One Record, Two Estimates: How to Read India's Crop Production Numbers

News Reference: 26 November 2026

Mains (General Studies Paper-III): Indian Economy, agriculture, food security and crop production estimates

Prelims: Indian Economy, key agriculture-sector data, the production-estimates process



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Why in the news

On 26 November 2026, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan released the **final production estimates of major agricultural crops for 2025-26** and the **first advance estimates for the 2026-27 kharif season**. The single press release carries two different kinds of numbers, the settled account of a completed agricultural year and the preliminary projection for an ongoing kharif season. Weighing the two on the same scale is the most common exam mistake, which makes this release important for both Prelims and Mains.

In **2025-26**, the country's foodgrain production reached an all-time high of **3785.38 lakh tonnes**, an increase of **208.06 lakh tonnes** over the 3577.32 lakh tonnes of 2024-25. For **kharif 2026-27**, foodgrain production is estimated at **1671.43 lakh metric tonnes**: **97.67 lakh tonnes above the average kharif production of the previous five years**.

What production estimates are

Advance Estimates: the preliminary projection of production made before the harvest. The first advance estimates are preliminary; they are revised in the second and final estimates once actual yield data becomes available from **crop-cutting experiments (CCEs)**: the scientific process of harvesting small marked plots in selected fields to measure real yields at harvest time.
Final Estimates: the settled production figure for the full agricultural year, based on the actual data available for the year.
How the estimates are prepared: they draw on information from states and Union Territories, **remote sensing** (satellite-based crop monitoring), the weekly **Crop Weather Watch Group (CWWG)**, the **Digital Crop Survey** and the **Digital General Crop Estimation Survey**, with industry consultation. The data goes through a **three-tier process of validation and triangulation** before release.

2025-26: records in the final estimates

The final estimates show new production records in foodgrains, pulses and oilseeds alike.

Key figures (in lakh tonnes):

Crop	2024-25	2025-26 (final)	Change
Foodgrains (total)	3577.32	3785.38	+208.06
Rice	1501.84	1551.54 (record)	+49.70
Wheat	1179.45	1220.64 (record)	+41.19
Maize	434.09	550.25	+116.16
Pulses (total)	256.83	272.40	+15.57
Oilseeds (total)	429.89	432.55 (record)	+2.66
Groundnut	119.42	131.71 (record)	+12.29
Rapeseed & mustard	126.67	137.66 (record)	+10.99

Other key points:

- **Nutri-cereals and coarse cereals:** total production stood at **740.80 lakh tonnes**, of which **'Shri Anna' (millets, jowar, bajra, ragi and other nutri-cereals)** accounted for **172.09 lakh tonnes**.
- **Within pulses:** moong set a new record of **43.96 lakh tonnes**; gram stood at **125.13 lakh tonnes** and tur (arhar) at **35.99 lakh tonnes**.
- **Soybean: 126.36 lakh tonnes**.
- **Sugarcane: 5037.29 lakh tonnes**.
- **Cotton: 280.06 lakh bales** (each bale of 170 kg).
- **Jute & mesta: 94.28 lakh bales** (each bale of 180 kg). Note, cotton and jute-mesta are measured in **bales**, not tonnes.

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Kharif 2026-27: the first advance estimates

Total foodgrains: estimated at **1671.43 lakh metric tonnes**: **97.67 lakh tonnes above the average kharif production of the previous five years**.

Major crops (in lakh tonnes, estimated):

Crop	First advance estimate
Rice (kharif)	1219.05
Nutri-cereals & coarse cereals (total)	381.05
- Maize	260.64
- Bajra	89.43
- Jowar	14.79
- Ragi	12.48
- Small millets	3.71
Pulses (total)	71.32
- Tur	31.22
- Moong	16.59
- Urad	14.49
- Other pulses	9.02
Oilseeds (total)	239.47
- Groundnut	111.68
- Soybean	102.44
- Castor	18.97
- Sesame	4.91
- Sunflower	1.17
- Niger seed	0.30
Sugarcane	4543.39
Cotton	248.66 lakh bales (170 kg each)
Jute & mesta	97.06 lakh bales (180 kg each)

Difficult weather, strong performance

Kharif sowing this year faced several weather challenges:

- **The return of El Niño**: the climate event linked to abnormal warming of equatorial Pacific waters, which can weaken the Indian monsoon.
- A **delayed monsoon in June** and rainfall **35 to 40 per cent below normal**.
- Low soil moisture and drought-like conditions in major agricultural states such as **Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**, which affected the sowing of **paddy, maize, tur, soybean**

and cotton.

Despite these conditions, production is estimated above the five-year average, attributed to the resilience of farmers, support from government schemes and **climate-resilient crop varieties** developed by scientists.

India's global standing

According to the press release, India's global production rankings are:

- **First:** rice, pulses, jute, millets and spices.
- **Second:** wheat, cotton, groundnut, fruits and vegetables (after China), and sugarcane (after Brazil).
- **Exports:** rice exports registered **5 per cent growth**; Indian basmati is reaching the United States, Canada and the Middle East. The country holds adequate stocks of both rice and wheat.

The direction: self-reliance in pulses and oilseeds

With a comfortable position in rice and wheat, the government's focus is now on **crop diversification** and **self-reliance in pulses and oilseeds**. Domestic demand is rising, and to cut import dependence work is under way in mission mode through the **National Pulses Mission** and the **National Oilseeds Mission**. The records in moong, rapeseed-mustard and groundnut in the final estimates are presented as the early impact of these efforts.

