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# THE HINDU

## **‘Punjab overstayed in agriculture’**

Lakhwinder Singh, professor of economics, and coordinator at the Centre for Development Economics and Innovation Studies at Punjabi University, Patiala, who has been mapping rural Punjab for decades, speaks to Vikas Vasudeva on agrarian distress. Excerpts:

### **What has sparked the agrarian crises in Punjab?**

Punjab’s Green Revolution was predominantly state-led agricultural capitalism. It dramatically reduced poverty among non-landed households.

However, after 1991, with the state failing to provide services such as education and healthcare efficiently and encouraging the private sector to provide the same at a very high price, surpluses generated in the agriculture sector have been squeezed. Also, mechanical and chemical innovations and their use in agriculture made family labour redundant without alternative jobs in sight. The cost of cultivation has gone up multiple times. Small and marginal farms were the first casualty. Per acre debt is highest among the marginal and small farmers.

### **The agriculture-led development model of Punjab was presented over the years as being worthy of emulation. What went wrong?**

Punjab not only achieved a leading status in terms of productivity, per capita income and level of infrastructure but improved its human capital and entrepreneurial skills. The State also started industrialisation, which was part-autonomous and part-complementary to agriculture.

The problem is that Punjab overstayed in agriculture and other sectors could not be developed to allow the workforce to move to a high productivity-high wages economy. Industry in Punjab has remained small.

## **Roanu brings cheer to paddy farmers in Krishna**

The recent cyclone Roanu has brought cheer to the farmers in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh.

The land preparation works for the kharif season are in full swing across the district.

Bullocks and tractors that plough land are seen on the fields.

Farmers are gearing to raise paddy nurseries anticipating the next spell of rain.

“The rains reported during the three-day Roanu have done a great job, making the land ready for kharif operations. Hopes are on the next spell of rainfall,” says Murala Babu Rao, a farmer of Mukkollu village. Farmers are keen on raising nurseries instead of preferring direct sowing of paddy, expecting good amount of rainfall in time for the kharif.

Agriculture Department sources say that normally 2.55 lakh hectares comes under paddy cultivation. In 2015 kharif, paddy was sown on 2.5 lakh hectares only owing to untimely rains.

*Land preparation activities for*

*kharif season in*

*full swing across the district*

## **Colourful start to Udhagamandalam flower show**

The 120<sup>+</sup> flower show began on a grand note at the Government Botanical Garden in Udhagamandalam on Friday.

The three-day flower show, which is part of the ongoing summer festival, is expected to draw a large number of tourists as the curtains come down on the summer season.

The sprawling 22-acre spacious Botanical garden has 15,000 pots of native and imported flowers of varied hues.

On an average, 15 lakh tourists visit the garden every year. While the garden was founded in 1848 by William Graham Mac Ivor, who was trained at London's Royal Botanical Garden, the first flower show was held in 1896. Since 1980, the Horticulture Department has been conducting the flower show.



Inaugurating the show, Agriculture Minister R. Doraikannu pointed out that besides tourists, the garden was drawing students and researchers as it was a home for more than 2,000 plant species. The star attraction at the flower show is the replica of the frontage of the Chennai Central Railway station using coronation flowers. Other replicas also became the selfie points for tourists. Congress MLA R. Ganesh surprised everyone by his presence. Speaking on the occasion, he urged the State government to implement the rope car project. He sought job permanency for 340-odd workers at the garden who were employed on a contract basis. He also wanted Rs. 15 crore revenue generated by the garden used for development of tourism.

This year's summer festival began with a Fruit Show at the Sims Park in Coonoor on May 21. The festival includes week-long cultural events at the HADP Grounds in Udthagamandalam.

*The three-day festival will showcase 15,000 pots of native and imported flowers of varied hues*

### **Farmers' company to start milk chilling plant**

The Tiruchi District Farmers' Producer Company, which was floated in July last year, has been registering a steady growth and has netted a profit of about Rs 2.50 lakh so far since its inception. It was floated with assistance and administrative guidance from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The profit was mainly from sale of fodder to members of the company who are largely milk producers. “Our bulk purchase of fodder encouraged the firms to offer some concession. We, in turn, offered a fair reduction in rates to the members,” says T.M.P. Thangaraj, Executive Director of the company.

The profit margin was relatively less. Fodder sale benefited both the company as well as the members.

He said the company, with a membership of about 1,000, was considering a plan to start a milk chilling plant in course of time, as part of its expansion of its enterprise. “We are working out the modalities for the plant, with an eye on meeting the growing demand for milk in Kerala,” he told *The Hindu*. The milk would be despatched to Kerala via Karur and Coimbatore within seven hours from Thuraiyur. Kerala offered a good market for milk as, apart from consumption, it accounts for a cluster of industries involved in value-added dairy products. Presently, the company members have a tie-up with private milk firm.

The daily chilling capacity would be 7,000 litres to start with. It would be expanded to 10,000 litres, he added.

### **Efforts on to turn farming in Ernakulam organic**



**GREEN MOVEMENT:** Famers’ clusters will be formed in the district to create organic villages.

The Principal Agriculture Officer (PAO) has said that intense efforts are underway to shift the entire farming methods in the district the organic way.

In this connection, famers' clusters will be formed to create organic villages. Organic fertilisers and pesticides will be produced locally in the farm fields. A system of Organic Produces Certification will be put in place to strengthen the marketing of organically produced crops and to make them profitable.

Besides, such produce would be branded and bestowed with Good Agriculture Practice (GAP) Certification and logo to make them more attractive. Products from GAP certified agriculture fields would be branded as "safe to consume". The PAO will supervise the project and the assistant director of agriculture will be the nodal officer. Farm fields will be inspected at the block level by assistant directors, agriculture officers and agriculture assistants at the level of Krishi Bhavans.

Financial assistance of Rs. 12 lakh would be given to farmers' groups, Rs. 7 lakh for rural compost units, and Rs. 6 lakh for packaging and labelling.

Awards have also been instituted for the best municipality, panchayat and corporation in the adoption of organic farming practices. The last date for the applications to be considered for awards is August 31.

