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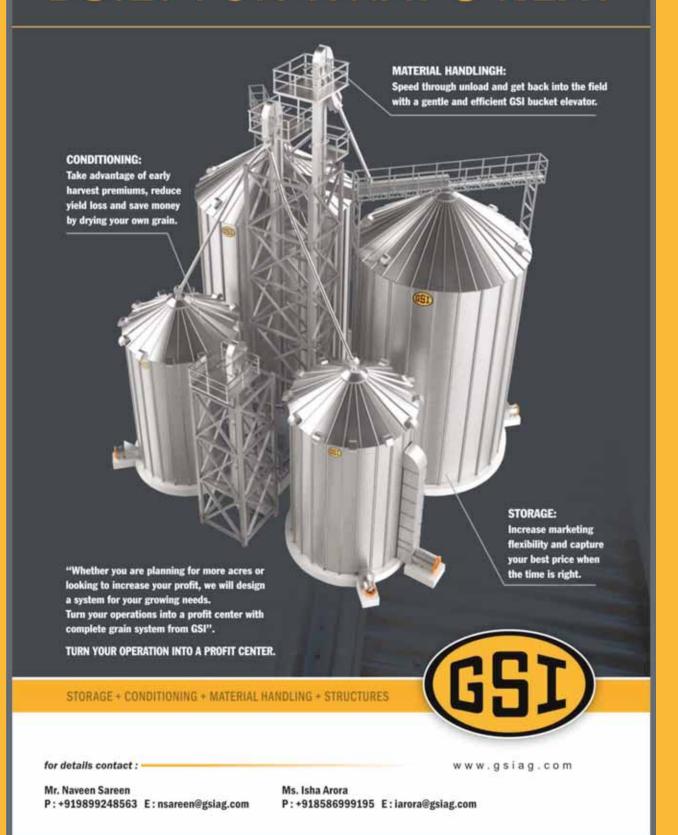








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Views Expressed in the articles are exclusively of the authors only.

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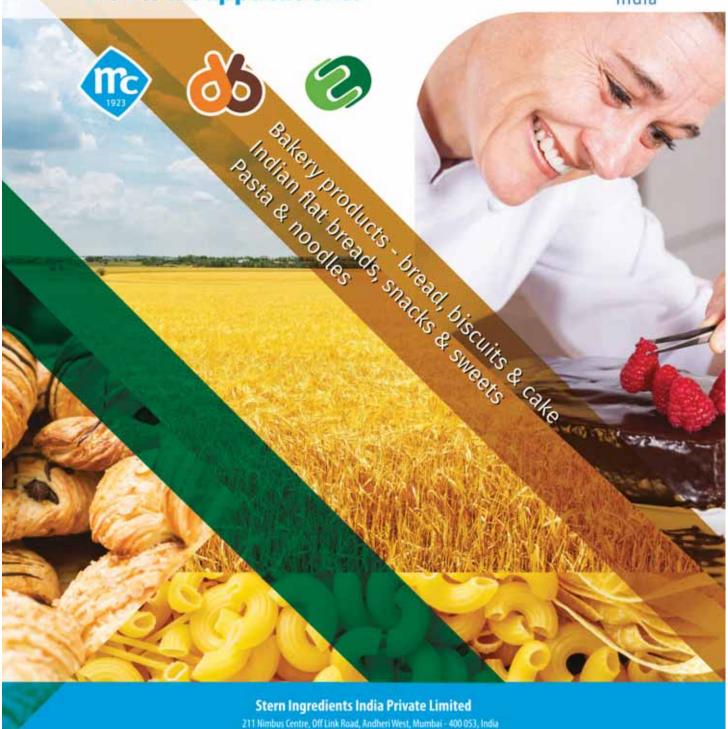
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 - Wheat Acreage up 7.5% rains boosting crop prospects
 - International Grain Council sees a smaller 2017/18 Wheat Harvest
 - India buys Australian wheat, Bangladesh takes Canadian
 - Fortified Mid-Day Meal by December 2019 to fight Malnutrition
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 - Brazil hikes wheat import forecast, after strong close to 2016
- India's Worsening Food Security
 - India became the top importer of Ukrainian Wheat
 - Co-milling of Wheat & Barley A Practical Solution for the Production of Heathy & Functional Flour
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Bakery Premix Technology	March 24-25, 2017	Greater Noida	http://assocom-india.com
Applied Baking Science (Biscuit Technologist: Module 2)	April 20-23, 2017	Greater Noida	http://assocom-india.com
Bread Technologist Module - 1 : Principles of Bread/Rolls	May 22-24, 2017	Greater Noida	http://assocom-india.com
Bread Technologist Module - 2 : Variety of Bread/Rolls	May 25-27, 2017	Greater Noida	http://aibtm.in

