

Kharif sowing begins as monsoon sets in

OUR BUREAU
New Delhi, June 10

The arrival of the South-West monsoon has kickstarted seasonal farming activity, with farmers taking up sowing of key kharif crops such as rice, pulses, oilseeds and cotton, among others, across many States.

According to the preliminary data put out by the Agriculture Ministry, sowing of kharif crops was complete on about 71.24 lakh hectares (lh) as on June 10, about 7 per cent lower than last year's acreage of 76.65 lh.

The sowing trend so far has been rather sluggish due to the delayed arrival of the monsoon, the lifeline of the country's agriculture sector, by about eight days. Also, lower-than-normal pre-monsoon rainfall in the Central and Southern parts of the country has contributed to the sluggish trend in kharif plantings.

Details on p14

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Acreage down 7% so far; but planting expected to pick up as rains progress

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Sluggish trend

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Till Friday, the monsoon had covered Central Karnataka and parts of Andhra Pradesh and was seen advancing further. The IMD



A sluggish start

	2016	2015
Rice	5.75	6.42
Pulses	1.46	2.32
Coarse Cereals	2.01	3.82
Oilseeds	0.72	1.22
Sugarcane	44.38	41.01
Jute & Mesta	7.06	7.55
Cotton	9.87	14.30
Total	71.24	76.65

Kharif Acreage in lakh hectares as on June 10

has predicted above normal rainfall this year for the country, which had witnessed two successive deficits, which triggered a drought in over ten States.

Bigger target

Transplanting of rice, the main kharif cereal crop, has commenced and acreages, so far, were higher in the North-Eastern States of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and also in Kerala. The Centre has set a rice production target of 93 million tonnes (mt) for the kharif season this year, over the 90.59 mt (per third advanced estimate) produced in the last year.

Sowing of pulses has commenced in States such as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh. So far, a total of 1.46 lh has been covered under pulses such as tur (arhar), urad and green gram as against

2.32 lh in the corresponding period last year.

The increase in bonus and higher prevailing prices of pulses could prompt farmers to shift from crops such as cotton and plant more legumes this year.

In fact, in the northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, where cotton planting has already been completed, acreages under the fibre crop have been lower on account of the threat of pests such as whitefly, which had caused significant losses last year. Also, the threat of pink bollworm could affect acreages in major growing States such as Gujarat, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh this year.

Among coarse cereals, maize has been planted on about 1.5 lh, while sowing of other grains such as jowar, bajra, ragi and millet has commenced mainly in Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Rajas-

than and Tamil Nadu. Sowing of oilseeds has also commenced in Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu.

Cane acreage up

So far, this kharif season, the acreage of sugarcane has been higher than in the corresponding last year.

Although a drought has impacted planting in Maharashtra, Union Agriculture Ministry data suggest that the acreage under sugarcane has risen in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

So far, sugarcane has been planted on 44.38 lh, with close to half of it being reported from UP where acreages currently stand at 21.79 lh (18.10 lh). Karnataka has planted the crop on 2.84 lh (2.66 lh), and Tamil Nadu on 2.61 lh (2.56 lh). In Maharashtra, sugarcane acreage is lower at 7.62 lh (8.21 lh).

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5