

# Winter rains to shower benefits on wheat, might hit mustard crop

BS  
6.2.13 p7

Industry body sends 5 teams to study impact on mustard crop

**SANJEEB MUKHERJEE**  
New Delhi, 5 February

The recent spurt of heavy rains in north and central India could have a favourable impact on the standing wheat crop, but could damage the early-sown mustard varieties, mostly in Rajasthan and parts of Uttar Pradesh.

In wheat, the biggest food-grain grown during the rabi season, experts said the rains would be beneficial for late-sown crops, but could have some minor impact on wheat sown from October 22-25 to November 5.

"The percentage of the early-sown wheat varieties is very less, hence the chance of any extensive damage to wheat is less," Indu Sharma, director of the Karnal, Haryana-based Directorate of Wheat Research, told *Business Standard*. She said 90 per cent of the wheat crop was "young" at this stage and it had not reached the flowering stage.

Her advice to all wheat farmers would be to stop water-logging in fields and visit the farms on a regular basis to ward off any fungal infection in plants.

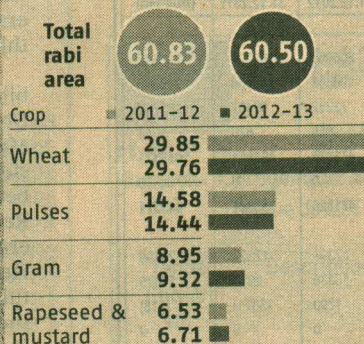
"If rains prolong, there could be chances of (attack of) yellow rust (fungal disease on wheat crop)," S S Gosal, director-research of Punjab Agricultural University, was quoted by news agency PTI as saying.

According to the India Meteorological Department (Met), light-to-heavy rainfall lashed various parts of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar



## WELCOME SHOWERS

Rabi crops sown till February 1 (mn hectares)



Note: The total might not match as all crops have not been included Source: Department of Agriculture

Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in the past 24 hours. While rains were moderate in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, it was heavy in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu & Kashmir.

"A Western depression over Rajasthan and its adjoining areas led to such heavy rainfall in north India," the Met office said in statement released today.

In general, the current spell of rains is good for agriculture and will benefit wheat, sugarcane, vegetables and fruit, Ramesh Chand, director, National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research, said. "But the crop which may suffer due to hail-storm is mustard."

A worried Solvent Extractors Association (SEA), the premier industry association of edible oil processors, has decided to dispatch five teams to major northern states

to analyse the impact of the recent heavy rains and hail-storm on the mustard crop.

"The late-sown mustard crop will benefit from the current spell of rains, but there can be some impact on the early-sown crop, which is nearing maturity," said B V Mehta, executive director of SEA. By next week, the association will come out with a final figure on the extent of damage after getting all reports from the teams, he said. "The teams will tour Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab," Mehta said, adding initial reports from Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan, one of the biggest mustard growing areas, showed the damage had not been extensive there.

The good news is that the intensity of rains will go down in the coming few days. "There will be a decline in moisture in northwest and central India in the next 24 hours," the Met office said.