INTERNATIONAL EVENT CALENDER			
8th International Symposium Ready to Eat Foods	May 2017	Bhubneshwar	http://rte.assocom-india.com
International Bakery Seminar	May 2017	New Delhi	http://ibs.assocom-india.com
Global Milling Conference 2017	July 2017	New Delhi	http://gmc.assocom-india.com

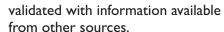
TOTAL FOODGRAINS PRODUCTION IN THE COUNTRY IS ESTIMATED AT RECORD 271.98 MT

- Total production of Rice is estimated at record 108.86
- Production of Wheat, estimated at 96.64 million tonnes is also a record

for 2016-17 released

 The 2nd Advance Estimates of production of major crops for 2016-17 have been released by the Department of Agriculture,

> Cooperation and Farmers Welfare on 15th February, 2017. The assessment of production of different crops is based on the feedback received from States and



- As per 2nd Advance Estimates, the estimated production of major crops during 2016-17 is as under:
- Foodgrains 271.98 million tonnes (record)
 - Rice 108.86 million tonnes (record)
 - Wheat 96.64 million tonnes (record)
 - Coarse Cereals 44.34 million

tonnes (record)

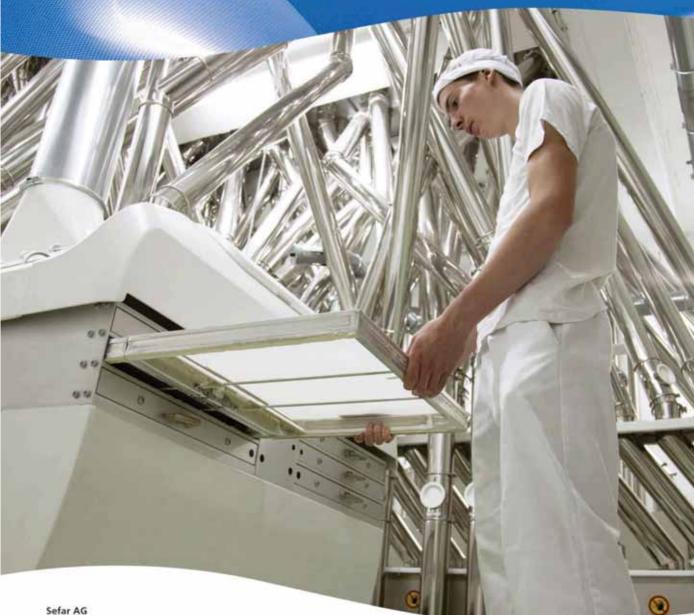
- Maize 26.15 million tonnes (record)
- Pulses 22.14 million tonnes (record)
- Gram 9.12 million tonnes
- Tur 4.23 million tonnes (record)
- Urad 2.89 million tonnes (record)
- Oilseeds 33.60 million tonnes (record)
 - Soyabean 14.13 million tonnes
 - Groundnut 8.47 million tonnes
 - Castorseed 1.74 million tonnes
- Cotton 32.51 million bales (of 170 kg each)
- Sugarcane 309.98 million tonnes
- As a result of very good rainfall during monsoon 2016 and various policy initiatives taken by the Government, the



- Production of Coarse
 Cereals estimated at a new record level of 44.34 million tonnes
- Total production of pulses during 2016-17 is estimated at record 22.14 million tonnes
- Total Oilseeds production in the country is estimated at record level of 33.60 million tonnes
- 2nd Advance Estimates of production of major crops

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- country has witnessed record foodgrain production in the current year. As per Second Advance Estimates for 2016-17, total Foodgrain production in the country is estimated at 271.98 million tonnes which is higher by 6.94 million tonnes than the previous record production of Foodgrain of 265.04 million tonnes achieved during 2013-14. The current year's production is also higher by 14.97 million tonnes than the previous five years' (2011-12 to 2015-16) average production of Foodgrains. The current year's production is significantly higher by 20.41 million tonnes than the last year's foodgrain production.
- 4. Total production of Rice is estimated at record 108.86 million tonnes which is also a new record. This year's Rice production is higher by 2.21 million tonnes than previous record production of 106.65 million tonnes achieved during 2013-14. It is also higher by 3.44 million tonnes than the five years' average Rice production of 105.42 million tonnes. Production of rice has increased significantly by 4.45 million tonnes than the production of 104.41 million tonnes during 2015-16.
- 5. Production of Wheat, estimated at 96.64 million tonnes is also a record. This year's wheat production is higher than the previous record production of 95.85 million tonnes achieved during 2013-14. Production

