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India set for record kharif crop harvest



Farm workers transplanting paddy at Shahpur village in Punjab last month. Paddy transplantation got a boost with the country as a whole receiving surplus rainfall in June. -- Ramesh Sharma

Foodgrain output in the ongoing 2017-18 kharif season is likely to surpass last year's record of 138.04 million tonnes due to higher acreage and a good monsoon for the second straight year, Agriculture Secretary Shobhana K Pattanayak said today.

So far, more than 80 per cent of the sowing of kharif crops — paddy, pulses, oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane and jute — has been completed and planting will continue in some parts till next month, Pattanayak told PTI in an interview.

About 19 lakh hectares of crop area has been affected by floods across the country and farmers are likely to take up other kharif crops once the water recedes, he said, expressing concern about poor rains in some parts of Karnataka.

"I am certain overall kharif foodgrain output will be more than last year," he said.

While there were floods in some states, there was a drought-like situation in parts of Karnataka, he said, adding that there has still been close to 3 per cent jump in the acreage under kharif crops so far.

Pattanayak said farmers in flood-hit areas will replant other crops in 19 lakh hectare once water recedes, but the situation in Karnataka has not yet improved.

“South interior Karnataka continues to be problematic, but some rains had come, let’s see,” he said.

Till last week, farmers had sown kharif crops in 878.23 lakh hectares as against 855.85 lakh hectare in the year-ago period, according to the Agriculture Ministry’s latest data.

Paddy — the main kharif (summer) crop — was sown in 280.03 lakh hectare, as against 266.93 lakh hectare, while pulses covered 121.28 lakh hectare as against 116.95 lakh hectares in the said period.

However, oilseeds acreage was down at 148.88 lakh hectare till last week of the kharif season from 165.49 lakh hectare in the same period last year.

This, Pattanayak said, should not be an issue. “It is lower so far, but the sowing window is not over. They (farmers) will take up little later on marginal lands. Overall, it is not bad.”

He said the overall acreage for all pulses is higher, except tur.

With regard to cash crops, he said the overall area sown to cotton and sugarcane is higher than last year so far and the output is also expected to be better.

“The cotton acreage has gone up substantially, but part of the area is affected in Gujarat due to floods. Farmers may grow other crops like pulses.”

According to the data, cotton acreage has increased to 114.34 lakh hectares so far in the 2017-18 kharif season from 96.48 lakh hectares in the year-ago period on account of good rains and better prices.

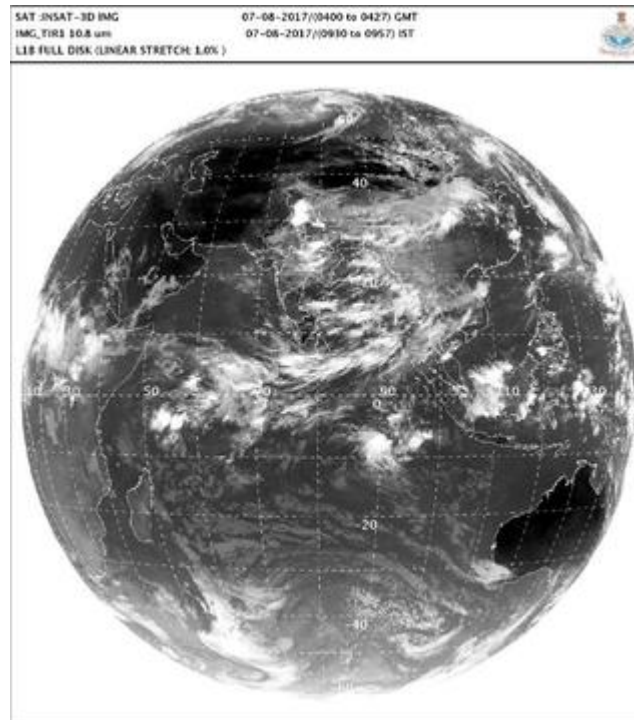
Similarly, the acreage under sugarcane has gone up to 49.71 lakh hectares from 45.64 lakh hectares in the said period because of a good monsoon and timely payment of cane arrears by sugar mills.

In the 2016-17 kharif season, foodgrain output was at a record 138.04 mt, while the previous record was 128.65 mt achieved during the 2013-14 kharif season.

Production of paddy stood at 96.09 mt, pulses at 9.12 mt, coarse cereals at 32.84 mt, oilseeds at 22.8 mt, cotton at 30.5 million bales in the 2016-17 kharif season, according to the ministry’s data.

(This article was published on August 6, 2017)

Parts of East, North-East, South witness moderate to heavy rain



The monsoon has continued to maintain a weak phase except in parts of East and North-East India, North-West India and the South Peninsula.

A forecast low-pressure area has failed to materialise but a preparatory cyclonic circulation is in place over South-East Jharkhand this morning.

RAIN FOR KERALA

This is seen as moving in a west-northwest direction to Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and the neighbourhood, dragging in a fresh rain belt across the region.

Among areas which received varying amounts of rainfall yesterday were North-East India, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and isolated parts of the rest of North India.

In the South, Kerala and South interior Karnataka, along with parts of the rest of the region, witnessed a wet spell as flows feeding into typhoon 'Noru' in the North-West Pacific precipitated rainfall.

Back home the cyclonic circulation over South-East Jharkhand too had some influence on the flows as some of them were diverted back into the Bengal and Odisha coasts.

This morning's cloud pattern showed the skies over Kerala clearing up, while those above the Chennai-Nellore belt featured some.

CLOUD PRESENCE

In the North, the clouds hung over Bhopal-Jabalpur-Sagar in Madhya Pradesh; Nagpur-Bilaspur in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh; and Haryana-Chandigarh-Punjab-Himachal Pradesh.

An India Met Department outlook said a low-pressure area may form over land over the Indo-Gangetic plains by August 14 and move into Uttar Pradesh and North Madhya Pradesh the next day.

This would trigger another round of wet spell for the East and adjoining North-West India, while weak south-westerly monsoon-friendly winds are forecast to blow across Kerala and Karnataka.

The rest of the West Coast to Kerala's north may also come under what forecasts suggest are a tentative revival of the monsoon, which would be just in time as well.

Meanwhile, the ongoing rain in Kerala has made some modest improvement in its rain-deficit scenario.

(This article was published on August 7, 2017)