## **Oversupply, low prices cut onion farmers deep**

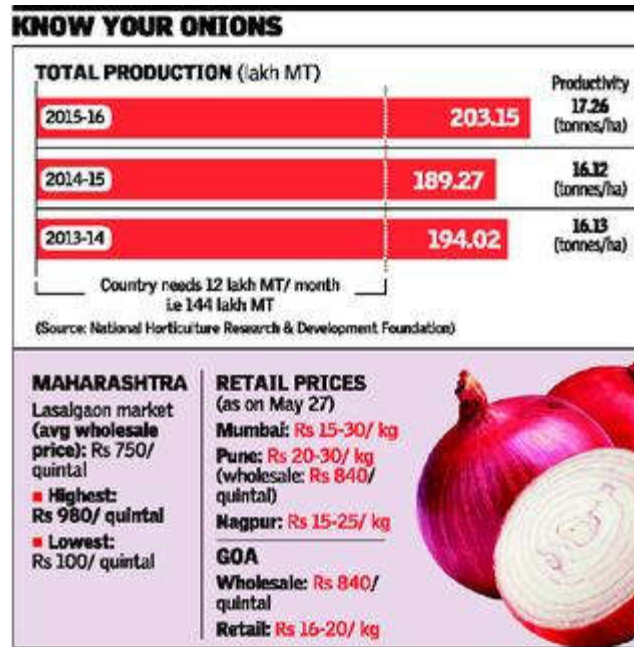
*Cyclical drop and rise in onion prices hurt all*

It's a double whammy for Maharashtra's onion farmers: in the third consecutive drought year, a demand-supply mismatch has pushed them to the brink.

While high prices pinched citizens last year, this year, farmers are struggling to recover their production cost. The all-India onion production figure has touched 203.15 lakh metric tonnes (MT), the highest in recent years, which is in excess of the average consumption of 144 lakh MT.

Prices at Lasalgaon market in Nashik, the largest onion market in the state, have dropped to Rs 750 per quintal on average from last year's Rs 5,500 to Rs 6,000 per quintal.

This essentially means a farmer is selling one kg of good quality onions at Rs 7.5 in the wholesale market, a price too low to even compensate the production cost. The state is one of the largest producers of onions in the country, contributing to almost 40 per cent of total production.



Essentially, the farmers got their math wrong. Buoyed by onion prices last year, many farmers took to onion cultivation. “The area under onion cultivation in the state almost doubled in the 2015 rabi season. Farmers hoped they would get the 2015 rate, which did not happen as the produce quantity shot up,” said Nanasahab Patil, chairman, Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC).

A major reasons for the rise in onion prices last year was hailstorm-induced damage to the crop. “Though production was satisfactory last year, the natural calamity had reduced the keeping quality (shelf life) of the crop. So the produce that was harvested faced damages and prices went up,” said Mr. Patil.

The drought too pushed up onion farming. “There was water scarcity and sensing that, even sugarcane farmers turned to onion cultivation in many parts of the state,” said Deepak Chavan, a Pune-based agriculture commodity analyst. A similar trend was witnesses in other parts of the country, he said.

## **The vicious cycle**

According to Mr. Chavan, while the drought has already affected lakhs of farmers in the state, the continued drop in prices and the government's inability to extend fair prices to farmers will hit more of them hard. "Due to this drop, next year, farmers will not opt for onions and then it will lead to an increase in prices. This is a cyclical process that has been going on for years. It should be stopped in the interest of both farmers and consumers," he said.

"There is a similar increase in onion production in Pakistan and China and has brought in restrictions on export of the Indian crop," said onion trader Sanjay Pingle from the Vashi APMC.

According to a National Horticulture Research & Development Foundation report, the arrival of onion increased in almost all the markets of major rabi onion-producing states. "The harvesting of rabi onion will continue till May 2016. Farmers and traders started storing good quality onions from April 2016, and it is expected to continue till May-end. Around 45 lakh MT or even more is expected to be stored in the current year due to the availability of good quality and the prevailing low rates. Onion prices are expected to remain the same till May/June 2016," the report stated.

## **Systemic failure**

Farmers say the government failed to see this coming. "Farmers have been agitating since December 2015, but no one bothered to listen to them. Adding onion to the essential commodities list has ensured that traders do not stock, making matters worse. Our policies are always consumer-centric, but what about the producers?" Mr. Patil said.

*Last year, onion prices had shot up after the crop was damaged by hail, reducing shelf life*

## **Campaign to reduce use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides**

Stepping into what hitherto has been concerned farmers' pursuit, the Agriculture Department has launched a campaign to promote organic farming in the kharif season.

As a part of the exercise, in 10 clusters of the district, including three in the Agency area, 3,000 farmers have been identified to take up zero-budget natural farming. They will take up the farming in a part of their holding.

“In organic farming no chemical fertilizer and pesticide will be used. This is intended to provide two benefits: one it will bring down the cost of inputs making agriculture viable and secondly, it will deal with the more critical issue of chemical residue in foodgrains owing to their excessive use either to improve productivity or fight pests,” says Joint Director (Agriculture) V. Satyanarayana.

For organic farming natural fertilizer and pesticide are produced from desi cow’s dung and urine, he explains. Some freely available plants in villages are mixed with the urine to produce natural pesticides.

A cow will help cultivate 30 acres, it is estimated.

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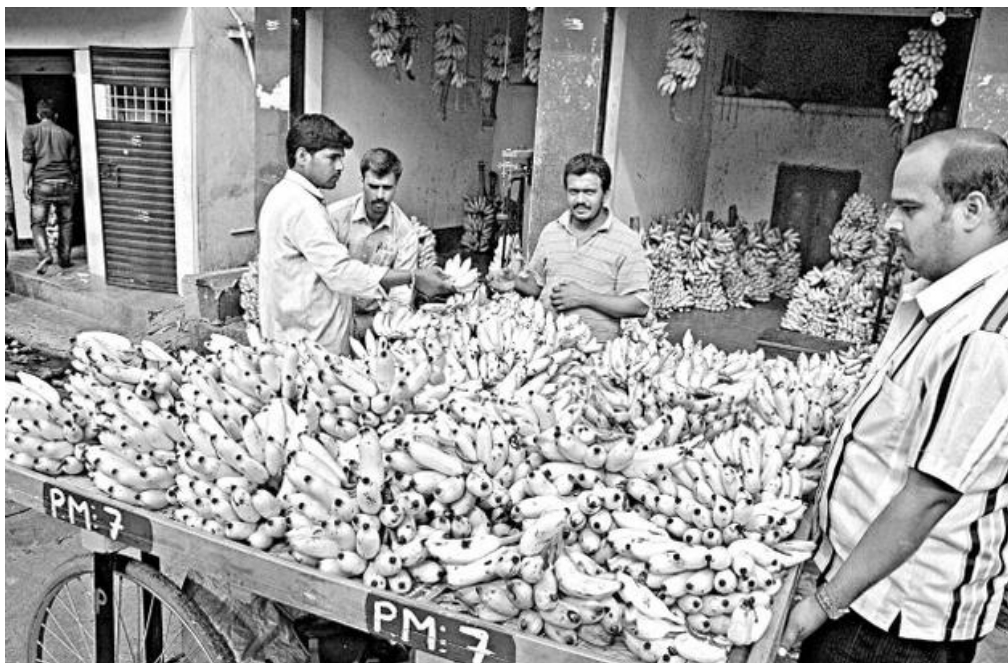