- of Wheat during 2016-17 is also higher by 4.03 million tonnes than the average wheat production. The current year's production is higher by 4.36 million tonnes as compared to Wheat production of 92.29 million tonnes achieved during 2015-16.
- 6. Production of Coarse Cereals estimated at a new record level of 44.34 million tonnes is higher than the average production by 3.00 million tonnes. It is higher than the previous record production of 43.40 million tonnes achieved during 2010-11 by 0.94 million tonnes. Current year's production it is also higher by 5.82 million tonnes as compared to their production of 38.52 million tonnes achieved during 2015-16.
- 7. As a result of significant increase in the area coverage and productivity of all major Pulses, total production of pulses during 2016-17 is estimated at 22.14 million tonnes which is higher by 2.89 million tonnes than the previous record production of 19.25 million tonnes achieved during 2013-14. Production of Pulses during 2016-17 is also higher by 4.50 million tonnes than their Five years' average production. Current year's production is higher by 5.79 million tonnes than the previous year's production of 16.35 million tonnes.
- 8. With an increase of 8.35 million tonnes over the previous year, total Oilseeds production in the country is estimated at record level of

- 33.60 million tonnes. It is higher by 0.85 million tonnes than the previous record production of 32.75 million tonnes achieved during 2013-14. The production of Oilseeds during 2016-17 is also higher by 4.34 million tonnes than the five year's average Oilseeds production. The current year's production is significantly higher than the production of 25.25 million tonnes during 2015-16.
- 9. Production of Sugarcane is estimated at 309.98 million tonnes which is lower by 38.46 million tonnes than the last year's production of 348.45 million tonnes.
- 10.Despite lower area coverage during 2016-17, higher productivity of Cotton has resulted into higher production of 32.51 million bales (of 170 kg each) as compared to 30.01 million bales during 2015-16.
- 11. Production of Jute & Mesta estimated at 10.06 million bales (of 180 kg each) is marginally lower than their production of 10.52 million bales during the last year.







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INDIA'S WHEAT IMPORTS TO SLOW AFTER MARCH ON FUMIGATION RULE CHANGE

India's wheat imports from Russia, France and Ukraine could come to a halt after March, as New Delhi has asked exporters to fumigate their cargoes with methyl bromide, an insect control gas banned in Europe and the Black Sea region. Currently, food shipments are fumigated at India's ports. After March 31, the plant quarantine authority will only accept cargoes fumigated with methyl bromide at the country of export. The decision is aimed at curbing wheat imports to help local farmers, who will harvest the new-season crop from next month. "Since the government does not apprehend any shortage, the idea is to limit imports when local wheat harvests are round the corner," said a government source with direct knowledge of the matter. The source did not wish to be identified as he is not authorised to talk to the media.

India has bought more than five million tonnes of wheat since mid-2016, its biggest annual purchase in a decade, after it turned to the world market to meet a supply shortfall left by two years of droughts. New Delhi is slowing imports ahead of the harvest in April and purchases in the months ahead will depend on production this year. The farm ministry last week

forecast wheat output at 96.64 million tonnes in 2017, up from 92.29 million tonnes in the previous year. "It is a non-tariff barrier, which will affect cargoes from Europe and Black Sea. But supplies, if any, will continue from Australia, which allows the use of methyl bromide," said Tejinder Narang, a trade analyst in New Delhi.

India probably does not need imports until October because of its local harvest, said a European trader. But both Moscow and Kiev are in talks with New Delhi to reach an agreement, traders in Russian and Ukraine said.



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USDA EXPECTS U.S. WHEAT PRODUCTION TO FALL 20 PERCENT YEAR-OVER-YEAR

The USDA held its annual Agricultural Outlook Forum Feb. 23 to 24 where the 2017 Grain and Oilseeds outlook was presented. USDA currently estimates 2016/17 (June to May) wheat acreage at 46.0 million acres (18.6 million hectares), a nine percent decrease from last year.

USDA reported that winter wheat plantings are down 10 percent with the HRW crop having the largest decrease. HRW plantings fell by 12 percent to 23.3 million acres (9.43 million hectares). Soft red winter (SRW) plantings decreased by 300,000 acres (121,000 hectares) to 5.7 million acres (2.3 million hectares).

USDA anticipates a 3 percent reduction in spring wheat plantings due to more favorable returns for other commodities. Currently, USDA's spring wheat and durum acreage projection stands at 13.6 million acres (5.51 million hectares).

Due to the expected reductions in planted area and a return to trend line yields, production will decrease to a projected 50.0 MMT.

If realized, that would be down 20 percent year-over-year. Based on trend yields, USDA expects the national average yield to fall to 47.1 bushels per acre (31.6 MT per hectare). USDA projects the wheat harvested-to-planted ratio will be 0.85, on par with 2016/17 and the 5-year average.

