

Maha mills may shut early as rain hits cane supply

Sugar mills in Maharashtra are set to stop cane crushing 45 to 60 days earlier than last year as heavy rain has curtailed sugarcane availability, a senior state government official said on Friday.

Maharashtra, which accounts for more than a third of the country's sugar output, could produce 12.8 million tonnes of sugar in the 2022/23 marketing year that began on October 1, down from an earlier forecast of 13.8 million tonnes, Maharashtra's sugar commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad said. Lower sugar output could prevent India from allowing additional exports, potentially supporting global prices and allowing rivals Brazil and Thailand to

increase their shipments.

India has allowed sugar mills to export only 6.1 million tonnes of the sweetener in the current season and, out of that, mills have already contracted to export 5.7 million tonnes. "Excessive rainfall curtailed sugarcane's vegetative growth. This year, lower cane is available for crushing," Gaikwad said.

A few mills in central Maharashtra could start winding down operations in 15 days, and by the end of April, all except three or four mills could have stopped crushing, he said. Sugar mills in Maharashtra were operational until mid-June in 2021/22 as they were struggling to harvest a record crop.

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