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### **Banana prices hit the roof thanks to harsh summer**



Difficult situation:HOPCOMS sources say the price of bananas usually dips once mangoes arrive in the market, but the poor supply this year has pushed up prices.— PHOTO: M.A.SRIRAM

## **COSTLY DEAL**

### **Retail price at HOPCOMS**

| <b>Variety</b>  | <b>Now</b> | <b>A Month Ago</b> |
|-----------------|------------|--------------------|
| <b>Yelakki</b>  | Rs. 52     | Rs. 30             |
| <b>Pachbale</b> | Rs. 28     | Rs. 14             |

### **Wholesale price at Devaraja Market**

**Yelakki: Rs 40 to Rs. 55**

**Pachbale: Rs. 20**

**ALL RATES PER KG**

*Retail price of the Yelakki variety is inching towards Rs. 60 a kilogram*

Banana prices, which had crashed just a few months ago, have now shot up. Sources in the wholesale banana market in Mysuru and representatives of the Horticultural Producers' Co-operative Marketing and Processing Society (HOPCOMS) attribute it to the exceptional hot summer.

“The prices may go up further in the coming days,” said Bore Gowda, President of HOPCOMS, Mysuru.

Though the price of Pachbale in the retail market is hovering around Rs. 28 a kg, the popular Yelakki variety, is being sold at Rs. 58 a kg. However, its HOPCOMS price was Rs. 52 on Friday.

HOPCOMS managing director B.C. Anand said the banana crop requires a good amount of water. And with farmers in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar unable to find sufficient water for the crop this summer, the output has declined.

“But the farmers who have managed to get good yield despite the hot conditions are laughing their way to the bank. The purchase price of bananas by HOPCOMS too has gone up steeply,” Mr. Anand said.

Mr. Anand, a wholesale dealer of bananas at Devaraja Market, added that the price of Yelakki ranges between Rs. 40 to Rs. 55 a kg in the wholesale market, depending on the quality.

### **Huge jump**

According to sources in HOPCOMS, the price of Yelakki variety was hovering in the range of Rs. 30 to Rs. 35 a kg last month. Similarly, the price of Pachbale was in the range of Rs. 14 to Rs. 15 a kg in April.

But the rates began spiking from early May and they may touch Rs. 60, said Mr. Bore Gowda.

“Usually, the price of bananas dips during summer when mangoes hit the market. This year, unusually, the price has gone up,” a HOPCOMS source said.

### **Go nuts over mangoes**



Go grab them: About 400 tonnes of mango varieties are up for sale at the three-day mela which was inaugurated at Curzon Park in Mysuru on Friday.—  
photo: m.a. sriram

## WHAT THEY COST

➤ Jackfruit: **Rs. 20**

### MANGO

➤ Raspuri: **Rs. 40**

➤ Ratnagiri Alphonso:  
**Rs. 60**

➤ Alphonso: **Rs. 50**

➤ Kesar: **Rs. 70**

➤ Mallika: **Rs. 50**

➤ Daseri: **Rs. 75**

➤ Baganpalli: **Rs. 40**

➤ Thotapuri: **Rs. 30**

**(ALL RATES PER KG)**

For mango lovers, all roads in the city will be leading to Curzon Park over the weekend, with a three-day mango and jackfruit mela kicking off there on Friday.

Both popular and rare varieties of the King of Fruits are on display at the mela, which was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner C. Shikha. Farmers from Mysuru, Mandya, Chamarajanagar, Ramanagaram, Chickballapur, Doddaballapur and Shivamogga have brought their produce to the mela. About 60 stalls have been set up, including three of jackfruit.

There are two stalls where organically grown mangoes are being sold. “All the varieties [on offer] are naturally ripened,” said Dinesh Kumar, Senior Assistant Director of Horticulture.

“We thought of having only 30 stalls but the number went up with many farmers coming forward to sell their produce directly to the consumers at affordable prices,” Mr. Kumar told *The Hindu* .

## **Many choices**

About 400 tonnes of mango varieties, including Ratnagiri Alphonso, Badam, Raspuri, Saindoora, Mallika, Daseri, Kesar and Malagoa, are up for sale. “If the demand goes up, the farmers can arrange for the fruits. There is no dearth,” he said.

Some rare varieties like Valaja, Imam Pasand, and Rumali for Shivamogga are also available. Over 18 varieties are on display, but only nine are up for sale. The mela is open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Meanwhile, farmers from Chickballapur and Doddaballapur are selling jackfruit in three stalls. Mr. Kumar said the price for every variety has been fixed by the Horticulture Department. “It is a win-win situation for both farmers and consumers as our aim is to help both by giving priority to quality.”

Somashekar, who had come with his family to the mela, said it was a great opportunity for mango enthusiasts to get quality fruits for a good price.

## **Poly-house farming set to receive fillip**

*Horticulture Department readying two poly-house demo units in Khammam to popularise greenhouse technology*

Poly-house farming is set to receive a fillip in the district, with the Horticulture Department readying two poly-house demo units to popularise greenhouse technology and help farmers take up cultivation of high yielding vegetables round the year under controlled weather conditions.

Although widely acclaimed as the horticulture hub of Telangana, Khammam, the predominantly tribal populated district, is still lagging behind in embracing the protected cultivation technology to maximise horticulture output.

According to sources, only seven farmers constructed greenhouses by availing subsidies offered by the Horticulture Department in the entire district last year. However, they are yet to take up protected cultivation of crops using the greenhouse technology in a full-fledged manner in Sattupalli, Yerrupalem, Penuballi and Khammam rural mandals, sources added.