Though winter wheat planted area is at its lowest level in 108 years, growing conditions can greatly impact production levels as demonstrated in 2016/17.

In February, winter wheat ratings declined in Illinois, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota, according to the monthly USDA Crop Progress report.

yet the forecast expects total U.S. supplies to decrease in 2017/18. USDA forecasts 2017/18 U.S. supplies at 84.3 MMT, down 9 percent from 2016/17, still I percent more than the 5-year average, if realized.

Demand in the United States will decline in 2017/18, due to decreased feed usage. USDA



The biggest change was noted in Montana, where USDA rated 5 percent of winter wheat in good to excellent condition compared to 70 percent in January.

The percentage of Oklahoma wheat rated good to excellent increased to 43 percent, up from 33 percent in January.

USDA reported 15 percent of Oklahoma wheat in poor or very poor condition, down from 17 percent in January, but significantly higher than the I percent poor or very poor on the same date last year. USDA resumes weekly crop progress reporting on April 3.

Large carryover stocks will partially offset the projected lower production,

anticipates a 2 percent decrease in domestic use, from 33.9 MMT to 33.1 MMT.

Smaller U.S. supplies and competition from other origins are expected to constrain U.S. wheat exports.

USDA expects U.S. exports to decline slightly to 26.5 MMT, down 5 percent from the forecasted 2016/17 U.S. wheat export level of 27.9 MMT. U.S. ending stocks are forecast to decrease to 24.6 MMT, down 21 percent year-over-year but still 8 percent above the 5-year average.



COFCO AGRITO ENTER THE BRANDED WHEAT FLOUR AND MAIDA SEGMENT

The Indian arm of Cofco Agri, which recently entered the premium branded edible oil segment, plans to expand its portfolio by launching cotton seed, mustard and sunflower oils in the coming financial year.

Cofco India, which is the fullyowned subsidiary of global agromajor Cofco Agri, also plans to country. It also established 1,400 metric tonnes edible oils refining plant in Kandla, in Gujarat, in 2013.

After Cofco's acquisition of Noble Agri, the company is planning to expand its presence in the branded edible oils market in India in line with its global strategy where Cofco is present in the branded segment of many commodities. "For

other oils like mustard, cotton seed and sunflower oil, we plan to get the oilseed extraction, processing and packaging

done through third parties," Desai said.

He said that identifying them is taking time because of the strict quality parameters and also because of problems related to scale as most regional players don't have the scale to undertake large processing and also their quality standards are not up to the mark. "This strategy also makes sense as there are a lot of logistical problems involved in transporting unrefined oil from one point to another," Desai added.

India's branded edible oil market is highly fragmented, with major players like Bungee, ITC, Adani Wilmar and Ruchi Soya cornering a



enter the branded wheat flour and maida segments, but only after it gets a strong foothold in the highly fragmented edible oils market, as per its managing director, Samir Desai.

Cofco globally acquired the agriculture business of Noble Group for USD750 million in 2015, which also brought the Indian arm within its ambit. Prior to the acquisition, Noble Agri had a strong presence in the Indian agriculture trade market and was one of biggest bulk importers of edible oils, importing over a million tonnes of edible oil annually in the

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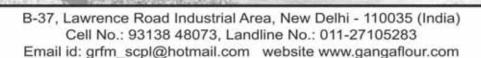
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bulk of the market. That apart, there is a host of local and regional players, who have their own small but dedicated markets. Together, the big players sell around 1-1.2 million tonnes of edible oils annually, while Cofco has managed to sell around 60,000-70,000 tonnes of oils every year since 2014, when it launched its first mass segment edible oils brand 'Nutrilive'. Haldiram Sweets, Parle, Britannia are the companies to which Cofco sells edible oils in bulk. In the 2015-16 financial year, Cofco India recorded a turnover of Rs 2,300 crore, which is expected to increase by almost 30 per cent in 2016-17.

Apart from importing edible oils

and selling through its dedicated brands, the company also imported around 0.5 million tonnes of other commodities in 2016-17, which included 0.3 million tonnes of wheat and 0.1 million tonnes of maize. In 2015-16, the Company's imported 0.2 million tonnes of other commodities.

"This part of our business is opportunity based and not regular unlike edible oils, where we every year import around 1.2 million tonnes of edible oils into India — 0.2 million tonnes for refining and selling through our brands, while the remaining is meant for institutional and bulk buyers," Desai said.

Regarding the Indian agriculture product market, Desai said that Indian private traders would continue to import wheat in the next financial year as well despite hopes of a good

harvest this rabi season as there pipelines are bone dry.

