

# Chana, mustard, wheat and jowar drag rabi acreage lower by 7%

**MIXED TREND.** Paddy coverage edges up, maize sowing jumps sharply

**Our Bureau**

New Delhi

The total area under all rabi crops was 146.06 lakh hectares (lh) as of November 8 against 157.73 lh a year ago, down 7.4 per cent.

The acreage of wheat, chana (gram), mustard and jowar is down, per preliminary reports received from the States.

Sowing of wheat, the rabi season's key cereal, is lower by 15.5 per cent at 41.3 lh as of November 8 against 48.87 lh a year ago. Similarly, chana is down 10.4 per cent at 24.57 lh from 27.42 lh, and mustard's acreage dipped 1.6 per cent at 49.90 lh from 50.73 lh.

The area under jowar, mainly grown in kharif and also in the winter season in some parts, has dropped 25.1 per cent to 6.69 lh from 8.93 lh.

## **MASUR UP 11.2%**

On the other hand, winter season's paddy acreage is nearly at par as transplanting has been completed on 7.04 lh against 6.99 lh a year ago. The acreage of rabi maize is up 50.3 per cent at 2.71 lh from 1.8 lh.

The sowing of masur (lentil) has also been reported higher by 11.2 per cent at 4.28 lh against 3.85 lh and that of barley at about 69,000 hectares against 27,000 hectares year-ago.

The government has fixed the production target of 115 million tonnes (mt) for wheat, 14.55 mt for rice, 12 mt for maize, 13.65 mt for chana, 1.65 mt for masur, 13.8 mt for mustard and 2.25 mt for barley during current rabi season.

The acreage of crops is the key factor to determine pro-



**DROP IN ACREAGE.** Area under rapeseed-mustard, the key rabi oilseed crop, dipped 1.6% at 49.90 lh

duction as farmers normally select crops which command higher prices in the market.

In the total foodgrains target of 341.55 mt set for the 2024-25 crop year (July-June), the contribution of rabi season's foodgrains are set to be 164.55 mt or more than 48 per cent.

Some experts said the optimum time of wheat sowing in the north-west plains is up to November 20 and there is a penalty in yield if sowing is delayed beyond that.

A former official of the Agriculture Ministry said there may be several factors for the lower coverage of area and the government needs to take a holistic approach.

"Amid two consecutive years of below expectation production of wheat, the sowing of the crop should have been completed before November 25 in the north-west region, which looks unlikely as of now," the former senior officer said, adding the government needs to step in to avoid any delay in paddy harvesting to avoid possible adverse impact on yield from any rise in temperature before harvest.

## **WHEAT PRICES**

He suggested that the government should be hyperact-

ive during rabi sowing to ensure timely availability of fertilizers as there is no alternative for now to ensure a good wheat crop.

In Uttar Pradesh, farmers in some districts are waiting to decide whether to go for wheat or sugarcane, experts said and attributed it to a delay in the announcement of the State Advised Price (SAP) of sugarcane by the State government whereas the current wheat rates are highly lucrative.

## **STORAGE LEVELS**

In the 11 reservoirs in the northern region in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan, the storage level was at 62 per cent of their combined storage capacity of 19.836 billion cubic meters (BCM) as on November 7, whereas it was 76 per cent in the year-ago period.

The average storage of the last 10 years as on date is 76 per cent of capacity in the northern region. The storage levels in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are higher than normal as well as from year-ago levels.

Wheat, mustard and chana are mainly grown in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.