6. Wheat Production - Geography

For the Rabi 2025-26 season, India has set an ambitious foodgrain target of 171.14 million tonnes, with a record 119 million tonnes for wheat, its main Rabi crop. The strategy aims to ensure national food security while also pushing for crop diversification into pulses, oilseeds, and millets to reduce import dependency.

Introduction - Ambitious Targets for India's Food Security

After achieving a record-breaking wheat production of 117.51 million tonnes in the 2024–25 Rabi season, the Union Agriculture Ministry has set an even higher target for Rabi 2025–26. This ambitious goal underscores the government's strategy to bolster national food security, manage inflation, and enhance farmer incomes, while also promoting crop diversification.

Rabi Season 2025–26 - Production Targets

The government has set a total foodgrain production target of 171.14 million tonnes for the upcoming Rabi season. Wheat remains the cornerstone of this target, complemented by a strategic push for pulses, oilseeds, and millets.

Crop-wise Production Targets for Rabi 2025–26

Crop Category	Specific Crop	Target (in Million Tonnes)
Cereal	Wheat	119.00
	Maize	14.50
	Total Coarse Cereals	16.55
	Total Shri Anna (Millets)	3.17
Pulses	Gram	11.80
	Total Pulses	16.57
Oilseeds	Groundnut	0.74
	Rapeseed & Mustard	13.90
Total Foodgrains	-	171.14

The Significance of Wheat

Wheat is not just a crop but a pillar of India's food and economic stability.

1. Primary Rabi Crop - It is the main winter-sown crop, cultivated across a vast area of over 30 million hectares.
2. Second-Largest Foodgrain - After rice, wheat is the most important foodgrain, forming the staple diet for a significant portion of India's population.
3. Foundation of Food Security - It is vital for the successful implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), which provide subsidized foodgrains to approximately 81 crore beneficiaries.

Key Drivers and Potential Challenges

Achieving the ambitious targets depends on leveraging favourable factors while mitigating significant risks.

Favourable Factors (Drivers)

1. High Seed Availability - A stockpile of 25 million metric tonnes of certified seeds is ready, comfortably exceeding the estimated requirement of 22.9 MMT.
2. Good Soil Moisture - The forecast of good rainfall across several wheat-growing states is expected to provide optimal soil moisture for sowing.
3. Assured Fertiliser Supply - The government is proactively coordinating with the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilisers to ensure a balanced and timely supply of essential nutrients like urea and DAP.

4. Government Outreach - The launch of the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan from October 3rd aims to be a massive farmer outreach program to promote awareness and adoption of modern agricultural technologies.

Challenges and Risks

1. Climate Variability - Unpredictable weather remains the biggest threat. Untimely rains or sudden heat waves during the critical grain-filling stage in March can severely impact yield and quality.
2. Rising Input Costs - Increasing prices of fertilizers, diesel, and other inputs can squeeze farmers' profit margins.
3. Regional Productivity Gaps - There are significant disparities in productivity, with states like Punjab and Haryana having very high yields, while eastern India lags behind.
4. Post-Harvest Bottlenecks - In years of bumper production, challenges related to MSP procurement, inadequate storage facilities, and logistics can lead to post-harvest losses and distress sales.

Broader Agricultural Strategy

The Rabi targets reflect a larger strategic shift in Indian agriculture.

1. Beyond the Wheat-Paddy Cycle - There is a clear policy push to encourage the cultivation of pulses and oilseeds. This is aimed at reducing India's high import dependence, as the country currently imports approximately 60% of its edible oils and 20% of its pulses.
2. Promotion of Millets (Shri Anna) - A special focus on millets addresses the dual goals of nutritional security (due to their high micronutrient content) and climate resilience (as they are hardy, drought-resistant crops).
3. Focus on Productivity over Acreage - The government's emphasis is on yield enhancement through better technology and practices, rather than simply expanding the area under cultivation.

Economic and Policy Implications

1. For Farmers - Assured procurement of wheat at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) provides a crucial income safety net. The MSP for 2025-26 is set at ₹2275 per quintal.
2. For the Economy - A successful harvest helps curb food inflation, a key macroeconomic priority. Success in diversifying into pulses and oilseeds will also reduce the import bill.
3. For the Government - It's a complex balancing act. The government must manage the fiscal burden of procurement, storage, and subsidy costs while ensuring timely support to farmers in the form of seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation.

The Way Forward

To sustain this growth and make agriculture more resilient, the focus must be on -

1. **Climate-Smart Agriculture -** Promoting the development and adoption of heat and drought-resistant wheat varieties.
2. **Incentivizing Diversification -** Creating effective policies and market linkages to make the cultivation of pulses and oilseeds more profitable for farmers.
3. **Investing in Post-Harvest Infrastructure -** Expanding and modernizing storage facilities, cold chains, and logistical networks.
4. **Promoting Technology -** Encouraging farm mechanization and using digital extension services to disseminate best practices.
5. **Alignment with National Goals -** Integrating the Rabi crop strategy with the overarching national missions of Doubling Farmers' Income and Viksit Bharat 2047.

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