"So far, around 4.5 million tonnes of wheat has been imported by private traders in the country and till the end of March 31, 2017, another 0.5 million tonnes will be imported. But, I feel that in 2017-18, private traders would import another 2 million tonnes of wheat as stocks with them are still low." Desai said.

He said that total edible oil imports in the 2016-17 oil year, which started from November, is expected to fall marginally to around 14.9 million tonnes due to good mustard seed production in the current rabi season.











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WEEKLY INTERNATIONAL WHEAT PRICES

						1 /1/	1000	
	Conversion #	US Hard V #2 Ordinary Gulf IGC	#2 Ordinary Gulf IGC	Canadian #1 CWRS, 13.5 St. Lawrence	Argentinian Trigo Pan Up River F.O.B. IGC	Australian Standard White	US Soft Win USDA US\$/Bush 0.027216	#2 Gulf
		US\$/Ton	US\$/Ton	US\$/Ton	US\$/Ton	US\$/Ton		US\$/Ton
	Feb., 2016 AVG		205.25	225.25	194.00		5.1325	188.58
	Mar., 2016 AVG		207.00	224.80	192.40		5.1570	189.48
Т	Apr., 2016 AVG		200.75	231.50	198.75		5.2526	193.36
	May, 2016 AVG		193.20	226.60	202.00		5.1425	188.95
	Jun., 2016 AVG		198.00	225.75	210.00		5.0506	185.58
	Jul., 2016 AVG		187.75	209.50	210.00		4.5738	168.05
	Aug., 2016 AVG		188.20	203.20	215.00		4.2855	157.46
	Sept., 2016 AVG		188.25	202.75	201.25		4.2888	157.58
١	Oct., 2016 AVG		192.75	215.50	184.00		4.4550	163.69
ı	01-Nov-2016	231110 8	192.00	211.00	177.00		4.6675	171.50
	08-Nov-2016		193.00	208.00	177.00		4.6625	171.31
	15-Nov-2016		190.00	207.00	176.00		4.4650	164.06
	22-Nov-2016	No.	192.00	210.00	176.00		4.5475	167.09
	29-Nov-2016		186.00	212.00	176.00		4.3350	159.28
V	Nov., 2016 AVG		190.60	209.60	176.40		4.5355	166.65
Ν.	06-Dec-2016	4 4 7	179.00	218.00	167.00		4.3775	160.84
	13-Dec-2016		189.00	224.00	167.00		4.4850	164.79
	20-Dec-2016	3/41	188.00	219.00	168.00		4.3675	160.48
	27-Dec-2016		191.00	216.00	170.00		4.4350	162.96
N	Dec., 2016 AVG		186.75	219.25	168.00		4.4163	162.27
	03-Jan-2017		189.00	217.00	175.00		4.4800	164.61
	10-Jan-2017		199.00	229.00	175.00		4.6875	172.23
	17-Jan-2017		205.00	232.00	175.00		4.7750	175.45
	24-Jan-2017		208.00	229.00	179.00		4.8175	177.01
	31-Jan-2017		202.00	222.00	182.00		4.7725	175.36
	Jan., 2017 AVG		200.60	225.80	177.20		4.7065	172.93
	07-Feb-2017		206.00	222.00	185.00		4.8575	178.48
	14-Feb-2017		217.00	228.00	184.00		5.0400	185.19
	21-Feb-2017		211.00	223.00	188.00		4.9250	180.96
	28-Feb-2017		206.00	222.00	188.00		4.8125	176.83
	Feb., 2017 AVG		210.00	223.75	186.25		4.9088	180.36
	Please note that prices are sub	bject to revisions					Source : I	ESCG, FAO

NEW EDUCATIONAL WEBSITE EXPLORES PLANT BREEDING INNOVATION, GENE EDITING

What is plant breeding innovation? What do plant breeders do? And what could the latest breeding techniques like gene editing mean for the future of agriculture and society? Find answers to these questions and more at seedinginnovation.org, a new educational resource developed by the American Seed Trade Association.

The plant breeding innovation website is a multimedia platform that houses "Frequently Asked Questions, a blog, plant breeder profiles, videos, one-page summaries and other resources about the evolution and future of plant breeding.





MADHYA PRADESH EYES SECOND SPOT IN WHEAT OUTPUT

Madhya Pradesh is expecting to emerge as the second largest wheat producing state in India with a target of a record 20 million tonnes this year.

Madhya Pradesh is known for its high-protein Sharbati wheat variety and others like Durum, which are in demand for making pasta.

The state discontinued offering Rs 150 per kg bonus in 2014 following a central government order. Though the opposition Congress contests claims of the government on wheat procurement, the yield is increasing since 2007-2008.

In 2007, Madhya Pradesh's wheat yield was 1,643 kg per hectare. "It is now expected to reach 3,271 kg per hectare," said ML Mina, director, state farmers welfare and agriculture development.

