

Crop Production Performance 1997-98 and Prospects 1998-99

6. Foodgrains production estimated at 192.4 million tonnes in 1997-98 was quite a let down from the preceding year's record output of 199.4 million tonnes. Major set back was seen in wheat whose production was lower by 3.5 million tonnes and coarse cereals whose production had dropped by over 3 million tonnes. Prospects for kharif 1998 output of rice and coarse cereals are no better than kharif 1997. However, overall prospects of achieving over 195 million tonnes foodgrains output for 1998-99 are bright mainly due to Rabi crops sown in November-December 1998. Rabi foodgrains output is likely to be 96.5 million tonnes which is higher by 5.2 million tonnes when compared with Rabi 1997-98. Foodgrains production during the last four years together with the prospect for 1998-99 is listed in Table 8.3.

7. Indications are that growth in agriculture production (crops) would be about 3.9 per cent in 1998-99 as against a drop of 6 per cent in the preceding year as shown below :

Annual Growth in Agriculture Production*

Year	Index	% change
1994-95	165.2	5.0
1995-96	160.7	-2.7
1996-97	175.4	9.1
1997-98(P)	164.9	-6.0
1998-99(P)	171.3	3.9

* Index of Agricultural production (46 principal crops) with base triennium ending 1981-82=100.

P = Provisional

Rice

8. Rice production of 82.3 million tonnes in 1997-98 (71.6 million tonnes in kharif and 10.7

million tonnes in rabi) was a new record from previous high of 81.8 million tonnes achieved in 1994-95. Kharif rice output in 1998 would be marginally lower than kharif 1997 output of 71.6 million tonnes because of excessive rain in late October affecting adversely the standing paddy crop in Punjab, and Haryana. Rabi rice prospects which normally should contribute 12 million tonnes appear very promising and the year 1998-99 may end up with a total rice production of 82.2 million tonnes, just about the same as last year.

Wheat

9. Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, are the major wheat growing states. In 1997-98, the country's total wheat output was 65.9 million tonnes which was 3.5 million tonnes lower than 1996-97 record output of 69.4 million tonnes. In 1998-99 the prospect of production is quite good and it is likely that the production may touch the previous best of over 69 million tonnes.

Pulses

10. The country grows a large variety of pulses—the most popular are gram, moong (green gram), tur or arhar (pigeon pea), masur (lentils) and urad (black gram). Gram dominates with 40 per cent share followed by tur with about 19 per cent share. The annual production ranging from 12 to 14 million tonnes has virtually remained stagnant for over thirty five years as there is hardly any technological breakthrough in improving productivity. Consequently the per capita availability has dropped from 56 grams per day in 1968 to 33 grams per day in 1998. Dependence on imports has been increasing. In 1997-98, 9.97 lakh tonnes of pulses valued

Crop	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99 Estimated
Rice	81.8	77.0	81.7	82.3	82.2
Wheat	65.8	62.1	69.4	65.9	69.1
Coarse Cereals	29.9	29.0	34.1	31.1	29.1
Pulses	14.0	12.3	14.2	13.1	14.8
Foodgrains	191.5	180.4	199.4	192.4	195.2
Kharif	101.1	95.1	103.9	101.1	98.7
Rabi	90.4	85.3	95.5	91.3	96.5

at Rs. 1184 crore was imported. Major source of imports is Myanmar followed in some years by Canada and Australia.

Coarse Cereals

11. The declining trend of coarse cereals production is the direct consequence of the gradual shrinkage in its area. From a peak of 47 million hectares in 1967-68, the area declined to about 36 million hectares by 1990-91. By 1996-97 it dropped further to 32 million hectares. Hardly 10 per cent of the area is irrigated. Being

dependent entirely on rainfall, the coarse cereal output shows considerable inter year variation. In 1996-97 coarse cereal output was 34.1 million tonnes (one third of which was jowar and another one-third was maize). In 1997-98 coarse cereal output declined to a low of 31.1 million tonnes. In kharif 1998 coarse cereals output is expected to be still lower at 23.2 million tonnes compared to 25.2 million tonnes in kharif 1997. As the area under irrigation expands, area devoted to coarse cereals is likely to shrink further. Coarse cereals output of only 29.1 million tonnes is expected in 1998-99.