

No call yet on wheat sale in open market to cool prices: Govt

PRATIGYA YADAV & SANJEEB MUKHERJEE
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The government on Wednesday said no decision had been taken on liquidation of central wheat stocks to cool retail prices under the open market scheme.

At the same time, it said that it had enough grains in its inventory if the free foodgrains programme was extended beyond December 2022. Under the free foodgrains scheme, called the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY), the central government has been distributing 5 kg of wheat and rice. This is over and above the usual monthly allocation to almost 800 million beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act.

The programme was started during the first Covid wave as a welfare measure. It has been extended seven times since, the last being in September this year.

"No decision has been made in regard to PMGKAY extension and open market sale scheme (OMSS) sale or export restrictions being eased. The government will take a decision when the time is right," food secretary Sanjeev Chopra told reporters on Wednesday.

Specifically, on OMSS for wheat, the secretary said that, the government is watching the situation and no decision has been taken.

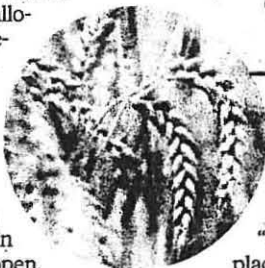
Wheat prices in the open market have climbed to new highs of around ₹2,800 per quintal in North India during the last few weeks against an MSP of ₹2,125 per quintal due to severe shortage of supplies. Some time back, a delegation of flour millers had met senior government officials to request them to offload at

HOW IT STANDS

Paddy procurement till Nov 21 (in mn tonnes)

State	2021-22	2022-23
Punjab	18.24	17.88
Haryana	5.5	5.89
Chhattisgarh	0	1.01
Tamil Nadu	0.46	0.85
Uttarakhand	0.94	0.74
UP	0.64	0.65
Telangana	0.33	0.5
Total	26.34	27.73

Note: Total might not match as all states have not been included; kharif marketing season runs from October to November
Source: Food ministry



least 2-3 million tonnes of wheat in the open market from inventories to cool down prices.

On rising prices of wheat and flour, the secretary said, "Export regulations were put in place for wheat in May, followed by atta two months later. Then in September, we imposed restrictions on the export of broken rice, as a result of which, prices have cooled down." Since export regulations were put in May, wheat prices rose by 7 per cent, and after factoring the MSP increase, it is just 3-4 per cent. If we see any kind of abnormal increase in prices, the government will step in with the measures needed, he added.

Meanwhile, on paddy procurement, government figures showed that till November 21, 2022, around 27.73 million tonnes of paddy has been procured for the central pool. This is 5.28 per cent more than the procurement done in the same period last year.