

# Unseasonal rain spares key rabi crops

■ 'Not more than 5% damage to standing crop' but harvesting likely to be delayed due to low temperature

**Sandip Das**  
New Delhi, March 10

**UNSEASONAL** rains earlier this month across the northern and central regions have had only marginal adverse impact on key rabi crops such as wheat, oilseeds and pulse. However, harvesting is expected to be delayed because of prevailing low temperature.

"After an extensive survey across the northern states in the last few days, we have found out that excess water due to rains has been drained from wheat fields. We expect not more than 5% damage to the standing crop," **KV Prabh**, joint director (research), at

the premier Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) under the ministry of agriculture, told *FIE*.

Prabhu said farmers have sown high yielding and yellow rust resistant variety HD 2967 on more than 81% area across 9.5 million hectares in Punjab and Haryana. "In most fields assessed across northern India, the crop is advancing towards maturity and impact of the recent rains has been marginal," he added.

The HD 2967 variety had been developed by IARI and introduced to farmers about two years ago. According to agriculture ministry data, the wheat has been sown on more than 30.6 million hectares

## Wheat output may surpass last year's record 95.85 mt

■ **New Delhi, March 10:** India's wheat production this year is likely to surpass the previous record of 95.85 million tonne (mt) achieved in 2013-14, notwithstanding some crop damage in a few places due to unseasonal rains, a top agriculture ministry official said on Tuesday.

India, the world's second-biggest wheat grower, could set a fresh record if the current low temperature continues and there are no rains in the current month, agriculture secretary Siraj Hussain said on the sidelines of 'Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela'. In its second estimate, the ministry had last month pegged wheat output slightly lower at 95.76 mt for the 2014-15 crop year (July-June).



across the northern and central regions.

Indu Sharma, director, Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley, a Karnal-based research organisation, said that due to prevailing cool cli-

mate in northern and central India, wheat harvest is expected to be delayed by a week or 10 days. Usually wheat harvesting commences from the first week of April.

As per the second advance estimate released last month, the country's wheat production during 2014-15 is expected to be 95.76 million tonne, which is marginally lower than the previous year.

According to an agricul-

ture ministry official, the damage to mustard, a critical oilseed crops, from the recent rains is also not likely to be much as grain filling has already been completed. As per the agriculture ministry's estimate, mustard production in the current year is likely to be 7.3 million tonne, which is lower than last year.

Agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh, speaking in the Rajya Sabha last week, had stated that standing crops on over five million hectares in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal had been damaged by the unseasonal rains. However, agricultural scientists are eagerly awaiting

the rainfall pattern in the next few days, as the India Meteorological Department has predicted hailstorms and thunderstorms on March 13 across the northern states of Punjab, Haryana, west Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and east Rajasthan.

After visiting several districts of Punjab, Ashok Gulati, former chairman, Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, said the standing wheat crop has not been impacted. "Unless we get an assessment report from each district, it would be difficult to quantify the damage to crops because of the rains," he said.

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