In an effort to give an impetus to poly-house farming, the Horticulture Department has constructed two poly greenhouses – one each at its horticulture farms in Garimellapadu in Kothagudem mandal and Atchutapuram in Aswaraopeta mandal – exclusively for demonstration purpose. The move is aimed at familiarising farmers with the scientific and cost-effective method of poly greenhouse cultivation by providing them hands-on training at the demo units.

## **Cultivation**

Efforts are on to cultivate tomato, cucumber and capsicum in the poly greenhouse demonstration units at the horticulture farms in Garimellapadu and Atchutapuram, said R. Srinivasa Rao, deputy director, Horticulture Department, Khammam.

The demo units will help motivate farmers adopt greenhouse technology to grow high yielding vegetable crops in a protected environment throughout the year, he affirmed, adding that plans were afoot to bring 50 acres under greenhouse farming in the district this year.

## **Choice veggies missing from wedding feasts**

Up, up and away: Prices of beans have been skyrocketing over the past several weeks. —file Photo

*Unexpected rise in prices have caterers replacing them with cheaper alternatives*

It is the marriage season, with exciting fare in feasts to look forward to.

Despite elaborate arrangements, some families find their best-laid plans washed away by unexpected rise in prices of vegetables.

Vegetarian feasts include beans and carrots. But with the prices of beans skyrocketing these past several weeks, chefs have had to replace it.

Radha Varadarajan of Arr Vee Caterers says that when he catered for a wedding recently, beans was included despite the steep price. But if the client is flexible, then they replace it with yard-long beans or broad beans. “Of course, we will

make sure to provide the best of taste,” he says, adding such a steep increase in price was witnessed last in 2012.



“But one of the highest I have seen in my 30-year career was in 1994 when one kg cost Rs.180. Yet, we served beans since the client was very particular,” he says.

Though caterers can replace plantains with potatoes, tomatoes and onions are a staple, says M. Krishna Rao, who runs Sree Durga Caterers. “We cannot do without tomatoes and onions for rasam and sambar. But more than often than not, we do not pass on the price rise on the client’s final bill,” he adds.

A. Selvaraj, general secretary of Chennai Koyambedu Periyar Market Tomato Merchants Association, says beans sold at Rs.80-100 per kg at Koyambedu wholesale market on Friday. Staple vegetables such as onion (Rs.15-20) and potatoes (Rs. 20) were cheaper than shallots (Rs.40) and tomatoes (Rs.60).

“The price of beans has been steadily climbing because supply to the Koyambedu wholesale market has fallen drastically. Usually, we get around 10 to 15 lorry-loads everyday, but it has fallen to four-five loads,” Mr. Selvaraj says.

The seasonal rain in Karnataka and the belts along Hosur that account for the bulk of beans production has damaged the crop. “The price of beans may not fall till May-end and after that it will hover around Rs.60,” he says.

As for tomatoes, he says prices will stabilise in the coming weeks when production picks up in Maharashtra and, within a couple of months, in Theni, Udumalpet and Dindigul.

### **Walk-in interview for research fellow**

A walk-in interview will be held at 10 a.m. on June 15 to fill a post of Senior Research Fellow at the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute for an ICAR project, Establishment of mechanised cassava and sweet potato model farms — Development of Cassava Production Machineries.

A press note issued here said the duration of the post was till January 31, 2018, or till the project was terminated, whichever was earlier. Knowledge in designing harvesters and farm equipment was desirable. The fellow would be paid Rs.25,000 a month. A written test would be held.

For details, contact principal investigator J.T. Sheriff via email [jtsheriff@rediffmail.com](mailto:jtsheriff@rediffmail.com).

### **Honeybees that thrive in the city**

*Green spaces in Paris had a better mix of trees and flowers than farming areas*

If you are a honeybee in France, the best place to live (and work) might be smack in the middle of Paris.

Audric de Campeau, who set up his first hives in Paris in 2009, said he was surprised to discover that his Parisian bees produced more than twice as much honey as the ones he kept back in the northeastern Champagne region.

De Campeau said that green spaces in Paris and other large cities like New York or London actually had a better mix of trees, flowers and other plants than farming areas dominated by vast single-crop fields. Plus: no crop-dusted pesticides.

Honey produced in Paris tastes of red berries and lychee, de Campeau said. He said that traces of the city’s high air pollution had been found in beeswax and



the bees themselves, but that the bees still lived longer than their country cousins. Bees were cultivated in Paris as far back as 1856, in the Luxembourg Garden, where there is still a beekeeping school. Now, local authorities count 700 hives in parks, private residences and office buildings.

They have been set up on the rooftops of the National Assembly, France's lower house of parliament, and on top of the Palais Garnier opera house, which sells small jars of its honey online for 15 euros, or about \$17.

At the Tour d'Argent, a Left Bank restaurant, diners could recently enjoy "roast duckling with spices and honey from our roof" as they took in the sweeping view of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame — where several hives sit atop the sacristy.

Even the French Communist Party recently set up a handful of hives on the roof of its imposing 1970s-era headquarters. One Twitter user wryly noted that the party was now in the capitalist business of exploiting workers.— New York Times News Service



### **Pro-farmer schemes: Tota takes on Agri minister Radha Mohan Singh**

Even as Union Minister of Agriculture, Radha Mohan Singh, spoke at length about the NDA government's pro-farmer schemes on Friday, state Agriculture Minister, Tota Singh, disagreed with him on the effectiveness of the schemes.



Minister of Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh (PTI Photo) Even as Union Minister of Agriculture, Radha Mohan Singh, spoke at length about the NDA government's pro-farmer schemes on Friday, state Agriculture Minister, Tota Singh, disagreed with him on the effectiveness of the schemes.

“It needs to be mentioned that though 12 states out of 29 have become part of e- trading and even crop insurance scheme is also picking up as per Radha Mohan's claims, but Punjab is yet not part of these schemes despite the fact that BJP is an ally in the Punjab government,” said Tota Singh.

When asked about the delay in implementation of these schemes in Punjab, Radha Mohan said, “We are putting efforts and we have to implement these schemes in every state.

We have MSP for paddy and wheat crops in Punjab and so far, Punjab and Haryana have the best purchase system of crops in the whole country. The Centre is in the process to take out FCI from purchase system and we are not yet convinced with e-trading as it will drop the prices of crops even more.

However, state Agricultural Minister, Tota Singh, said, “The terms and conditions in this scheme are not suited for Punjab.

