mission was being implemented through State Bamboo Missions/State Bamboo Development Agencies in 23 states and one Union Territory.