

Recent rains likely to cut mango output by 10-15%

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DELIP KUMAR JHA
Mumbai, 17 March

Mango output this year is expected to decline by 10-15 per cent because of crop damage from recent unseasonal rain. However, this is unlikely to affect prices.

Lasting a little over two days, the inclement weather is reported to have damaged mango buds and flowers in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

"An assessment is yet to be done on the extent of damage," said S Insaram Ali, president, All India Mango Growers' Association.

The National Horticulture Board's first advance estimate was for output at 29.52 million tonnes in 2015-16, as compared to 18.52 mt the previous year. It says sowing was 2.2 million hectares, from 2.1 mn last year.

Prior to this, the weather had been supportive, barring some damage due to cold weather in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, hub of the Alphonso variety.

Prasad Jadhav, a farmer in that district, says he doesn't expect a major change in his fortunes this year, despite lower output. "The season started with a base price of



₹1,000-1,200 a dozen (of Alphonso) early this week, almost similar to last year," he said. "As the season goes ahead, the price would decline when other varieties hit the market.

All, too, sees little possibility of a significant increase in prices.

Exporters say they have large orders from the European Union (EU) and the United States (US), primarily for Alphonso and some other varieties such as the kesar. Orders from other destinations have been tepid and export growth could be largely flat.

MANGO OUTPUT

Crop year	Area (mha)	Production (m tonnes)
2013-14	2.52	18.43
2014-15	2.16	18.53
2015-16*	2.2	19.52

*According to first advanced estimate
Source: National Horticulture Board

"There has been huge order flow from the EU and US. We estimate handsome growth in exports to these regions," said Dattatreya More, general manager (mango), Deepak Fertilisers.

On guard to save cotton crops

Agriculture departments of Punjab, Haryana ready to stop distribution of spurious cotton seeds, spray

KOMAL AMIT GERA
Chandigarh, 17 March

The agriculture departments of Haryana and Punjab are extra vigilant this year to prevent distribution of spurious cotton seeds and chemical spray by distributors.

Last year, because of the bad quality of seeds and spray, there was a substantial loss of cotton crop, which was hit by white fly and leaf curl virus.

Sowing will start in May, after the wheat harvest is over.

As recommended by the All India Coordinated Research Project for Dry Land Agriculture, Haryana has approved 35 hybrid seed varieties and shortlisted 12 seed companies, to be granted a licence to operate.

The suppliers of seeds and pesticides will have to operate in a highly regulated market this year as the damage to cotton had political and financial repercussions on the state governments last year.

The Haryana government recently announced indemnity of ₹967 crore to farmers affected by pests in five districts.

BALE-OUT

- Haryana and Punjab to keep strict vigil on cotton seeds and pesticides companies
- Haryana gave ₹967 crore and Punjab ₹600 crore compensation to cotton growers for crop loss due to white fly and leaf curl virus attack

- Acreage to decline this year, as cotton cultivation cost is higher and farmers don't want to risk their investments
- 583,000 ha in Haryana and 398,000 ha in Punjab was under cotton last year

Sowing last year was 583,000 hectare in Haryana, concentrated largely in the districts Sirsa, Hisar, Jind, Fatehabad and Bhiwani.

Sources in the agriculture department said the area under cotton could decline as growers diversify some part of their land towards other crops like jwar and pulses. Where irrigation is available, paddy would be the first choice over cotton, as it has an assured Minimum Support Price.

The department had earlier projected to bring up to 50 per cent under desi (native) varieties to break the monoculture

in cotton farming but this does not seem feasible, as farmers are not keen to take one risk after another by growing the desi variety on a large scale.

Punjab has approved 38 varieties of cotton seeds and its agriculture department is keeping an extra vigil on the distribution of seeds and chemical sprays so that the farmers are not fleeced by the companies.

Cotton acreage was 398,000 hectare last year in Punjab and has grown in the south-west of the state in districts Bathinda, Mansa, Barnala and surrounding areas.

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r/c News paper Unit