

YELLOW RUST INCIDENCE IN WHEAT IN PUNJAB, HARYANA CAUSES ANXIETY

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Representative image. Wheat crop at the harvesting stage | Photo Credit: [Shiv Kumar Pushpakar](#)

The detection of yellow rust disease in the wheat crop in the sub-mountainous parts of Punjab and Haryana has raised anxiety among farmers about drop in the yield, even as respective farm departments are leaving nothing to chance to ensure the spread of disease doesn't go beyond control.

Agriculture officials from both the States are in the fields advising farmers to adopt remedial measures to deal with the situation. In Punjab, yellow rust has been reported in a few villages of Ropar, Hoshiarpur and Pathankot districts. In Haryana, it has been detected in a few villages of Panchkula, Yamunanagar, Ambala districts.

Yellow rust is a fungal disease which turns the leaves into yellowish colour and affect the photosynthesis activity, which eventually could result in drop of yield.

"We have received reports of yellow rust on wheat crop in a few villages of Ropar, Pathankot and Anandpur Sahib districts. It's in a very limited area that the crop has been affected as of now, but we are not taking any chances and our team of experts has reached the fields to monitor the situation. However, at this stage it's not threatening." Sutantar Airi, Director, Punjab Agriculture department told *The Hindu*.

The minimum temperature has been hovering around 1.6 to 3.0 degree Celsius above normal at many places in parts of Punjab during the past few days. "After the rain in the past few days, the minimum temperature has risen a bit coupled with slight humid conditions. However, in the next 3-4 days, it is likely to dip," said Surinder Pal, Director, India Meteorological Department, Chandigarh.

Pargat Singh, chief patron (Ropar) of the Bhartiya Kisan Union (Sidhupur), who has sown wheat in nearly 14 acres, said the farmers are worried. "It can't be ignored as it can spread quickly and can cause severe losses in crop yield, if not checked in time," he said, adding that the government should remain in a constant state of vigil to control the situation.

Wheat, the main rabi (winter) crop, is sown between late October till December while the harvesting of the crop will start from April onwards.

Ram Pratap Sihag, Joint Director (Agriculture) in Haryana, said the department has already issued advisory to farmers regarding the yellow rust. "The situation is not alarming. Farmers should spray their crop as per the advisory to contain the attack. The recent rains coupled with slight increase in the temperature and humid conditions are favourable for the rust," he said.

Mr. Sihag said agriculture experts have suggested that farmers must avoid risks associated with mono-culture and advise them to grow more than one variety in their field. The entire area in which a farmer plans to plant wheat should not be brought under just one variety.

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