

Bumper wheat crop of 26 million tonnes expected this season Pakistan

Around 26 million tons of wheat is expected to harvest during the current season a figure, little short of annual target. It is the highest ever as increased fertilizer decreases the low acreage impact.

The News surveys with farmers and agriculture experts across Punjab found that this year's crop output may be close to 26 million tons against the target of 26.46 million tons despite lower acreage, water shortage and late sowing associated with marketing-related issues of sugarcane and cotton crops.

"If proven right, it will be the record output of wheat ever harvested in the country," a senior official said. The expected crop production is equal or near to what was forecast by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (26 million tons) and United States Department of Agriculture (26.5 million tons).

Agriculture experts termed the highest fertilizer consumption as a major factor behind the healthy crop outlook. Above-average temperature and lingering water shortage are, however, still a source of concern for the farmers who fear that production might be hurt if the trend continues in the coming days.

A senior official of a Punjab agriculture department said despite 400,000



acres less plantation this year, wheat crop is likely to be around the last year's level.

"We are assuming about 19 million tons of wheat production (in the province) this year," Zafar Yab Haider, director general at the provincial Agriculture Extension Department said. "Water shortage has been one of the biggest sources of concern, but two timely rains during dry period helped a lot in mitigating adverse effects of water shortage."

Shafiq Ur Rehman, a leading seed breeder from Khanewal said healthy crop with good yields are expected across Punjab. "High temperature during the grain formation stage causes forced crop maturity but we had a plenty of sunshine hours in wheat season with cool nights, which have good positive effect on crop," Rehman added.

Engro signs to revolutionize Dairy as industry struggles

Engro Foods has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Greenland Zone, which provides farm machinery and financial assistance for the agricultural sector. Engro Foods is a leading enterprise in packaged milk and dairy products.

The objective of this collaboration is to enhance the productivity of dairy farms by facilitating the acquisition of modern farm machinery and equipment and imparting valuable training to the farmers for capacity-building.

Deployment of modern technology promises to be a game-changer for Pakistan's traditional farming sector. This will ensure the production and distribution of quality milk for the masses, while increasing the profitability and prosperity of the agricultural sector too.

This alliance will enable Engro Foods and Greenland Zone to empower the local farmers, by guiding them towards farm-mechanization which in turn will lead to an increase in quality and quantity of dairy production. Thus, the two organizations have pledged to nurture a healthy and prosperous society.

Engro will provide consultancy and deeper insights after evaluating the farmers' technological needs. They will then recommend the right machinery needed for higher profitability for the farmers. Greenland Zone will then facilitate the acquisition, installation, training and maintenance of the recommended equipment.



Farmers Advised to Complete Sugarcane Cultivation with approved seed variety

The agriculture experts have advised the farmers to start the cultivation of sugarcane crops and complete it by mid of March to get bumper yield

A spokesman for the agriculture extension department said that farmers should cultivate approved varieties of sugarcane over maximum space because its production not only plays a pivotal role in meeting sugar requirements but it also helps the growers in mitigating their financial issues. Among the approved varieties of sugarcane include CP-77-400, CP-72-2086, CP-43-33, CPF-243, HSF-240, SPSP-26, SPF-213, SPF-245 and COJ-84, he said and added that more information could be obtained from agriculture helpline.

Smart Phones to be provided to farmers by Punjab government

The smartphones will be handed out to registered farmers soon which will help them ascertain when to water crops and how much fertilizer to use.

"These smartphones will enable us to grow crops in the right quantity and in the best possible manner," said one farmer. "We will be able to know how much fertilizer to use and whether or not rain will be likely during the day."

As many as 600,000 smartphones will be distributed among farmers. During the first phase of this scheme smartphones will be handed out to those farmers who are registered and are being provided interest-free loans according to an official of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB). In the later stage they will branch out to farmers who are not seeking interest-free loans.

The experiment of providing smartphones to farmers has proven to be successful in India and Kenya. Agricultural experts claim that the use of technology will not only improve living standards of farmers but would also boost the country's economy.



Tea imports go up by 9.6% in three quarters

The imports of tea into the country witnessed 9.65% increase during the first three quarters of the ongoing fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year. Pakistan imported tea worth \$411.231 million during July-March (2017-18) against the imports of \$450.932 million in July-March (2016-17), according to the latest data of PBS.

Overall food group imports into the country witnessed increase of 4.51% during the period under review by growing from \$4.526 billion last year to \$4.730 billion during the ongoing fiscal year, the data revealed.

Turkey gifts pilot black tea processing plant to Pakistan

PARC being the apex body of agricultural research and development in Pakistan is coordinating with international partners to promote and coordinate research activities. Government of Pakistan and Government of Turkey have been actively collaborating in various sectors, particularly agriculture sector.