"Farmers have provided more acreage to wheat. Sharbati, Durum and Lok-I fetch good returns. We will be the second largest wheat producing state since weather conditions are favourable this year," he added. Punjab and Uttar Pradesh are

the top two wheat producing states at present.

Madhya Pradesh has witnessed drought, frost, unseasonal rain and hailstorm during the past several seasons, yet farmers have managed to maintain productivity. "Farm mechanisation plays a key role. Despite odd weather, farmers are continuing with wheat," he said. Sehore, Ujjain, Shajapur, Shujalpur, Guna, Ashoknagar, Chhatarpur, Rewa, Morena, Bhopal, Raisen and Hoshangabad are the main wheat growing areas in Madhya Pradesh.

Year	Area (000 Ha)	Production (OOO MTs)	Yield (Kg/Ha)	
2007-08	4,101	6,737	1,643	
2008-09	4,010	7,280	1,815	
2009-10	4,471	8,873	1,985	
2010-11	4,645	9,227	1,986	
2011-12	5,261	14,544	2,764	
2012-13	5,261	16,518	2,943	
2013-14	5,613	17,478	2,925	
2014-15	6,002	18,480	3,079	
2015-16	5,911	18,410	3,115	
2016-17	6,422	21,006	3,271	
Source: State Agriculture Department				



NON-FUMIGATED WHEAT THREAT LOOMS LARGE

Consignments with false certificates could make their way to Indian shores, posing health risks. Non-fumigated wheat that could harm people eating it could be entering India despite government rules to not

allow such imports. The rules will be made tighter from March 31, but some importers have devised ways to bring in such wheat by producing fake fumigation documents. Wheat imports to India must be fumigated with methyl bromide at the port of origin.

If this is not done, consignments are fumigated at Indian ports. From March 31, fumigation will have to be done only at the port of origin.



330 LAKH MT OF WHEAT TO BE PROCURED DURING RABI MARKETING SEASON 2017-18

In the conference of the Food Secretaries of the States held here under the Chairpersonship of Ms. Preeti Sudan, Secretary, the Department of Food & Public Distribution, Government of India, the prospects of production of wheat and procurement estimate for Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2017-18 were discussed.

In consultation with the States, it was decided to procure 330.00 lakh MT of wheat during RMS 2017-18, which is considerably more in comparison with the last season actual procurement of 229.61 lakh MT.

The State-wise break-up of the estimate of wheat procurement during RMS 2017-18 is as follows:

SI. No.	State	Estimate for Wheat
		Procurement (lakh MT)
I.	Punjab	115.00
2.	Haryana	75.00
3.	Madhya Pradesh	85.00
4.	Uttar Pradesh	30.00
5.	Rajasthan	17.50
6.	Bihar	5.00
7.	Uttarakhand	1.50
8.	Gujarat	0.50
9.	Other States	0.50
	Total	330.00

In the Conference, the estimate for procurement of paddy grown in Rabi/Winter/Summer crop of Kharif Marketing Season 2016-17 for various States were also done in terms of rice. The estimate is 50 lakh MT with State-wise break-up given below. This estimate is over and above the estimate of 330 lakh MT set for Kharif crop of paddy for KMS 2016-17, for which the procurement operations are going on and the paddy procurement in KMS 2016-17 in terms of rice has already reached to the level of 292.31 lakh MT as reported on 15.02.2017, which is nearly 28 lakh MT higher than the procurement of 264.53lakh MT by the corresponding date in previous year, i.e., KMS 2015-16.

Estimate for paddy procurement in terms of Rice for winter/summer Crop in KMS 2016-17:-

SI. No.	State	Estimate for Paddy
		Procurement in terms
		of Rice (lakh MT)
I.	Andhra Pradesh	13.00
2.	Telangana	15.00
3.	Odisha	7.00
4.	Tamil Nadu	5.00
5.	Kerala	1.00
6.	West Bengal	8.00
7.	Assam	0.25
8.	Maharashtra	0.75
	Total	50.00



FOOD FORTIFICATION NOT A MAGIC BULLET

Though fortified foods are promoted as an effective means to combat malnutrition, they have been embroiled in controversy in the past.

The Supreme Court order on sourcing natural food locally

instead of relying on artificiallyfortified commercial products is hailed by experts.

On January 2, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued draft guidelines prescribing standards for fortification of salt, oil, milk, vanaspati (vegetable oil), atta (wheat flour), maida (white flour) and rice.

The food regulator sought suggestions and objections to the guidelines within a month after which the draft regulations



will be taken into consideration.

Fortification means adding key vitamins and minerals like iron, iodine, zinc, Vitamin A and D to staple foods to improve their nutritional content. These nutrients may or may not have been originally present in the food before processing.

