

Research Project FR2: Mid-term Evaluation Comments

Project Title	An Interdisciplinary Study toward Clean Air, Public Health and Sustainable Agriculture: The Case of Crop Residue Burning in North India
Abbreviated Title	Aakash
Project Leader	HAYASHIDA Sachiko
Project Period	5 years Full Research
Affiliated Program	Research Program 1 : Societal Transformation under Environmental Change

General advice and comments of the EREC:

The Committee received the clear report and discussion with approval. It was recognized that the Corona pandemic was causing considerable problems for the project due to suspension of international travel and the constraints on field research activities in India. Good efforts have been put forward to make the best of this situation, among others by hiring researchers to be based, for the time being, in India, and by working closely with local counterparts. In spite of the difficulties, good progress has been made. The Committee agreed with the adaptations and changes in the research plan.

It was commented that the close focus on stubble burning is a logical result of the concern with air pollution, but that it would be valuable to place this issue into the wider context. This includes a more wholistic understanding of household and village level behaviour and even more broadly, how the sustainable agriculture in the title of the project can be achieved. The roots of the problem lie in the history of the green revolution in the Punjab and in Indian agricultural policy over decades. The massive and dramatic demonstrations in the past year by Punjabi farmers against such policies suggest that the policy and political context are important for a holistic understanding of the root problems. Putting a bit more emphasis on the basic issues may also show the relevance of lessons from other places and practices beyond rice stubble burning.