This was said by Dr. Yusuf Zafar, T.I, Chairman PARC on the occasion of "Inauguration of Pilot Turkish Black Tea Processing Plant at NTHRI, Shinkiari". He said there is a lot of potential for Pakistan to take benefit from the Turkish experience.

He further added that, introduction of high value agriculture in Mansehra is a step towards this director wherein tea

plantation was introduced to improve farmers' income. PARC has identified some better varieties for promotion to operate this plant according to the future needs. He said that Tea Processing Plant is installed now having processing capacity of 5 ton/day.

Ministry seeks budget proposals to safeguard dairy farmers

The federal Ministry of Food Security and Research has sought budget proposals from stakeholders on regulation of milk powder imports, as it adversely affects domestic production of fresh milk.

The ministry has sought budget proposals to safeguard the interest of dairy farmers, which will be presented in a meeting scheduled to be held in April in Islamabad.

In this regard, the ministry has asked representatives of Pakistan Dairy Association (PDA) and Corporate Dairy Farmers Association (CDFA) to attend the meeting, which will be chaired by Minister for Food Security.

Apart from these two bodies, other stakeholders, including dairy farmers, industry and academia will present their respective point of views on regulating import of milk powder, the official said.

The meeting is a follow up of an earlier meeting held in March, in which Pakistan Dairy Association presented budget proposals for 2018/19.

Apart from other proposals, PDA highlighted the issue of lowering duty on



import of milk powder and whey powder, which stands at 45 %.

Despite having one of the largest animal population-base and huge local production of milk, imports of powders indicate manipulation in the value chain, resulting in net economic loss for producers and consumers alike, he added.

The use of skimmed milk and whey powders in the dairy processing industry, dairy products, biscuits, sweet making, confectionary industry and tea whitening segment has deprived the local farmers from getting right price of the milk.

As per the latest trade data, milk and whey powders import has almost doubled in three years' time - from 2013 to 2016. Pakistan has spent over \$175 million in importing these powders only in 2016, while \$692 million have been spent in the last five years on import of milk and whey powders.

Owing to low international prices of these commodities and easy imports into Pakistan, the interest of farming communities are at stake, the official said.

The official also said these developments are bound to make Pakistan deficient in milk production in the years to come by promoting manipulation in dairy supply chain due to rampant import of dry milk and whey powder.

This vicious circle would increase rural unemployment and weakening food security in the country in addition to compromising the kids' nutrition who were already malnourished due to less availability of quality fresh milk.

Dairy Farmers Urge Ban on Import of Dry Milk Powder

Dairy and livestock farmers have shown concern over import and sale of dry milk in the country, stressing the government to ban import of dairy items and instead take serious steps to enhance milk and meat production in the country.

While speaking at a news conference at Peshawar Press Club, Dairy and Cattle Farmers Association (DCFA) president Shakir Gujjar said that the dairy sector had plunged into severe crisis due to apathy on the part of the government due to which farmers were forced to slaughter their cattle. He said that the crisis resulting out of wrong policies of the government was pushing large numbers of small dairy farmers out of business.

He said that as many as 200 dairy farmers had gone bankrupt in Karachi alone, while nearly 100 farmers migrated from Sindh to Punjab under prevailing circumstances. He added that hundreds of tons of skimmed and whey milk powder had been imported during the last five years in the country, which is a growing threat to local dairy farmers. He also said that sale of synthetic milk was on the rise.

Agricultural policy for Pakistan

Government completing its constitutionally mandated five-year term in the 2nd quarter of the current year which proved to be a bleak period for the farmers of the country. The government made lot of claims to revitalize the agricultural

sector of the country, yet it was without any concrete strategy to implement the measures listed in it. Consequently, government could not formulate an agricultural policy during its entire tenure.

About the agricultural sector the manifesto issued by the government promised to "accelerate the pace of agriculture development and to reduce poverty by diversifying the rural economy to expand non-farm employment" by undertaking the "following specific programmes and measures for the integrated development of agriculture, livestock, fisheries, horticulture and forestry "To implement the above-mentioned promise, government's manifesto contained an exhaustive wish list such as declaring agriculture as an industry, turning terms of trade in its favour, focussing on small farmers etc.

Soon elections dates will be announced and with that the political parties will be announcing their manifestoes. Maybe they like to pick up some points from the following:

First things first. Thanks to rapid population growth, economic development and urbanization, valuable arable land is being converted at alarming rates for commercial nonfarm uses. Infrastructural development, though necessary is also reducing the area under cultivation often forcing farmers onto shrinking and more marginal lands. All these developments necessitate the formulation of a national land use policy by suitably amending the industrial zoning and urban planning policies to save the arable land going under brick and mortar.