The conditions say that crop compensation will be given if the damage is not less than 10 per cent of the total agriculture land in the whole of the state while

in the 1988 floods, damage in Punjab was not more than nine per cent and that has been the maximum till now.

Moreover, the terms state that the whole village needs to get insured to avail benefits and it should be voluntary and we have conveyed our suggestions to the Centre, we are ready to implement the scheme but with modifications as per the needs of our state.”

### **Government agro-reforms talks of ‘more crop per drop’**

This comes in the wake of the state’s decision to adopt the Israeli agro-model of more crop per drop (of water).



A farmer in his crop field. (Express archive photo.) The state government is planning to bring in more reforms in the agriculture sector by promoting “high-density planting” to facilitate higher yield in lesser land holding.

This comes in the wake of the state’s decision to adopt the Israeli agro-model of more crop per drop (of water).

A senior officer in the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Conservation said, “Today, 90 per cent of the farmers in Maharashtra are used to traditional farming.

They completely rely on rain-fed farming, and where almost one-third land is wasted due to extra spacing between two plants

The reports of the data analysis carried out by agriculture universities submitted to government maintains: “The high-density agriculture technique would almost double the yield. Moreover, it could be done in just two third of the land.”

Dr Anil Bondre, who own orange farms, said, “Across the world, high-density farming is being experimented successfully. We have to switch to this new technique for better management of resources.”

The state government, which is pushing the Israeli agro-technique, has indicated that all new aspects of farming from crop patterns, water management to high density techniques should be co-opted in the reforms to make agriculture sustainable, specially for farmers in the drought-hit districts.

### **Against the grain**

Official wheat production estimates raise questions about the quality of data from government departments.



Wheat meant to be transported in Jalandhar market. (Source: Express) Crop output estimates are always fraught with uncertainty, as production happens not in factories, but over millions of hectares of open fields exposed to the elements.

Their numbers are, therefore, subject to margins of error and upward/downward revisions much more than in steel or cement.

But when the gap between initial and final estimates or that of the government vis-à-vis private trade are of the order of 10 million tonnes (mt), there's a serious problem.

The Union agriculture ministry has pegged this year's wheat crop at 94 mt-plus, a jump of 7.5 mt over 2014-15. This, when both market arrivals and government procurement have fallen by about 5.1 mt, even as wholesale wheat prices are ruling roughly 15 per cent higher than last year.

The fact that even for 2014-15, the ministry's final figure of wheat production turned out to be about 9.2 mt lower than the first advance estimate of 95.76 mt, raises further doubts about the quality of official data.

And that isn't restricted to wheat.

There are two broad concerns. Does Krishi Bhawan have a robust mechanism to track the progress of sowing in various states, the status of crops at different stages of growth, arrivals in mandis and stocks with the trade, apart from imports, exports and prices both in domestic and international markets?

The importance of such information is obvious for policy purposes, whether it relates to fixing of minimum support prices for promoting/dissuading cultivation of particular crops or supply-side management with a view to control inflation.

Recent experience — at least with regard to onions, pulses, sugar and now wheat — points to the government not being particularly possessed of timely market intelligence.

Being slow in reacting to both shortages and gluts has, in turn, produced knee-jerk responses — typically in the form of imposition of export curbs or stock-holding limits without a thought to what these would do to producer incentives.

The second concern is larger, having to do with credibility. Liberalised market economies don't need the government to directly engage in production and trade, but its role in statistical data collection and dissemination — which is a public good much like primary education, healthcare or law and order — is well recognised.

Trust in government economic data is premised on its not being in business and, hence, unlike private industry, not financially standing to lose from giving out the right information.

It is this credibility that becomes a casualty when official information on farm production or GDP growth is seen to be providing an exaggerated picture of buoyancy, which does not appear to square up with the ground reality.

The agriculture ministry should explain the basis for its optimistic output estimates.

## THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

### **Global Q1 black tea production up 17%**

Global black tea production in the first quarter (Q1) current calendar has risen by 17.12 per cent over the same period of last year due to high cropping conditions in India and Kenya.

“Global black tea production so far this has risen to 286.78 million kg (mkg) from 244.87 mkg. This increase of 41.91 mkg marked a growth of 17.12 per cent”, Rajesh Gupta, compiler of annual Global Tea Digest told *BusinessLine*.

“India tops the production table at 103.23 mkg with 21.93 mkg more tea than last year. In most countries, the El Nino factor has influenced the cropping pattern. Now, weather experts are warning of La Nina influence on tea production,” he said.

Kenya's production has risen by 28.35 mkg to touch 94.28 mkg. Sri Lanka, however, has posted a reduction of 8.94 mkg to dip to 70.05 mkg.

### **Monsoon may set in over Kerala during June 3 to 9, says agro-met advisory**

Advisory urges Kerala farmers to undertake nursery for rice, vegetables and orchard crop

Meteorological subdivision-level rainfall forecast indicates rainfall activity over South India during June 3 to 9, which can bring the onset of the South-West monsoon. Normal date for onset over Kerala is June 1.

The June 3-9 window has been projected in the national agro-met advisory service bulletin based on extended range weather forecast valid for the period May 27 to June 9.

#### **Wet spell**

It is issued by the India Met Department in association with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, All India Coordinated Research Project on Agricultural Meteorology and the Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, Hyderabad.

According to the bulletin, extreme parts of South India and North-East India are likely to receive witness a wet spell rain during May 27 to June 2.

Over the West Coast, the rainfall belt will gradually extend northward, which will drive the rains over the rest of South India during June 3 to June 9.

This, according to the bulletin, could likely precipitate onset of the monsoon over Kerala followed by other parts of South India.

#### **Delayed onset**

The India Met Department had in its monsoon onset forecast issued earlier said that the arrival of the rains will be delayed until June 7 with a model error of four days.

The aforementioned bulletin says that the next fortnight beginning Friday would witness normal or above normal rainfall would over Jammu & Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Interior Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Normal or above normal rainfall may also occur in either of the next two weeks in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Konkan, Goa, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathawada, Telangana and Coastal Karnataka.

Prevailing weather conditions are suitable to continue agricultural activities such as land preparation and sowing of kharif crops in North-Eastern states, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

### **Advice to farmers**

Since there has been rainfall in Kerala which is likely to continue too, farmers are advised to undertake nursery for rice and vegetables as well as planting of orchard crops.

On the other hand, heat wave or high temperature conditions have prevailed in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Vidarbha, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

During the latter part of the next fortnight, heat wave to severe heat wave conditions may descend over Central India and North-West India.

