

# Start sugarcane crushing in Maha from Nov 1: Govt

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**Kolhapur:** A panel of ministers, led by chief minister Eknath Shinde, on Thursday approved the start of sugarcane crushing in Maharashtra from November 1. State sugar commissioner Chandrakant Pulkundwar gave a presentation to inform the attendees about the last crushing season, cultivation status and estimates for the upcoming crushing season.

Usually, sugar mills from the state begin cane crushing from October 15. Last year the crushing lasted for nearly four-and-a-half months due to excess production of sugarcane. But this time due to shortage of rainfall in cane producing regions of the state, the cultivation has owing to which production is likely to decline.

From the 14.07 lakh hectares of sugarcane available, the mills are expected to produce 88.85 lakh tonnes of sugar. Last season, a total of 211 mills from across Maharashtra produced 105 lakh tonnes

Pic for representation



Mills in the state are expected to produce 88.85 lakh tonnes of sugar this year

of sugar—making the state the top producing one in the country.

Industry experts have claimed that the central government will have to maintain fine balance between demand and supply of sugar for the coming year. "The Centre may ask the mills not to convert sugarcane syrup into ethanol and instead prefer molasses as raw material to ensure adequate sugar is available. Production in the country is expected to remain less than 300 lakh tonnes, but by adding carry-over stock, we will have enough sugar for domestic consumption," Vijay Autade, an industry expert based in Kolhapur, said. Last year 12 lakh tonnes of sugarcane was diverted for ethanol production.