



De-hyphenating Rice-Wheat Production

For Prelims: [Rice, Wheat, Kharif, Rabi, Minimum Support Price \(MSP\), Official household expenditure survey data 2022-23, National Food Security Mission, Hybrid Rice Seed Production, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, Climate-Smart Varieties.](#)

For Mains: Changing Consumption Pattern, Need of Climate Resilient Agriculture

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the policymakers called for **de-hyphenating the** production of [rice and wheat](#) due to changes in their production and consumption.

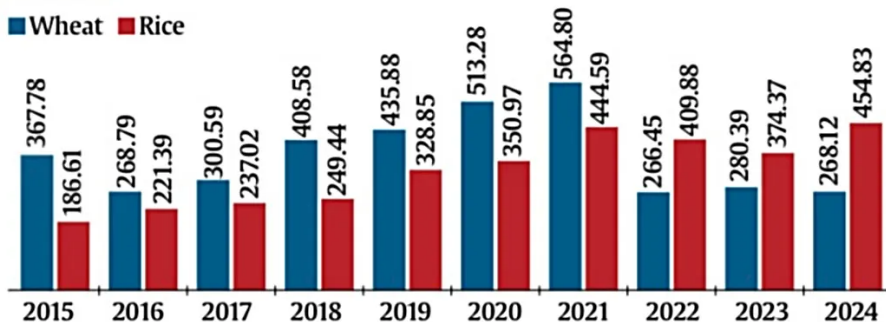
- In **rice**, there is a **surplus production** while **wheat** is suffering from a **deficit in production** and increased consumption.

What is the Need to De-hyphenate Rice and Wheat Production?

- **Contrasting Surplus Situations:**
 - **Rice Surplus:** India exported **21.21 million tonnes (mt)** of cereal grain (basmati plus non-basmati) in 2021-22, 22.35 mt in 2022-23, and 16.36 mt in 2023-24.
 - Despite the record shipments, [rice stocks](#) in government godowns were at an all-time high at **45.48 mt** in August 2024.
 - **Wheat Deficit:** Wheat exports plunged from a peak of 7.24 mt in 2021-22 to 4.69 mt in 2022-23 and **0.19 mt in 2023-24.**
 - The government banned wheat exports in May 2022, yet [wheat stocks](#) were at a **low** of 26.81 mt in **August 2024**, one of the lowest in recent years.
- **Differences in Production Areas:**
 - **Rice:** Rice is grown both during the [kharif \(southwest monsoon\) and rabi \(winter-spring\)](#) seasons. In West Bengal, farmers grow three crops of rice called **aus (summer), aman (rainy season) and boro (winter).**
 - Moreover, it is cultivated across a **wide geography** with **16 states contributing over 2 mt each.** E.g., North (Punjab, UP) to South (Tamil Nadu, Telangana), Central (MP, Chhattisgarh), East (West Bengal, Assam), and West (Maharashtra, Gujarat).
 - **Wheat:** Wheat has a **single rabi cropping season** and only **eight states** producing 2 mt-plus each mainly in the northern, central, and western regions.
 - The top **four states** (UP, MP, Punjab, Haryana) account for **76% of output.**
- **Production Volatility:** Wheat is more volatile due to its **seasonal and geographical constraints**, making it more susceptible to production fluctuations.
- **Limiting Factor:**
 - **Rice: Water availability** is the main limiting factor which can be **easily managed.** E.g. States like Telangana have increased rice output significantly due to improved [irrigation](#) and [minimum support price \(MSP\)](#) assurances.

- **Wheat:** Wheat has become vulnerable to winters getting shorter, warmer and less predictable due to [climate change](#) adapting to which is long and difficult.
 - Temperature increase in **March (grain formation)**, and higher temperatures in **November-December (sowing period)** have reduced yields in recent years, leading to lower government stocks.
- **Diverging Consumption Trends:**
 - **Wheat:** [Official household expenditure survey data 2022-23](#) shows **per capita monthly wheat consumption** at **3.9 kg** in rural and **3.6 kg** in urban India, translating to roughly **65 mt** for a population of 1,425 million.
 - A significant portion of wheat is consumed in [processed forms \(maida, sooji/rava\)](#) for bakery items, convenience foods, and sweets, which is expected to rise with urbanisation and higher incomes.
 - Today, most **South Indians** consume **wheat** daily in **at least one meal**, while **rice** has **not** become as **popular** in the North as wheat has in the South.
 - **Rice:** **No similar upward trend in rice consumption.** Innovations in rice-based convenience foods are limited, suggesting stable [consumption patterns](#).

