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The Unseen Rise of Harjeet Singh: A Progressive Farmer from Bhanaur Village, Kharar

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Harjeet Singh is a 35 years old farmer from Bhanaur village, located near Kharar, Punjab. His family has been engaged in agriculture for several decades, primarily cultivating wheat and paddy on approximately 15 acres of land. Like most farmers in the region, his family traditionally depended on chemical fertilizers, tube-well irrigation, and government schemes and systems. From an early age of 15, Harjeet assisted his father in routine farm operations such as irrigation management, harvesting, and post-harvest handling. Over time, he began noticing problems such as rising input costs, declining soil fertility, and reduced net profit, despite stable yields. These observations gradually shaped his interest in improving farming practices.

After completing his schooling, Harjeet pursued a Diploma in Agricultural Technology in the year 2014-2015, which provided him with basic exposure to soil testing, crop nutrition, and modern agronomic practices. He also visited farms in neighboring states such as Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, where he observed better methods of crop planning and resource utilization. This phase marked the beginning of his shift from traditional to more knowledge-based farming.

Adoption of Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)

In **2016**, Harjeet accidently attended a government-organized training programme on Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) led by Narinder Singh in Hoshiyarpur village while he was visiting his maternal home in Hoshiyarpur. The session was focused on practical demonstrations of making Jeevamrutha and Bijamrutha using on farm resources. Instead of making immediate large-scale changes, he decided to experiment cautiously by applying the methods on a small plot of 3 acres.

On the field, he began preparing and applying Jeevamrit, reduced the use of chemical fertilizers, and introduced pulses in crop rotation to support soil health. Alongside this, he constructed a small vermi-compost pit to meet part of the nutrient requirement directly from the farm. Over the next two to three years, these practices started showing visible results. The cost of cultivation decreased due to reduced dependence on expensive fertilizers, while the soil became softer with better moisture-holding capacity. Crop growth also appeared more uniform across the field after a few cropping seasons, and although the yield increase was not sudden, it remained steady and reliable, improving by about 10–15 percent over time

During 2018-2019, Harjeet expanded improved practices to 6–7 acres. He continued using organic inputs along with less amounts of chemical fertilizers. Slowly he saw improved soil structure and more consistent yields compared to past few years. At this stage, seeing the expansion, neighboring farmers began showing interest, though adoption of ZBNF remained limited or none.

Adoption of Drip Irrigation for Water Management Irrigation Improvement

Water availability is a major concern in Punjab agriculture, and Harjeet's farm was not an exception. Declining groundwater levels and irregular electricity supply became serious

issues. To address this issue, in 2021, he gradually adopted drip irrigation combined with solar energy support under the PM-KUSUM (Pradhan mantri Kisan urja suraksha evam utthan mahabhiyan) Scheme. With a total subsidy of 60%, he installed the venture in 5 acres of his land which he expanded to 10 acres in a few years. He adopted timers to regulate irrigation frequency. This phase significantly improved the overall efficiency of his farm. He observed 30-35% reduction in water usage with lower electricity expenses. It also reduced crop stress during peak summer months because of limited water usage for irrigation purpose.

Role as a Progressive Farmer in the Village

Over time, Harjeet emerged as a **progressive farmer**, not through formal appointment but through practical experience. Farmers from nearby fields often visited him to understand drip layouts, compost preparation, and crop planning.

He:

- Guided other farmers on drip irrigation system layout and about its maintenance.
- Assisted villagers in understanding **government subsidy procedures.**
- Promoted **soil testing** and cost-effective input use.
- Shared practical knowledge through farmer meetings or informal discussions.

Although he never gained a formal recognition but his field became a **learning site** for nearby farmers.

Present Scenario (2024–2025)

- **Total land holding:** 20 acres
- **Drip irrigation coverage:** 10 acres
- **Cropping pattern:**
  - Kharif: Paddy, pulses (limited area)
  - Rabi: Wheat, mustard
- **Nutrient management:** Integrated approach (organic inputs + reduced chemicals)
- **Irrigation source:** Tube-well supported by solar power
- **Livestock:**
  - Cows- 5; breed- HF; milk production- 30-35kg/day
  - Buffaloes- 4; breed- murrah; milk production- 50kg/day

Harjeet Singh's journey reflects a practical and realistic path of progressive farming, built not on sudden change or heavy investment, but on gradual learning, trying new ideas on small scale, and improving slowly over time. He represents a large number of farmers who work quietly at the village level, improving their farms and strenthenging agriculture without recognition or publicity yet with visible improvements in soil health, water use, and farm stability**.** His experience shows that progress in farming does not always come from large technologies, investments or quick results, but from patience, observation, and the willingness to adapt. By learning from both success and failure, Harjeet has turned his farm into a dependable livelihood, offering a model that is environment friendly, relatable, and inspiring for other farmers and rural youth**.**