

Maha sugar output likely to equal last year's record of 107 lakh tn

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MAHARASHTRA'S SUGAR OUTPUT is likely to touch 107 lakh tonne for the season of 2018-19, with 63 sugar factories in the state continue to crush cane. As the season is drawing to a close, about 132 of the 193 factories have completed crushing operations for the season. Last year, the state's sugar production was 107 lakh tonne, which was considered a record production in the state.

Maharashtra sugar commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad said the department had earlier estimated the production to touch 106 lakh tonne for the season and it's too early whether the mills' output would touch 107-lakh tonne mark.

As on date, around 935.96 lakh tonne of cane has been crushed to produce 104.9 lakh tonne of sugar. According to experts, the figure is likely to touch or cross the 107-lakh tonne mark as 63 factories are still crushing cane. According to sources in the sugar commissionerate, the season is likely to continue till April 15.



Fair and remunerative price (FRP) arrears, however, continue to remain a concern. Of the ₹21,154.48 crore FRP payable, according to agreements, total FRP paid is ₹16,544.93 crore and the FRP arrears are at ₹4,831.18 crore as on March 31, 2019.

Nearly 78% of the arrears have been paid, the commissioner said, adding that the arrear position has come down. Last fortnight, the arrears were around ₹4,926.17 crore.

Sectoral experts say the arrears were still high because more mills were entering into agreements with farmers.

State sugar commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad has written to district collectors and

CEOs of zila parishads, urging them to buy sugar for the various institutions in their jurisdiction, such as hostels and hospitals, directly from mills.

The commissioner seeks to encourage sales after millers had found themselves to be struggling to sell the commodity in a depressed market. Gaikwad said action had been initiated against 49 sugar mills that have failed to pay FRP. He said he expected about 90% of the FRP will be deposited in farmers' accounts before mills close the crushing season.

Sugar prices hover at the minimum support price (MSP) level of ₹3,100 per quintal. Bombay Sugar Merchants Association secretary general Mukesh Kuvediya said the prices had gone up by ₹30-50 per quintal on the announcement of sales quota and remain more stable at ₹3,100 per quintal.

Last week, the commissioner had issued a stern warning to millers that under the Essential Commodities Act, action would be taken against them if the millers are found selling sugar under MSP. The Centre sought action against Maharashtra sugar millers selling below MSP.