"This should not be made mandatory because fortification by its very nature incentivises centralised production and procurement of food," said Biraj Patnaik, Principal Adviser to the Commissioners of the Supreme Court.

Patnaik added that he had no fundamental objections to the concept of fortification, if it has been proven that the vehicle used for fortification provides for sufficient bio-availability and bio-absorption.

"My argument is that preference should be equally for promoting dietary diversity as the means for dealing with micro-nutrient deficiency rather than emphasising on fortification."

According to the draft guidelines, the regulator will promote fortified foods in the country and take steps to encourage production, manufacture, distribution, sale

and consumption.

It will also advise and promote the use of fortified food in government-funded programmes on distribution of food. Though fortified foods are promoted as an effective means to combat malnutrition, they have been

embroiled in controversy in the past.

Even the Supreme Court, in its order dated October 2004, had said that private contractors should not be used for supply of nutrition in Anganwadis and preferably, ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) funds should be spent by making use of village communities, self-help groups and Mahila Mandals for buying grains and preparation of meals.

Commercialisation of malnutrition

ICDS is India's flagship programme and the world's largest scheme on early childhood care and development.

The scheme serves children under six years as well as pregnant and lactating women. Under this programme, six-year-olds and younger children are entitled to 500 calories and 12-15 grams of protein.

Severely malnourished children are entitled to 800 calories and 20-25 grams of protein regularly, while pregnant and lactating women are entitled to 600 calories of energy and 18-20 grams of protein a day.

This supplementary nutrition is distributed in the form of micronutrient fortified food and/or energy dense food as take-home rations.

The Supreme Court order was hailed by experts who advocated inclusion of locally-sourced natural food in place of artificially-fortified commercial products. Banning private vendors was also seen as an effective way to stop commercialisation of malnutrition.

Patnaik recommends a wholesome approach to tackle malnutrition which deals with multiple aspects, including junk food consumption and micronutrient deficiency.

"Government and policy efforts should simultaneously attack both problems — reducing dietary diversity and increasing consumption of unhealthy, ultraprocessed food; as well as fortification. It should not be seen as a magic bullet," he said.





BIHAR TO WITNESS RECORD WHEAT PRODUCTION: RAI

Bihar Agriculture Minister Ram Vichar Rai today announced in the Assembly that the state is expected to witness a record production of paddy and wheat, despite slashing of funds by the Centre.

The department has made significant achievements due to successful implementation of agriculture roadmaps - first, from 2008 to 2012, and then again from 2012 to 2017, he said.

Due to this, the state is expected to witness a record 84.87 lakh ton of paddy production in 2016-17, he said adding that a record wheat

production is also expected this year because of favourable weather.

The government is preparing to roll out the "third agriculture roadmap for 2017-2022, the minister said after in reply to the debate in the Assembly on his departments Rs 2644.74 crore budget demand which was passed later amid boycott by opposition NDA members.

Rai said that the Centre slashed funds for schemes relating to agriculture and the state got only Rs 80 crore in two years out of Rs 3094 crore announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the agriculture package.

The Centre has reduced its share up to 60% from 100% in Rashtriya Krishi

Vikas Yojana and Rashtriya Khadya Suraksha 6Mission Yojana in 2015-16, he said.

The Centre also reduced to 60% from its earlier share of 85% in the Rashtriya Bagwani Mission Yojana, Rai said.

A cut motion moved by BJP member Arun Kumar Sinha and others was rejected.

Sinha demanded that the Chief Minister include agriculture schemes as part of his Seven resolves.

Later, BJP members led by Prem Kumar boycotted the governments reply.



EL NINO SEEN ARRIVING TOO LATE TO HURT INDIA'S MONSOON RAINS

India's monsoon may escape the effects of a possible El Nino as the event that can bring dry weather to the world's top cotton grower and second-biggest wheat and sugar producer.

"Mostly it may not have any impact on rains" because the El Nino probably won't develop until later this year, said D.S. Pai, head of the long-range forecasting division of India Meteorological Department. "As of now it's not indicating. There will be clarity when more information is available in April and May."

Forecasters globally have been increasing odds that El Nino will develop this year as temperatures in the Pacific Ocean rise. Australia's Bureau of Meteorology issued an El Nino "watch" on 28 February, indicating the likelihood of the pattern forming this year is about 50%.

Six climate models suggest thresholds may be reached by July. The US Climate Prediction Center raised its odds to 50% by the end of the year, while Malaysia puts a 50% chance of development between September and November. The 2015-16 El Nino was the strongest since the record event of 1997-98.



