

Wheat procurement picks up, nears 120 lt

UPPING PURCHASES. Down 25 per cent from a year ago; quality norms for Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan relaxed

Prabhudatta Mishra

New Delhi

Wheat procurement in the country reached 119.26 lakh tonnes (lt) until April 23, against 159.23 lt year-ago, official data show.

Though there is a drop in Punjab, as much as 31.64 lt was bought in last six days from April 19 for the Central Pool stock, which indicates that the procurement is back on track.

Procurement by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and the State agencies got affected due to untimely rains earlier this month in Punjab resulting in higher grain moisture.

The government is hopeful of procuring 210 lt as targetted from Punjab and Haryana, whereas the main problems are in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, sources said.

The procurement in Punjab has jumped to 34.95 lt until April 23 from 3.31 lt until April 18. Though the



current year's procurement is down 49 per cent from the year ago level, it is expected to gain momentum once harvesting picks up, official sources said. Wheat harvesting is completed only in 30 per cent area of the State.

NORMS RELAXED

Wheat procurement in Haryana, where target is 80 lt, has reached 48.14 lt. This is down 2 per cent from the 49.18 lt registered in the previous year. Officials said that 70 per cent of harvest-

ing is completed in Haryana.

However, concerned over the lower procurement in Madhya Pradesh, where the target is to buy 80 lt, and in Rajasthan, where it aims to buy 20 lt, the Centre on April 23 relaxed quality specifications of wheat so that there may be some improvement in the purchases.

The purchase in Madhya Pradesh has dropped 26 per cent to 29.71 lt from 40.18 lt. On the other hand, though it is higher at 2.32 lt

against 0.19 lt in Rajasthan, it is below official expectations, sources said. In both these States, the local government is paying ₹125/quintal bonus over and above the minimum support price of ₹2,275.

While wheat harvesting in Rajasthan is yet to be completed only in 10 per cent of the area, it is already 100 per cent completed in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, officials said.

Under the relaxation in

Mixed trend

	(Wheat procurement in lakh tonnes)		
	2024	2023	% Change
Punjab	34.95	68.78	-49.2
Haryana	48.14	49.18	-2.1
Uttar Pradesh	4.05	0.82	393.9
Madhya Pradesh	29.71	40.18	-26.1
Bihar*	3,939	0	--
Rajasthan	2.32	0.19	1,121.1
Others*	5,770	8,116	-28.9
All India	119.26	159.23	-25.1

Note: Procurement until April 23; *in tonnes

the Uniform Specifications of wheat in Madhya Pradesh, the Centre will buy the grain if it is "Shrivelled and Broken" upto 15 per cent without value cut, whereas the normal criteria is up to 6 per cent. The limit of Luster loss of wheat is relaxed up to 50 per cent without any value cut for Madhya Pradesh.

For Rajasthan, the Centre will buy the grain if it is "Shrivelled and Broken" upto 20 per cent without value cut and the limit of Luster loss of wheat

is relaxed up to 70 per cent. The Centre has bought 4.05 lt of wheat from Uttar Pradesh so far, whereas the aim is to buy 60 lt in this season. Though it is much higher than nearly 82,000 tonnes bought in the year-ago period and also according to the arrival volume, but holding back of the grain by the farmers could be counter productive for the government to meet the target. The State is reported to have seen 70-80 per cent completion in harvesting of wheat.