In view of prevailing heat wave conditions, farmers in the above States have been advised to apply light and frequent irrigation to summer vegetables, sugarcane and orchards during evening hours.

Soil mulching or mulching with straw or polythene may be undertaken to conserve soil moisture.

### **Maharashtra fixes stockholding limits on sugar traders**

With sugar prices rising to 40 per kg level in retail markets, the Maharashtra government has imposed stockholding limits on sugar traders in order to check hoarding and control prices of the sweetener.



Maharashtra has fixed the maximum limit for sugar at 5,000 quintals that a wholesaler can keep in stock for a period of maximum 30 days after receiving such stock.

According to a government resolution, issued yesterday, the limit for retailers has been set at 500 quintals for a period of maximum 30 days after they received such stock.

As retail sugar prices crossed 40 per kg, the Centre had allowed the states last month to fix the stockholding limit on sugar.

The Cabinet had given its approval to bring sugar under the purview of stockholding limit, keeping in view the uptrend in prices, an official statement had said.

The Centre has also withdrawn sugar output subsidy of 4.50/kg to mills.

Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan has recently said it would consider lowering import duty on sugar and banning exports of the sweetener if prices spike further from the current level.

The country's sugar production is estimated to be about 25 million tonnes in the 2015-16 marketing year (October-September), as against 28.3 million tonnes last year

### **Intertek eyes agri testing business in India**

Intertek, a UK-based quality assurance and testing services provider, has launched an AgriTech laboratory in Hyderabad.

The 130-year-old company, has a long history of acquisitions – including the legendary inventor Thomas Edison's Electrical Testing Laboratories – registered a turnover of £2.1 billion last year.

It has over 1,000 laboratories in 100 countries with over 40,000 employees.

The firm's new laboratory in Hyderabad would provide DNA analyses for seed firms assisting them in their research projects.

The laboratory, with permission from the Department of Biotechnology, will cater to the needs of seed firms in crop testing, pathogen testing, livestock and commodity testing.

This is the first such laboratory in India and fourth in the world for the company.

“The laboratory enables customers to access technology services consistent with Intertek ScanBi Diagnostics in Sweden, which is a certified laboratory for several major seed companies,” Valentin Rossel, Global Business Line Leader – Agricultural Services at Intertek, said, after launching the laboratory here on Friday.

The firm, however, refuses to disclose the investments made in the laboratory at its Hyderabad facility.

“We have about 15 clients as of today,” he said.

The agriculture tech vertical contributes about 10-15 per cent to the overall revenues of the company.

### **Cotton blooms on limited supplies**

Cotton prices moved up on scarcity of quality fibre in the market.

Moreover, fresh demand from domestic mills supported the upside in price. Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton increased by 200 to 36,500-37,000 per candy of 356 kg.

Average quality cotton traded at 35,000-36,000.

About 10,000 bales of 170 kg each arrived in Gujarat and 35,000 bales arrived in India.

Kapas or raw cotton moved up on tight supply.



Kapas gained by 10-15 to 980-1,035 per 20 kg and gin delivery kapas quoted 1,050-1,065. Cottonseed gained 10 to 500-540.

### **Govt may increase funds to help States complete irrigation projects**

Decision will depend on the response to long-term infra bonds floated by Nabard

The Centre may consider scaling up the dedicated Long-Term Irrigation Fund announced in this year's Budget beyond the initial corpus of 20,000 crore to help States expedite the completion of their pending irrigation projects and fight drought more effectively.

“If the response to the long-term infrastructure bonds to be floated by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) is good, we will scale up the fund this year,” a senior Agriculture Ministry official told *BusinessLine*.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced a separate corpus of 20,000 crore created through Nabard in this year's Budget. The fund is for completion of 89

long-term and medium-term irrigation projects pending for many years, specifically targeting 23 short-listed ones. “In the meeting between the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers of various drought-affected States this month, many pointed to the need of completing as many pending projects as possible and sought more resources.

The Centre is now exploring the possibility of raising more funds through infrastructure bonds so that some of it could be handed over to States to enable them to participate in the process,” the official added.

Chief Ministers of drought-hit States including Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Telangana have demanded more funds than what the Centre has agreed to release under the national and state disaster response funds to address their water crisis.

More than 330 million people have been severely affected in about 13 States due to drought and drought-like situation prevailing for the last two years. The Supreme Court, earlier this month, pulled up the Centre for not taking adequate action to mitigate distress in drought-affected States. “The Centre cannot hide behind the smokescreen of lack of funds,” Justice Madan B Lokur said in his judgment in response to a Public Interest Litigation filed by NGO Swaraj Abhiyan.

The Centre is also working with States for effective channelising of water as in many cases where dams exist the linkages for carrying water was missing. “We are working on establishing linkages through drips and sprinklers so that the same quantity of water can be used to irrigate more. In cases where canals are not completed, we are connecting it to fields with pipes which serves the dual purpose of preventing evaporation loss and also doesn’t encroach on land,” the official said.



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## **Punjab Agricultural University hosts Angolan agriculture minister**

An 11 member senior delegation, from the agricultural ministry of People's Republic of Angola, led by Eng. Afonso Pedro Canga, agriculture minister, Angola visited Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, on Friday, to strengthen linkages for development of agricultural extension, education and research in Angola.

The Angolan agriculture minister, Afonso Pedro Canga acknowledged the research contributions made by PAU at the international level and its tireless efforts towards the cause of food security for the teeming millions around the world. While applauding PAU's close connections with farmers through an organized extension programme, the minister invited the officials of the university to Angola in order to see and understand the agricultural challenges faced by Angola, as it is in a phase of reconstruction after being ravaged by war. He also mentioned the use of PAU maize and rice varieties for propagation in Angola to increase food production in the country.

The vice chancellor, Dr BS Dhillon, while interacting with the Angolan delegation, informed about the excellent relationship of PAU with African countries, and that, especially because of similar agro ecology, the chances of collaboration are stronger. He accepted the partnership proposal for Angolan students and also offered to undertake exchange programmes for faculty, students and farmers with the African country. Dr Dhillon highlighted PAU's strong programmes in seed production, plant protection and soil science and also proposed to set up PAU College of agriculture and engineering in Angola to help develop their agriculture sector.

Earlier Dr. Balwinder Singh gave a brief over of the university's research, extension and teaching activities. The meeting was followed by a visit to the crop museum followed by the soil museum.