A late El Nino may miss India's monsoon season that runs from June through September, accounting for more than 70% of rain and watering more than half of all farmland. Rainfall was normal in 2016 following two years of deficit that curbed output of sugar cane, wheat and

pulses. The good monsoon rains encouraged farmers to expand crop planting and the government predicts India's grain harvest will reach an all-time high on record rice, wheat and pulses production.

Farmers are watching the rain and temperature outlooks, especially for wheat crops that are to be harvested from this month. Wheat production will probably fall short of a government forecast, spurring imports, according to a Bloomberg survey published last month.

India's Meteorological
Department said last week that
above-normal temperatures are
likely across India from March to

May after 2016 was the warmest year since 1901. While weak La Nina conditions have been prevailing over the Pacific Ocean since July, forecasts indicate the pattern will weaken and reach neutral levels during the premonsoon season, it said.

"Any temperature that is above normal will have a direct bearing on

the crop, be it north or central India," said G.P. Sharma, a former president of India's Skymet Weather Services Pvt. "The crop needs cooler temperatures and a spell of rain also. The combination of the two decides the size of grain and yield."

Rain is likely in parts of wheatgrowing states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan this week, according to India's weather department. Temperatures rose in the north parts of the country in the second half of February, it said.





INDIAN SCIENTIST DISCOVERS MOLECULE TO BOOST WHEAT YIELD

A new molecule that can make the wheat crop resistant to climatic stress and boost yields by 50 per cent has been discovered by an Indian researcher.

The discovery assumes importance as average wheat yield is lower at around 3 tonnes per hectare in India, the world's second largest grower after China.

India's average yield is 39 per cent lower than China. The molecule is water soluble and can be sprayed on wheat plant or injected to the root of the plant.

It can also be used on other

crops like rice, maize and potato.

The new molecule has been discovered by researcher Ram Sagar Misra from Shiv Nadar University with the help of two other researchers, Benjamin Davis and Matthew Paul, from the Oxford University and the UK-based Rothamsted Research, respectively.

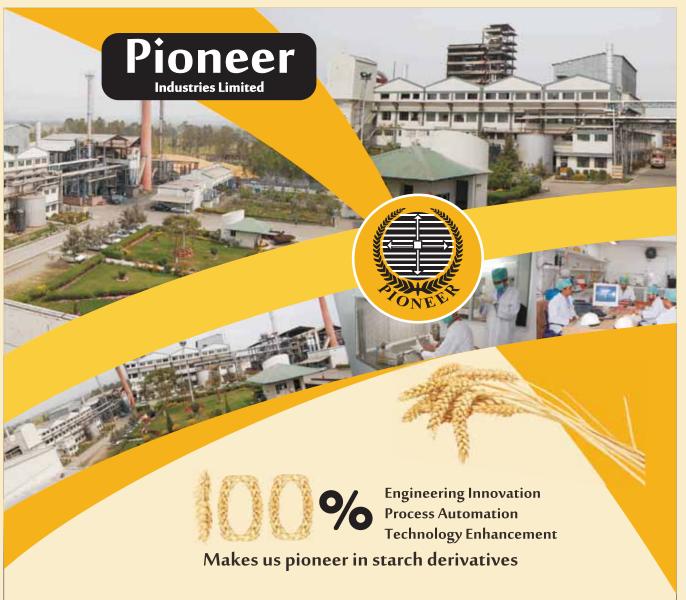
"The molecule have been patented in the US, the UK and the EU by the University of Oxford. We are now in talks with three agro-chemical companies including one Israeli firm for commercialisation," said Misra.

Not toxic

The molecule is non-toxic to the plant and does not get into the wheat grain. This new approach developed through the biotechnology-enabled process is known as "chemical intervention in the plant signalling approach", he said.







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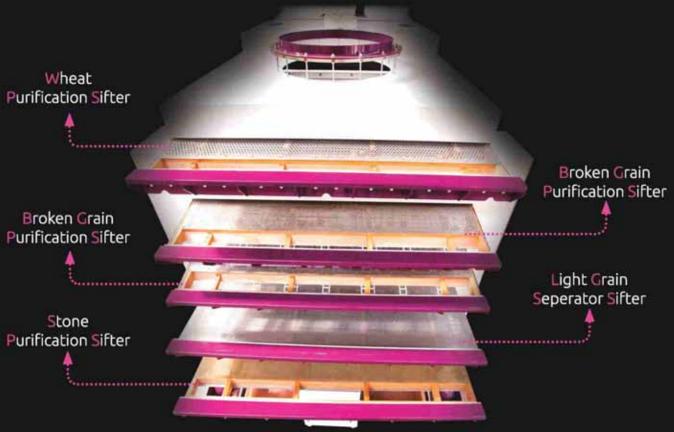
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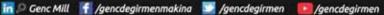












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