Secondly, the land reforms every political party invariably promises in its manifesto is merely an eyewash. Distributing the state land to the landless farmers from the dwindling pool of state lands, most of which are now not worth cultivation because of water scarcity, is more of the same every regime has been doing in the last six decades since independence. They should now concentrate on agrarian reforms which is a broader and more relevant concept in the changed circumstances. Agrarian reforms, as distinct from land reforms, are meant to transform entire socio-economic landscape of the rural areas by introducing

fundamental socioeconomic changes with the objective of increasing the productivity of farm and nonfarm operations.

Thirdly, add a new article to the Constitution to make the 'Right to Food' a fundamental right of every citizen within a reasonable time frame. This needs to be implemented by any party which comes into power. The new government at the centre should formulate a comprehensive food security policy in consultation with all the provinces because after the 18th constitutional amendment, it is the provinces who call 'the shots and not the federation.

Fourthly, food security is a multidimensional concept. Besides ensuring availability of food by increasing its indigenous production and importing when needed, food security also entails evolving an equitable system of food procurement and distribution, improving the access of poor households to food at affordable prices and developing a transparent system of safety nets for very poor households.

Fifthly, we must strive to achieve an average agricultural growth rate of at least 5 % per annum- the rate crucial for ensuring 8 % overall economic growth necessary to absorb the new entrants to the labour market. Given the resource constraint, particularly of land base, the only option available is to improve the farm productivity.

Sixthly, to improve agriculture performance in Pakistan we must put great emphasis on agricultural mechanization, innovation and technology-dissemination also. Most of the technology being scale-neutral, greater mechanization, not merely tractorisation, will not only increase productivity and add value but also reduce the yield gaps existing at different levels.

Seventhly, one of the main reasons for our low farm yields is the mismatch between the agro-ecological zones and the crops sown there. There is need for greater specialization across agro-ecological zones with Potohar, KP, GB, AJK specializing in production of fruits and vegetables while leaving wheat, rice cotton etc, for the plains of Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan. Cultivation of sugarcane should be restricted to the coastal areas if

there is sufficient availability of water. It will not only increase the overall production but also help in their proper marketing and agro-processing.

Keeping in view the importance of water for economic security of Pakistan, particularly when climate change is compounding the already dire situation, there is an urgent need to formulate a long-term strategy for increasing the water availability, reducing its losses and using it more efficiently.

Pakistan Rice Exports Register 27% Growth 12 March 2018

Rice exports from Pakistan have seen sizeable growth of overall 27% at the end of February, 2018.

Rice exports for fiscal year 2017-18 (July to Feb 2018) a significant growth has been observed as compared to last fiscal year 2016-17 (July to Feb 2017). This year the country exported total 2.59 million metric tons of rice amounting to US\$ 1.224 billion, whereas last fiscal year in the same period and had exported 2.27 Million Metric Tons of rice amounting to US\$.961 Million, which shows over all a significant growth of 27% in terms values and 14% in terms of quantity.

Further with the coordination of REAP Office Bearers with Trade Development Authority of Pakistan and Customs, value of rice export trade is showing improvement which is a good sign for our country. Further, REAP members are putting their untiring efforts and aggressive marketing to increase the rice exports and to earn valuable foreign exchange for our beloved country Pakistan.

.In 8 months of current fiscal year, the country exported more than 100,000 Metric tons of rice amounting to US\$ 67 Million. Kenya is the largest buyer of Pakistani Non Basmati rice and during eight months of this fiscal year (July to Feb 2018) Pakistan exported 323,000 Metric Tons of rice amounting

to US\$ 118 Million. China is the 2nd largest destination for Pakistani Non Basmati rice.

With hybrid seeds, rice output can rise 2 million tons

High-yielding hybrid rice is going to cross 50% of the total area planted with paddy in the next three years from the current range of 25% to 30%, which will increase the output by 2 million tons, said Guard Rice Research and Services CEO Shahzad Ali Malik.

Plantation of hybrid rice seeds in Pakistan is being spearheaded by national seed companies, mainly in collaboration with Chinese firm Guard Agri.

Several multinational seed companies like Monsanto, Pioneer, Syngenta and Bayer did try to introduce hybrid rice seeds, but failed to outperform the national seed companies, Malik claimed.

Their varieties were less rewarding for the farmers due to insignificant increase in production while seed cost was high compared to what local seed companies were offering, he said while speaking to members of the Agriculture Journalists Association after the oath-taking ceremony of a new body.

Malik, who was founding president of the Seed Association of Pakistan and ex-president of the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan, said with efforts of local scientists, the role of private sector in seed research and development was growing day by day.

In hybrid rice, around 90% of the area planted with the long-grain seed lies in Sindh while the remaining 10% is cultivated in south Punjab. ♦

