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Title: Need to address the problem of depletion of ground water level in Punjab.

SHRI PRATAP SINGH BAJWA (GURDASPUR): There has been 89 percent increase in the use of ground water in Punjab since the start of the Green Revolution. Over the years, Punjab's farmers, in order to boost agricultural productivity and ensure food security have used high-yield water intensive crops. According to an estimate 12 billion cubic meter ground water has been used in the State to cover this gap.

The National Geophysical Research Institute has found that due to over-exploitation, the ground water levels have gone down on an average by 60 cm every year. Punjab has, in less that 30 years, used up ground water reserves built up over the last 105 years.

In order to reach the water level farmers are forced to resort to digging deeper into the ground and using more power to pump up water adding to their costs every year. The National Rain fed Area Authority has maintained that if this situation continues in Punjab, desertification is imminent.

The declining water table leads to the concentration of Total Dissolved Soluble (TDS) and RSCs (Residual Sodium Carbonates), it also leads to brackishness of the ground water. Crops cannot reach their full potential leading to poor food grain production.

As this is a matter concerning national food security, it must be given immediate attention. Strengthening and consolidation of R & D infrastructure, artificial recharging of ground water, using check dams and rainwater harvesting is urgently required. Incentives should be given to farmers to shift to other less water consuming crops.

I urge the Government to look into this matter and address the issue on a priority basis as it impacts the food security of the nation.