

Rain deficit to be a boon for wheat crop: Expert

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Pune: While an active western disturbance is currently bringing wet weather in north India, this is not likely to be enough to dent the overall rain deficit in the country during January, which currently stands at 25%.

December 2022 had also recorded 13.6 mm rainfall, the lowest monthly quantum for the month since 2016.

The rain deficit may impact the winter crops, experts said. Rajbir Yadav, scientist, ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute,

told **TOI**, “Most of the areas (more than 95 per cent) under wheat in India are irrigated. However, moderate rain will prolong the cool period, which will be a boon for wheat crop production.”

Timely and light winter rain economises wheat production by saving costs on irrigation, which is especially helpful for farmers who have fewer irrigation facilities at their disposal, Yadav said. “Rain water also has nitrate, which is rewarding for crop growth,” he added.

When winters are dry, instances of frost hitting crops increase. “Some mus-

tard crops suffered frost attack a few days ago due to lack of rainfall and extreme cold. This damaged the mustard crop to some extent, particularly in Rajasthan and Mahendragarh district of Haryana,” Yadav said.

Devesh Shukla, a farmer from Ardaya village in Agra, said, “Wheat crops in areas of Uttar Pradesh which do not have irrigation facilities have been affected by less rainfall this season. Nearly 10-20% of wheat crops in such areas may have been affected. Potato crops were also hit by leaf scorch, which is pri-

marily caused by cold and dry winters.”

Rana Singh, who is heading the nature farming initiatives at Shramik Bharti — a not-for-profit, grassroots development organization — told **TOI** that rainfall during winter was not only deficient but also a little delayed in January, which was likely to affect crops like wheat and potatoes.

India had received good winter rain in the month of January consecutively since 2019, when it was recorded at 18.5 mm, followed by 28.3 mm in 2020, 20.2 mm in 2021 and 39.5 mm in 2022.