## **PAU to collaborate with Ohio State University, USA in the area of agricultural engineering**

A four member delegation from Ohio State University, USA visited Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana to build collaborations between PAU and Ohio State University (OSU), USA. The delegation visited to set up programme for undergraduate studies in Agricultural Engineering at PAU and to engage with Agricultural Engineering faculty in potential research areas through collaborations.

Baldev Singh Dhillon, vice chancellor, PAU appreciated the on-going collaborations with Ohio State University in the area of Agricultural Research and Education. He further expressed his willingness to carry these collaborations further for achieving professional excellence in agriculture sector.

Scott Shearer, Chair of Agricultural Engineering at Ohio State University appreciated the research work done by PAU faculty and mentioned wide scope of collaborations between Ohio State University and Punjab Agricultural University in the area of agricultural engineering. Mark Erbaugh, director of International Programs in Agriculture, Ohio State University acknowledged the full support extended by PAU in running bilateral and trilateral collaborative programmes in India and Tanzania.

While interacting with the delegation, JS Mahal, dean, College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology elaborated the various undergraduate and postgraduate academic programmes being offered by the college and landmarks achieved in the development and adoption of farm technologies. Mahal also mentioned that the College has strong linkages with industry in development of the farm technology and students training and skill enhancement programmes. While interacting with the delegation, the Head of Departments of College of Agricultural Engineering & Technology made presentations on their on-going research projects and future thrust areas.

Scott Shearer gave the details on the research work being carried out in the area of ethanol production from corn, pesticide spraying technology, controlled traffic to reduce soil compaction and dairy emission etc. at Ohio State University. Scott expressed his views in building collaboration with PAU research faculty in the discipline of Agricultural Engineering. He also explained that the next green revolution will come through digital agriculture which is the backbone of the precision agricultural technology. Punjab Agricultural University and Ohio State University agreed upon exploring the possibility on joint research and students exchange programme in common areas of interest.

### **UP to come up with agriculture information system for farmers with help from IIT-K**

Agriculture Production Commissioner (APC) Praveer Kumar has given his approval for the Comprehensive Agriculture Information System (CAIS). The Comprehensive Agriculture Information System would compile all the data pertaining to agriculture and agricultural sector, and would make a centralised database of entire agriculture land, farmers, ponds, gardens, soil, weather, irrigation system. The database would be used to give relevant data to the farmers for their benefit.

Initially, the CAIS would be implemented as a pilot project in 6 districts of Jhansi, Mau, Unnao, Meerut, Etawah and Gonda. After seeing the success of the implementation of the scheme, it would be replicated in other districts of the state. Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur has been assigned with the task of making the CAIS.

Agriculture director Mukesh Kumar Srivastava has been made the nodal officer to make the data available to the IIT Kanpur team. During the meeting, special secretary irrigation and water conservation, Aanjaneya Kumar Singh proposed that all GPS mapping of all the ponds of the state should be done. Seeing its utility, APC Praveer Kumar asked all the departments to implement this, so that any illegal activity carried out with different sources of water such as ponds, check dams and other water bodies, could be immediately detected at the headquarters level.

## **Storm causes 25% loss to mango crop**

The mango crop has suffered a loss of 20% to 25% due to high speed storms that had hit several districts on Monday and Wednesday. Unripe mangoes in many orchards fell due to the high velocity winds which blew at the speed of 100 km/hour and 70 km/hour respectively. Mango growers would not be able to get the maximum benefits of the crop this year.

The squall, followed by rain and thunderstorm, had hit the mango belts in Hardoi, Sitapur, Unnao, Rae Bareli, Safipur and Kanpur. Apart from mango crop, other crops also got damaged by the nature's fury. The farmers, who were expecting a good crop this year, are now counting their losses.

"We did not anticipate such a huge loss of mango crop, but around 30% of the crop got destroyed in the storm. This year the crop was comparatively better as compared to the last three years. We are helpless because it was the Almighty's wish. We have suffered a great loss", said Shaharyar Zuber, a mango grower in Kanpur. The crop was almost a week away from getting ripe. The unripe fruit which had fallen will not get a good price in the market, he added.

However, despite such a heavy loss, most experts are of the view that mango growers would not get higher prices because this year the productivity is high.

"Fortunately, this year the crop is bumper. Despite the losses, the industry will be able to sustain itself. People are afraid that prices of mango will be quite high but the situation is not so worse", said Sunil Kumar, a stockist at Kidwai Nagar fruit market.

Agro meteorologist of CSA University Anirudh Dubey informed that the high velocity winds during the storm had shed unripe fruit from the trees. The estimated loss of the mango crop may reach upto 25%. "In neighbouring areas of the industrial city like Safipur and Unnao, Dussehri mango crop has suffered the most", he added.



## **Eyeing a harvest of GM crops, Centre readies draft policy**

The Centre is slowly setting the stage for more genetically modified crops after they pass the test of public safety parameters to expand beyond Bt cotton, the only transgenic crop currently cultivated. The agriculture ministry has come out with a draft policy for transgenic crops, laying down rules for licensing of GM seed technology in future — a clear indication that the Centre is keen to have guidelines in place.

Though the ministry came out with its policy on May 18, it withdrew it five days later for consultations with stakeholders, including different ministries, farmers, experts and industries. The rules will eventually be framed after taking into consideration the suggestions of the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), which looks after the issue of intellectual property rights (IPR).

Agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh told TOI: "Since this order will decide the licensing issue of GM seed technology of any crop in future, we felt the need to take everyone's views for wider consultations before coming out with a definite policy."

Asked about the need to have such a policy, Singh said, "There is a view that other GM seeds (other than Bt cotton) may be introduced and therefore there should be a licensing policy. It is for the future".

According to the May 18 draft licensing policy, the GM technology provider cannot deny a licence to any eligible Indian seed company nor can it charge a royalty that exceeds 10 per cent of the maximum sale price of the seeds, which is to be fixed by the government every year. It specifies that the cap of 10 per cent will apply for the first five years. The royalty will decrease by 10 per cent a year from the sixth year onwards.

Though the central regulator on GM crops — Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee of the environment ministry — has allowed field trials of 18 varieties of genetically engineered seeds in past two years, it has not approved commercial cultivation of any such crop.

