

# Govt targets 12 mt wheat exports next fiscal

Centre looks to tap the opportunity offered by the Russia-Ukraine war

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The Centre has set a target to export at least a million tonnes (mt) of wheat every month next fiscal as it wants the country to emerge as a reliable source of the grain's shipments both in "quantity and quality". It wants to tap the current opportunities provided by the Russia-Ukraine conflict to the optimum.

This sets a target of 12 mt for wheat exports next fiscal. This fiscal, the foodgrain's exports are likely to be at a record of over 7.5 mt. The US Department of Agriculture has projected the country's wheat exports this fiscal at 10 mt. A meeting of exporters and officials of various ministries such as Railways, Shipping, Commerce and Agriculture was

chaired by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday to remove all impediments in speeding up the shipments. A task force has also been formed for this purpose.

At the same time, the Centre is now prepared to prune its wheat procurement target under the minimum support price (MSP) scheme by 10 mt. For the rabi marketing season starting April 1, the Food Ministry had set a procurement target of 44 mt.

## Removal of mandi tax

The meeting was held on the heels of India expanding its wheat export basket with Sudan and Thailand joining the list of importers buying Indian wheat. Russia and Ukraine make up nearly 30 per cent of the wheat export market. The conflict in eastern Europe between these two nations has resulted in shipments of commodities such as wheat, corn, sunflower oil and barley coming to a halt.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

At the meeting, Chouhan assured to remove mandi tax in the States as it would make Indian wheat more competitive, the sources said. Since MP takes the lead in growing the best quality Sharbati wheat variety, Chouhan wants to encash it politically as the State is due to go in for assembly poll next year, sources said. Social media is flooded with messages highlighting his efforts on wheat export. He has also called a separate meeting with exporters on March 29 at Bhopal.

All commodities (except de-regulated fruits and vegetables) in Madhya Pradesh are charged at 1 per cent mandi tax in addi-

tion to 0.2 per cent 'Nirashit Cess', both inside or outside mandis.

## Maintaining standards

Speaking at the event, which was organised by Food Ministry and also joined by many Indian ambassadors virtually, Food and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal stressed on quality and asked exporters to strictly follow the best standards so that Indian product leaves a mark in global trade. He said the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) would head a task force to coordinate with all agencies and a helpline will be operational for the exporters, sources said.

Lauding the efforts of the government, an exporter, who was present at the event that lasted for over an hour, said: "If in the first three-four months at least 5 mt exports are completed, the target will be achieved as this is the most crucial period with the entire harvest reaching the mar-

ket during April-May. The government has to find space at ports make available rakes and these are all challenging issues in view of priorities accorded to fertiliser and foodgrains (of FCI)."

Goyal is also learnt to have asked APEDA to take trade delegations to countries where there are potential so that exporters get an opportunity to meet buyers there, sources said. APEDA is likely to organise such a trip in April-May, sources said. The government will also soon prepare short-term strategies to meet the objective.

On the procurement front, officials of the Food Ministry have informed that the government may miss the target of 44 mt in 2022-23 and there will not be any problem if it touches 35 mt. The FCI had 23.4 mt of stock as on March 1, whereas the annual normal offtake on account of distribution through ration shops is 21-22 mt (excluding PMGKAY, OMSS and other welfare schemes).