

The Hindu Business Line

P. 17

11-03-2015

# Record wheat output likely despite crop damage

Unseasonal rain has affected only a few growing areas; production could top 97 mt

## OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, March 10

Damage to the wheat crop due to heavy unseasonal shower last week is limited to a few areas and is unlikely to lead to any short supply, Agriculture Secretary Siraj Hussain said.

Inaugurating the "Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela", a three-day fair being held at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), he said the country is also poised to surpass the record of 95.85 million tonnes (mt) produced in 2013-14.

"The damage caused by the recent rain is limited only to a few areas. Lodging was reported but is unlikely to hurt yields. My assessment is that wheat production will be more than last year," Hussain said. Lodging refers to

the collapse of the stems of cereal crops such as wheat when the plant cannot support its own weight. Two types of lodging are common - root lodging and stem breakage - the latter occurring in the maturity stage when the stalk becomes brittle.

The phenomenon occurs due to both structural traits in the plant as well as environmental conditions such as adverse weather.

"This season's wheat crop is expected to be higher than last year and low temperatures will improve yield. No more rain and low temperature are essential, and if the latter persists through March then yield will rise," he said. IARI estimates point out that wheat output could top 97-98 mt, possibly as much as 100

mt if favourable weather conditions continue till harvesting. The Ministry had earlier pegged wheat production to slide marginally to 95.76 mt.

According to Government data, nearly 5 million hectares of standing crops was damaged in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Punjab Agriculture Minister Sardar Tota Singh said earlier this week that around ₹3,000 crore of wheat was destroyed in the northern State owing to the unseasonal rainfall and hailstorms.

The higher production will add to a global glut even as the Agriculture Ministry expects overall foodgrain output to fall by 3 per cent to 257.07 mt this season to June, against a record 265.57 mt recorded the previous season, owing to erratic rainfall that impacted rice and coarse cereals production.



**Freshness intact** Farmers from Haryana displaying vegetables using a solar-powered, evaporative, cooling vending cart at the Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela in New Delhi. The innovative cart is priced at ₹17,000 and helps retain the quality of fresh produce. KAMAL NARANG

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