CHART STOCK IN CENTRAL POOL ON AUGUST 1 (Lakh tonnes)



*Includes rice equivalent of un-milled paddy lying with Food Corporation of India and State agencies.
Source: Department of Food and Public Distribution.

TABLE 2 TOP WHEAT PRODUCERS (million tonnes), All-India: 109.73*

Uttar Pradesh	34.46	Rajasthan	10.69
Madhya Pradesh	20.96	Bihar	6.32
Punjab	16.85	Gujarat	3.42
Haryana	11.37	Maharashtra	2.07

Note: Figures are average of five years from 2019-20 to 2023-24; *Includes production from other states.

TABLE 1 TOP RICE PRODUCERS

(million tonnes),

West Bengal	15.95
Uttar Pradesh	15.64
Punjab	12.97
Telangana	12.51
Odisha	8.97
Chhattisgarh	8.29
Andhra Pradesh	7.92
Bihar	7.13
Tamil Nadu	6.92
Madhya Pradesh	5.59
Assam	5.03
Haryana	4.99
Karnataka	3.96
Maharashtra	3.53
Jharkhand	2.41
Gujarat	2.22

All-India: 129.03*

What are the Government Initiatives to Support Rice and Wheat Cultivation?

- [National Food Security Mission](#)
- [Hybrid Rice Seed Production](#)
- [Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana](#)
- [Minimum Support Price](#)
- [Agriculture Infrastructure Fund \(AIF\)](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana \(PMKSY\)](#)
- Crop Diversification Programme (CDP)

What are Key Facts about Rice and Wheat?

Basis	Rice	Wheat
Temperature	Between 22-32°C with high humidity	Between 10-15°C (Sowing time) and 21-26°C (Ripening & Harvesting) with bright sunlight
Rainfall	Around 150-300 cm	Around 75-100 cm

Soil Type	Deep clayey and loamy soil	Well-drained fertile loamy and clayey
Top Producers	West Bengal >Uttar Pradesh >Punjab	Uttar Pradesh >Madhya Pradesh >Punjab
India's Global Position	Second largest producer of rice in the world after China	Second largest producer of wheat in the world after China

What are the Recommendations to Reduce Rice-Wheat Consumption Divergence?

- **Wheat Policy:** Rising consumption and geography/climate-imposed production challenges can make India an **importer of wheat** in the short term.
 - For the long term, the government needs to focus on boosting **per-acre yields** and breeding **climate-smart varieties**.
- **Rice Policy:** Domestic consumption of rice is not keeping pace with production.
 - The government should **lift the ban on exports** of white non-basmati rice.
 - The **20% duty** on parboiled non-basmati and the USD 950/tonne floor price on basmati shipments should be removed.
 - Need for innovation in rice-based food processing to increase its consumption such as **breakfast cereals, soup, baby food, packaged mixes**, etc.
 - **De-hyphenation of Policy:** The time has come to **de-hyphenate rice-wheat**, and not conflate one with the other. The two cereals are different in terms of issues faced, both current and for the future.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. There is a growing divergence between rice and wheat production and consumption in India. Do you agree? Substantiate your answer.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. The economic cost of food grains to the Food Corporation of India is Minimum Support Price and bonus (if any) paid to the farmers plus (2019)

- (a) transportation cost only
- (b) interest cost only
- (c) procurement incidentals and distribution cost
- (d) procurement incidentals and charges for godowns

Ans: (c)

Q. With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidised food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 3 only

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. How has the emphasis on certain crops brought about changes in cropping patterns in the recent past? Elaborate the emphasis on millets production and consumption. **(2018)**

Q. What are the major reasons for declining rice and wheat yield in the cropping system? How crop diversification is helpful to stabilize the yield of the crops in the system? **(2017)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/de-hyphenating-rice-wheat-production>

