

## **SUGARCANE CRUSHING MAY END EARLY IN MAHARASHTRA, KARNATAKA**

– By Vishwanath Kulkarni

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DESPITE a late start, the ongoing crushing season for the year 2024-25 will likely be curtailed early in Maharashtra and Karnataka for want of sugarcane for crushing.

Sugarcane production is estimated lower during the current season as the yield has been affected by pest infestation and water stress during the summer last year in key producing States.

**Prakash Naiknavare, Managing Director, National Federation of Co-operative Sugar Factories Ltd (NFCSF), said the 2024-25 crushing season could end a month earlier due to lack of cane. “Some mills in Maharashtra and Karnataka are closing by the end of this month. I see about 12 mills closing operations there at the end of January for want of sugarcane. By mid-February, another 20-25 mills will close. By February-end, a majority of them will almost close and then by the end of March, in my opinion, the season will be over,” Naiknavare said.**

**NFCSF is projecting a dip in the country’s sugar output year. “Last year we produced something like 319 lakh tonnes (lt). This year we are projecting production of 270 lt,” Naiknavare said.**

As per the NFCSF’s latest crushing report as of January 15, about 507 mills are crushing cane this year compared to 524 million last year. About 122 mills are operational in Uttar Pradesh against 120 last year. In Maharashtra, the number of mills operational are 196 this year compared with 206 a year ago. However, in Karnataka the number of mills operational this year is 77 against 74 last year.

About 1,482.14 lt of sugarcane have been crushed till January 15, down 8 per cent over 1,612.83 lt a year ago. Total sugar produced in the current season is 130.55 lt, down 13.65 per cent against 151.20 lt a year ago.

### **EXPORTS BOOST**

The average sugar recovery in percentage terms, excluding the diversion for ethanol, is 8.81 per cent, so far, compared with 9.37 per cent a year ago. The recovery is lower across all the sugar producing States.

Commenting on the Government’s decision to allow exports, Naiknavare said the decision has come at the right time because the prices were very depressing. “The domestic realisation has received a boost because of that announcement and prices have firmed up in all the States,” Naiknavare said.

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