

Good news for wheat farmers: IMD sees normal temperature in March

Our Bureau

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The wheat crop, which has been estimated at a record 112.02 million tonnes by the government, may be spared by nature this time easing concerns of all stakeholders after India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday predicted normal to below normal maximum temperature in March. Currently, all are watching India's wheat crop closely as to how will be the production after two successive years of below expectation harvest.

The maximum temperature during second and third week of March is very crucial to watch out as the wheat crop, which is grown in winter, is susceptible to high temperature which shrivels the grain.

In 2022, wheat production in India was severely affected due to high temperature weeks before the harvest.

From the 2022-23 crop season (July-June), the government had procured 26.2 million tonnes (mt) of wheat out of the targetted 34.15 mt and only 18.8 mt was bought against the target of 44.4 mt from crop year 2021-22.

The Agriculture Ministry on February 29 released the second advance estimates of crop output for the 2023-24 crop year, where wheat production has been pegged at record 112.02 mt.

SOUTH TO BEAR BRUNT

Releasing IMD's weather outlook for summer season (March-April-May) as well as for March, the weather bureau's Director-General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said while the south peninsula and western parts of the Central meteorological subdivision comprising Gujarat and Maharashtra may witness above normal maximum temperature, the



TORRID WEATHER. In 2022, wheat production in India was hit by high temperature weeks before the harvest PTI

north-west India is likely to be normal or below-normal.

During March, IMD said above-normal heatwave days are likely over most areas of north-interior Karnataka, Marathwada region, Telangana and south Andhra Pradesh. Mohapatra said the country is likely to record above-normal rainfall in March — 117 per cent of the long-period average of 29.9 mm.

LA NINA EMERGENCE

Further, he said above-normal maximum temperatures are most likely over most parts of the country, except over some isolated areas of north-west, north-east, central and peninsular India where normal to below-normal maximum temperatures may be observed during the hot weather season (MAM). Also, above normal minimum temperatures are most likely over most parts of the country during these three months.

While he attributed the warmer season to continuance of El Nino, he also said that it may become ENSO neutral by June as per maximum global models.

La Nina conditions — generally associated with good monsoon rainfall in India — are likely to set in by the second half of the monsoon season, he said.