



Stagnation in wheat yield rings alarm bells

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New Delhi: Having put seven new varieties on the table just ahead of the wheat season, the head of Indian Council of Agricultural Research's wheat research project B Mishra acknowledges that stagnation in yields is a concern. India needs 2.2% annual growth to reach 109 million tonnes production by 2020, but it's achieving just 1%.

Mishra says the investment made in wheat research has been repaid through increased productivity and production many times over in the past three decades — but now they seem to have hit a roadblock. "For four-five years, the yield has been almost stagnant in wheat," he says. They need to reach new areas and improve those where wheat fields once swayed to profit.

Countrywide production reached a high of 76.37 million tonnes in 1999-2000 — a high that hasn't been matched since. What is needed, effectively, is a sec-



Punjab CM Amrinder Singh inaugurates the procurement of paddy in the state by holding auction of a paddy heap at a grain market in Khanna on Monday.

ond green revolution.

After a steep growth between 1975 and 1990, wheat productivity in the front-line districts of north-western India has tended to "stabilise", says Mishra. "Recent yield plateau is a major concern in the highly-productive north-western plains zone."

Some problems are in the field — farmers aren't able to bridge the gap between

possible and actual yield or get the right inputs at the right time to achieve a potentially "remarkable" increase in wheat production. Policy pushes are needed to get production technology to the farmer, produce and market high-quality, product-specific wheat, encourage wheat-based rural industries and storage facilities to cut losses.