How to read these numbers correctly

In exam questions built on these figures, three mistakes are the most common:

- **Final vs first advance estimates:** the 2025-26 final figure (3785.38 lakh tonnes) is the settled output of the **full agricultural year**: kharif, rabi and zaid seasons together, while 1671.43 lakh tonnes is only the **first, preliminary estimate for kharif 2026-27**. Their scopes differ, so comparing them directly as 'higher or lower than last year' is wrong.
- **Average vs previous year:** '97.67 lakh tonnes above the average of the previous five years' does **not** mean production is that much above the previous year. A comparison with the average shows the long-run trend, not year-on-year growth.
- **Estimate vs actual harvest:** the first advance estimate is not the confirmed harvest outcome. It can change in the second and final estimates once yield data from crop-cutting experiments arrives.
- **Watch the units:** cotton and jute-mesta are measured in bales, the rest in tonnes, this is exactly the trap questions are built on.

The way ahead

After the kharif harvest, yield data from crop-cutting experiments will arrive and the first advance estimates will be revised in the second and then the final estimates. Progress of the National Pulses Mission and National Oilseeds Mission, the spread of climate-resilient varieties and crop diversification will decide whether the 2025-26 records remain a one-off event or become a lasting trend.

Related reading

Read our detailed article on rice production and exports: **India's Rice Economy: Balancing Exports, Virtual Water and Groundwater**

Read our detailed article on pulses production and self-reliance: **The Pulses Price Spiral: Tur's Production Worry and Gram's Inventory Mystery**

Prelims Practice Questions

Question 1. With reference to the final crop production estimates for 2025-26, consider the following statements:

Statement-I: India's total foodgrain production in 2025-26 was 3785.38 lakh tonnes, which was 208.06 lakh tonnes more than the production in 2024-25

Statement-II: Pulses production in 2025-26 declined to 256.83 lakh tonnes

(a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation of Statement-I

(b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, but Statement-II is not the correct explanation of Statement-I

(c) Statement-I is correct, but Statement-II is incorrect ✓

(d) Statement-I is incorrect, but Statement-II is correct

Answer and Explanation

Answer: (c)

Statement-I is correct: foodgrain production in 2025-26 stood at 3785.38 lakh tonnes, 208.06 lakh tonnes above the 3577.32 lakh tonnes of 2024-25.

Statement-II is incorrect: pulses production did not decline; it rose from 256.83 lakh tonnes in 2024-25 to 272.40 lakh tonnes. The figure of 256.83 lakh tonnes belongs to 2024-25.

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Question 2. With reference to the first advance estimates for kharif 2026-27, consider the following statements:

Statement 1: Kharif foodgrain production is estimated at 1671.43 lakh metric tonnes, which is above the average kharif production of the previous five years

Statement 2: Kharif rice production is estimated at 1219.05 lakh tonnes

Statement 3: Cotton production is estimated at 248.66 lakh tonnes

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two ✓

(c) All three

(d) None

Answer and Explanation

Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is correct: kharif foodgrain production is estimated at 1671.43 lakh metric tonnes, 97.67 lakh tonnes above the average kharif production of the previous five years.

Statement 2 is correct: kharif rice production is estimated at 1219.05 lakh tonnes.

Statement 3 is incorrect: cotton production is estimated in bales, not tonnes, 248.66 lakh bales, each of 170 kg.

Mains Practice Question

Bring out the difference between the advance estimates and the final estimates of crop production. What does the first advance estimate for kharif 2026-27 indicate about the resilience of Indian agriculture despite adverse climate conditions? (250 words, 15 marks)

Answer Outline

In the introduction

- Refer to the final estimates for 2025-26 and the first advance estimates for kharif 2026-27 released on 26 November 2026.

In the main body

- Bring out the difference: advance estimates are preliminary projections made before harvest, revised in the second and final estimates after actual yield data from CCEs; final estimates are the settled figures for the full agricultural year.
- Key kharif 2026-27 figures: foodgrains at 1671.43 lakh metric tonnes, 97.67 lakh tonnes above the five-year kharif average; explain the correct meaning of this comparison.
- Signs of resilience: production sustained despite El Niño, a delayed monsoon, 35-40 per cent below-normal rainfall and drought-like conditions in several states; the role of climate-resilient varieties and government schemes.
- Also note the limits: the first estimate is preliminary; the full picture emerges only with the final estimates.

In the conclusion

- Close with a balanced reading of the data and a comment on the direction towards self-reliance in pulses and oilseeds.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Are the first advance estimates the final production figures?

No. The first advance estimates are preliminary projections. They are revised in the second and final estimates once actual yield data from crop-cutting experiments at harvest time becomes available.

2. Why is the production of cotton and jute not measured in tonnes?

In agricultural statistics, cotton is measured in bales of 170 kg and jute-mesta in bales of 180 kg, so their figures are released in lakh bales.

3. What does 'above the average of the previous five years' mean?

It means the estimated production is higher than the average kharif production of the last five years, it is not a comparison with any single previous year. A comparison with the average shows the long-run trend, not year-on-year growth.

Sources

1. Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India (26 November 2026), final production estimates for 2025-26 and first advance estimates for kharif 2026-27: https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=2342093&lang=2&reg=48

2. Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, Advance Estimates: https://desagri.gov.in/statistics-type/advance-estimates/

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