

UP sugar output up; mills exchange export quota

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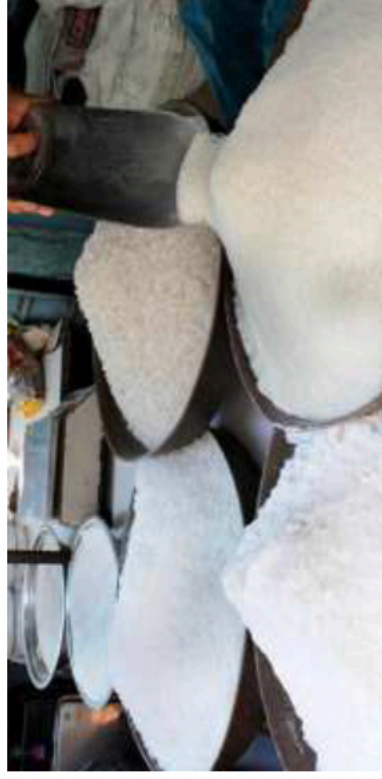
New Delhi

Sugar production in Uttar Pradesh, India's largest sugarcane growing State, remains high so far this season despite severe rainfall deficit in most of the districts and pest attacks on the main sugarcane variety, CO-0238, in several parts. But, Maharashtra may continue its top position as sugar producer for the second time this season.

According to Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), sugar production until January 15 in the current season (October 2022-September 2023) was 156.8 lakh tonnes (lt) against 150.8 lt in the corresponding period a year ago. The data excludes the quantity diverted for production of ethanol.

Maharashtra has produced 60.3 lt, up from 58.8 lt a year ago, while mills in Uttar Pradesh have reported an output of 40.7 lt against 40.2 lt last year.

Uttar Pradesh became the



AT THE TOP. Maharashtra may continue to be the top sugar producer for the second consecutive season

country's largest sugar producer in the 2016-17 season, thanks to the CO-0238 variety that improved both productivity and cane juice recovery substantially.

However, Maharashtra regained the status of top producer in 2021-22 with a production of 137.2 lt of sugar.

ALTERNATIVE NEEDED

"There is an urgent need to find an alternative variety to CO-0238 with similar yield and recovery. Sugarcane farmers do not know what to do in view of red rot disease affecting the wonder variety,"

Minister of State for Animal Husbandry and Dairy, Sanjeev Balyan, recently said at a conference organised by web portal Rural Voice. Balyan, who is MP from Muzaffarnagar in western Uttar Pradesh, also said it became the first such variety that pleased both farmers and sugar mills.

The CO-0238 variety increased sugar recovery by 2 per cent, benefiting the sugar mills, and raised cane productivity 1.5 times, benefiting farmers.

When the country's sugar production in 2019-20

dropped 21 per cent, the output touched a record high of 126.38 lt in UP. According to ISMA data, production in Karnataka, the third-biggest producer, is also higher, at 33.6 lt against 32.7 lt. Tamil Nadu has produced 3.6 lt compared with 2.1 lt a year ago and Gujarat's output has been recorded at 4.8 lt against 4.6 lt.

Meanwhile, ISMA said 55 lt of sugar has been contracted by mills for export, out of which 18 lt have already been shipped out.

The government has allowed sugar mills to export 60.12 lt by May 31, while a decision to allocate additional export quota is likely to be taken at the inter-ministerial group this month. The country exported a record high of 112 lt of sugar last season.

As many as 193 sugar factories have exchanged 14.90 lt, which is almost 25 per cent of total export quota, with other units at a premium that increased nearly four times before the sale window closed on January 4.