## **Government comes out with a draft policy on GM crops to expand base of transgenic seeds in future**

The Centre has so far not allowed commercial release of any genetically modified (GM) crops other than Bt Cotton in India, but it is getting future ready to welcome the transgenic variety of crops as and when it passes the test of public safety parameters through field trials.

For this purpose, the agriculture ministry has come out with a draft policy for transgenic crops laying down rules for the licensing of GM seed technology in future - a clear indication that the Centre is ready to expand the GM base beyond Bt Cotton and therefore it wants to have a clear-cut policy on the issue in advance.

Though the ministry had come out with its policy on May 18, it withdrew it five day later for consultations with stakeholders, including different ministries, farmers, experts and industries, so that it can come out with a comprehensive policy. The rules will eventually be framed after taking in view the suggestions of the department of industrial policy and promotion which looks after the intellectual property rights (IPR) issue.

Agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh told TOI: "Since this order will decide the licensing issue of GM seed technology of any crop in future, we felt the need to take everyone's views for wider consultations before coming out with a definite policy.

"We have withdrawn the order to take views of all stakeholders on the licensing issue. The ministry has put the entire draft of the order in public domain, seeking views of stakeholders within 90 days".

Asked about the need to have such a policy, Singh said, "There is a view that the other GM seeds (other than the Bt Cotton) may be introduced and therefore there should be a licensing policy. It is for the future".

According the May 18 draft licensing policy, the GM technology provider cannot deny a licence to any eligible Indian seed company nor it can charge a royalty that exceeds 10% of the maximum sale price of the seeds, which is to be

fixed by the government every year. It specifies that the cap of 10% will apply for the first five years. The royalty will decrease by 10% a year from the sixth year onwards.

At present, India allows commercial cultivation of only transgenic cotton (Bt Cotton). Though the central regulator on the GM crops - Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) of the environment ministry - has allowed scientific field trials of as many as 18 varieties of genetically engineered seeds in past two years, it has not approved commercial cultivation of any such crop. It is, however, expected to take its final call on commercial release of GM mustard soon.

Referring to the May 18 draft on licensing policy, Singh said, "I would like to make it clear that this particular order has nothing to do with what we had decided in case of Bt Cotton seeds by cutting its price and slashing the royalty fee. That order stands even now without change.

"That decision was taken, keeping farmers' interests in mind so that they cannot be exploited by the seed companies through arbitrary pricing. We have done this for our cotton farmers which had never been done before".

### **Farmers being taught benefits of community farming**

61 farmers of three villages of tribal Kondagaon district in Bastar are to be taught modern agricultural practices under community-based farming model for overall development of farmers in the region.

The programme is being carried out for technical upgrade and enhancement of their marketing linkages. The Krishi Vigyaan Kendra (KVK) of Bastar region along with Shaheed Gundadhur College of Agriculture and Research Station of Jagdalpur are involved in the project.

This model supports a group of 25 farmers owning 50 acres land at village Jarebendari while in the second group it holds 22 farmers having 70 acres of land at village Bolbola and third group with 14 farmers own 40 acres of land at village Bolbola. They were brought together with financial assistance from

National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) and Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) scheme of ICAR, New Delhi and Jila Panchayat, Bastar.

Indira Gandhi Agricultural University (IGKV) vice-chancellor Dr SK Patil told TOI that community farming provides a viable model of production and distribution of agricultural produces by local diversified farms. Local farmer Sonuram Mandavi, who benefitted from the initiative said, "This model has increased income from Rs 8,000 to 7,50,000. It has also increased field water efficiency by 75-85%."

## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

### **Above normal monsoon may add to farmers' foes**



In case of excess rainfall, soyabean, the main edible oilseed crop of the country, may suffer the most as water logging will severely damage the crop.

PUNE: Forecast of excess rainfall this monsoon season is heartening after back to back droughts, but it's also likely to bring along a lot of problems for the country's farmers, agriculture experts said.

Initial lethargy in monsoon's progress, coupled with possibility of excess rainfall during the latter part of the season, may bring problems for crops like soyabean, pulses, jowar and maize during their harvest time, while pest and

diseases incidence due to excess moisture may adversely affect cotton crop, they said.

India Meteorology Department (IMD) has already forecast delay in onset of monsoon by a week. "By June 10, the angle should start working," said LS Rathore, director general at IMD.

According to the department's forecast, the monsoon rainfall over the country is expected to be 106% of the long period average (LPA), while as per the experimental forecast of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology it is expected to be 111% of the LPA.

IMD will issue its second stage forecast about the regional distribution of rainfall on June 1.

The delay in onset of monsoon may delay sowing of kharif pulses like moong and urad, cotton and soyabean.

However, more than the delay in sowing, agronomists are concerned about the prospect of excess rains. Delayed sowing reduces output, while pest and disease increase cost of production for farmers.

In case of excess rainfall, soyabean, the main edible oilseed crop of the country, may suffer the most as water logging will severely damage the crop.

"We have already advised everyone that India may have to deal with excess rainfall, floods and landslides this year. I personally feel that soyabean may face problem in Madhya Pradesh due to excess rainfall," said Rathore.

Though governments of Maharashtra and Telangana have not specifically discouraged soyabean cultivation, they have advised farmers to increase area of tur by its inter-cropping with soyabean and cotton.

Madhya Pradesh, which ranks first in the country in soyabean acreage and production, has set a target of 5%-7% reduction in area under soyabean cultivation.

"During last three years, there has been uncertainty in production of soyabean due to drought, pest incidence etc. That is why, we have advised farmers to shift to arhar (tur)," said Mohanlal Meena, director (agriculture) of Madhya Pradesh.

Soyabean Processors Association of India (SOPA) expects soyabean acreage in Madhya Pradesh to decline due to higher prices of pulses and problems in availability of seeds. "We have advised soyabean farmers to adopt broad bed and furrows (BBF) technology to deal with excess rainfall," said B Venkateswarlu, vice chancellor of Vasantrya Naik Marathwada BSE 0.00 % Krishi Vidyapeeth, Parbhani.

With no specific incentive for increase in area under cotton, its productivity can also come under stress in case of excess rains.

"Cotton has the risk of getting pest and diseases if rains are in excess in September/October. The BG II variety of cotton had suffered from pink ball worm incidence last year, which can increase this year, if rains are heavy. That is why we have told farmers to reduce area under cotton," Venkateswarlu said.

"Moong and urad may escape the losses from excess rainfall at the time of harvesting even if they are sown by June end as they mature in 75 to 80 days," he said.