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## HBL Microfinance, SUPARCO Launch Satellite Agri-Lending in Okara

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HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB) has partnered with the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) to integrate satellite-based agricultural analytics into the country's microfinance lending ecosystem. This marks the first collaboration of its kind between a bank and SUPARCO, aiming to bring space technology into agricultural financing.

The pilot project will be launched in Okara District, a major agricultural hub in Punjab. Using high-resolution satellite imagery, the initiative will enable remote pre-loan assessments,

crop health analysis, yield forecasting, and risk profiling. These tools will help determine farm-level creditworthiness through a scoring engine, reducing reliance on manual field verification.

A secure API and dashboard interface will allow HBL MfB to incorporate this satellite-derived data directly into its lending decision process. Bank officials expect the move to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance the accuracy of agricultural loan approvals.

HBL MfB President and CEO Amir Khan highlighted the significance of the agreement, stating that this partnership reflects the bank's commitment to providing innovative financial solutions. "We are proud to be the first microfinance bank in Pakistan to work with SUPARCO for climate-smart agricultural financing," he said. "By integrating satellite analytics into lending, we aim to improve the quality of life for our customers and make agricultural financing more precise and impactful."

Zafar Iqbal, Member (SAR) at SUPARCO, noted that the initiative extends the application of the organisation's Agricultural Geographic Information System (AGIS) into the financial sector for the first time. "SUPARCO remains dedicated to using space technology for national development, and this collaboration is a new milestone," he said.

Following the initial launch, the partnership will enter a post-loan monitoring phase, during which satellite data will be used to track crop growth and detect anomalies. This will allow early intervention in case of potential issues, offering farmers and lenders better security against agricultural risks.

Industry observers say the move could set a precedent for microfinance institutions across Pakistan, especially in regions where agriculture is a primary source of livelihood. By using technology to reduce uncertainty in lending, the project may pave the way for more sustainable and profitable agricultural financing models in the future.

With Okara serving as the testing ground, both HBL MfB and SUPARCO aim to expand the model nationwide if the pilot proves successful, potentially reshaping agricultural microfinance practices in Pakistan.