

## India 2024 wheat output at 106 million tonnes to fall short of govt estimate: Survey

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*Output, though higher than last year's 102.9 million tonnes, remains short of government projections of 112 million tonnes*



*The past two years have seen India's wheat production hit by severe heatwaves, leading to reduced domestic supplies and increased prices. (Photo: HT)*

India's wheat production for the 2024-25 marketing season is projected to reach nearly 106 million tonnes, marking an increase from the previous year but falling short of the government's forecast.

Wheat output this year is seen at 105.7 million tonnes, up from last year's 102.9 million tonnes and less than the 112 million tonnes estimated by the government, according to a survey of the standing crop, conducted by the Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India and Agriwatch.

This development is particularly critical as India, the world's second-largest wheat producer and consumer after China, confronts rising food inflation and declining central pool stocks of essential food grains.

The past two years have seen India's wheat production hit by severe heatwaves, leading to reduced domestic supplies and increased prices. Consequently, the government has had to release stocks from the central pool to stabilize prices.

As of last month, wheat inventories held by the Food Corp of India (FCI), which maintains the government's granaries, had dropped to 7.71 million tonnes. The last time wheat stocks were below this level was in 2008 when it had dipped to 5.8 million tonnes.

Meanwhile, India's retail inflation marginally decreased to 5.09% in February from 5.1% in January — still above the central bank's 4% target. The period saw food and beverage prices surge above 7% for the fourth consecutive month.

According to data from the department of consumer affairs, all-India average wheat flour, or atta, prices in the retail market on Monday were at ₹35.9 per kg, up 3.7% year-on-year.

The expected rise in wheat production this year is attributed to higher acreage and improved yields in key states like Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, though Gujarat and Rajasthan might see a decrease in output.

Uttar Pradesh, contributing 30% to India's total wheat production, is expected to see a 4.7% increase in output to 32.25 million tonnes this year. Similarly, output in Punjab, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh is seen rising 3.5%, 4.1% and 1.8%, respectively, from last year.

Output in Gujarat and Rajasthan is likely to fall 5.8% and 3.3% to 3.1 million tonnes and 8.85 million tonnes, respectively, according to the crop survey report.

The FCI, meanwhile, remains optimistic about procuring 31-32 million tonnes of the food grain in the ongoing 2024-25 rabi marketing season against 26.2 million tonnes bought last season.

Adding the estimated increase of 3 million tonnes in this year's output to last year's procurement of 26.2 million tonnes brings us to 29.2 million tonnes, said Ashok Meena, FCI chairman and managing director, who was present at the unveiling of the crop survey report.

"As we started procurement operations earlier this year, adding 1-1.2 million tonnes makes it 31 million tonnes...If 31 million tonnes comes in, it will not go below the buffer norm," Meena said.

As of Sunday, FCI had purchased 1 million tonnes of wheat compared to 700,000 during the same period last year.

"Cumulatively, OMSS (open market sales scheme) has been 10 million tonnes since July last year, the highest ever done by the FCI. I do not think we will require that much intervention going forward," Meena added.

Without OMSS, the requirement for buffer and other interventions is 18.5 million tonnes.

Meena also said the government is committed to ensuing fair prices for farmers while also protecting consumer interests.

*Source: <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-2024-wheat-output-at-106-million-tonnes-to-fall-short-of-govt-estimate-survey-11712578824093.html>*