

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE & FARMERS WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FARMERS WELFARE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 435
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 22ND JULY 2025

PRODUCTION AND IMPORT OF CEREALS

435. SHRI SUDAMA PRASAD:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्री be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has taken cognisance of the widening 'cereal gap', wherein India is simultaneously reporting record domestic production of cereals while doubling its cereal imports in the last decade, as highlighted by Down To Earth dated 3/01/2025;
- (b) whether this contradiction points to serious lapses in procurement, storage and supply chain management and whether any audit has been conducted on post-harvest losses and export–import policy distortions;
- (c) the extent to which free trade agreements and cereal exports have disrupted domestic price stability and compromised food security for lower-income populations;
- (d) whether the Government plans to revamp its approach to public distribution, ensure domestic prioritisation over exports and protect farmers from market volatility; and
- (e) if not, the rationale for continuing with a policy regime that undermines self-sufficiency in essential grains?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE
कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण राज्य मंत्री (SHRI RAMNATH THAKUR)

- (a): Government of India continues to maintain self-sufficiency in major cereals, particularly rice and wheat, which have seen no significant increase in import volumes over the past decade. In fact, India remains a net exporter of both rice and wheat in recent years.

Domestic cereal production has remained strong, with total output rising from approximately 234.87 million tonnes in 2014–15 to over 308.05 million tonnes in 2023–24. This includes record production levels of both rice and wheat. According to the Third Advance Estimates, cereal production is expected to reach an all-time high of 328.72 million tonnes in 2024–25. In the same fiscal year (2024–25), cereal exports are projected at 20.90 million tonnes, underscoring the country's surplus and robust export capacity. In contrast, cereal imports are estimated at just 1.36 million tonnes—negligible in comparison to overall domestic production and exports. The marginal increase in cereal imports during 2024–25 is primarily due to higher maize imports, which stand at approximately 0.97 million metric tonnes. This rise is driven by factors other than food security.

The Government's cereal policies are aligned with the dual objectives of food security and agricultural diversification under the broader vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The Government remains committed to maintaining self-sufficiency in essential cereals while responsibly managing demand from emerging sectors like biofuels. Continuous review and course correction are integral to ensuring procurement efficiency, storage adequacy, and equitable food access across the country.

(b): The Department of Food & Public Distribution takes care of procurement, storage and supply chain management of Central Pool stock through the implementing agency, Food Corporation of India (FCI).

The requirement of Storage capacity in FCI depends upon the level of procurement, requirement of buffer norms and public distribution system operations for Rice and Wheat mainly. FCI continuously assesses and monitors the storage capacity and based on the storage gap assessment, storage capacities are created/hired through following schemes: -

1. Private Entrepreneurs Guarantee (PEG) Scheme
2. Central Sector Scheme (CSS) 2017-25 (culminated on 31.03.2025)
3. Construction of Silos under Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode
4. Hiring of godown from Central Warehousing Corporation/State Warehousing Corporations (SWCs)/State Agencies
5. Hiring of godown through Private Warehousing Scheme (PWS).
6. Creation of godowns under Asset Monetization
7. Covered and Plinth (CAP) Hiring Scheme -2025
8. Modified PEG scheme for North Eastern & Hilly states with longer guarantee period of 15 years

As on 01.07.2025, total Covered Storage Capacity available with FCI and State agencies throughout the country for storage of Central Pool foodgrain stock is 821.36 Lakh MT.

(c) to (e): The Government carefully calibrates export and import decisions for cereals to balance farmers' interests, consumer affordability, and buffer stock norms. While India has trade commitments under various FTAs and WTO obligations, these do not override the priority of domestic food security.

Government continues to review and strengthen the PDS and related mechanisms and ensure domestic prioritisation while protecting farmers from market volatility. Key steps include:

- One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC) for seamless access to food grains across states.
- Maintaining adequate buffer stocks of rice and wheat with FCI to ensure price stability.
- Supporting farmers through Minimum Support Price (MSP), procurement under Price Support Schemes and Price Deficiency Payment Scheme under PM-AASHA, and expanding coverage to include coarse cereals in specific regions.
- Promoting crop diversification to encourage millets and maize in anticipation of rising industrial demand.

Domestic availability of essential agricultural commodities is regularly monitored to calibrate export and import measures to balance farmers & consumers interest and to ensure price stability.
