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BusinessLine

How post-GST billing system feud disrupted tea auctions in TN

The ruckus over the billing system at tea auctions in two centres in Tamil Nadu, apart from being discussed and debated extensively, has brought tea factory operations in the Nilgiris district to a halt.

While members initially said there is “no clear-cut instruction from the Tea Board on the conduct of the auction”, they now seem to be taking the ire out on each other, with the sellers/producers alleging a nexus between buyers and brokers, and major buyers/exporters abstaining from the auction citing “lack of clarity in the billing system”.

The first sale that took place after the GST rollout (both in Coonoor and Coimbatore during the first week of July) proved disastrous. Members of the South India Tea Exporters’ Association (SITEA) said the Tea Board had directed sale of tea through auctions at four centres — Kolkata, Guwahati, Siliguri and Kochi — through registered broker contracts, and through seller contracts at the two centres in TN, at Coonoor and Coimbatore.

(Under broker contract, the broker draws the invoice on behalf of the seller after the auction.)

Buyers said that in Tamil Nadu, sales have been made under seller contract over the past six-seven years. “But under GST, when the Board directs the sale under broker contract in certain centres and seller contract in TN, we are confused, as major producers offer their teas at the auction centres in TN and Kochi as well. Further, the system should be uniform, especially when the Board is working towards a pan-India auction system,” said Hemen Shah, Chairman, SITEA.

The buying community has, over the past several years, gotten used to seller contracts in TN. Sellers have been insisting that the present system should continue, while buyers maintain that there should be uniformity in the billing system under GST.

The commercial taxes department had, on July 12, directed the trade to follow a uniform procedure (in line with the other auction centres), as the “GST Act has uniform implication throughout the country and different procedures for different auction centres would be inadmissible”.

The buying community hailed the communication, while sellers/producers decided to shut factory operations till July 21. The Tea Board organised a meeting of stakeholders in Kolkata

on Tuesday to iron out the differences and resolve the issue, but the discussions remained inconclusive with the Board deciding to take a legal opinion on the issue

An industry insider, meanwhile, explained that billing under seller contract is more transparent vis-a-vis a broker contract or as per the Tea Marketing Control Order (TMC), 2003.

The source pointed out that the Commercial Taxes Department in TN raised an audit objection in 2005-06 on the earlier billing system. “At the knock of a hammer, the sale is treated as a local sale. It would therefore be better if the seller raises the tax invoice on the ultimate buyer,” the source quoted the department as saying. “When VAT was introduced, the exporters could claim the tax refund, and this model was accepted by the Board as well,” the source said.

Under GST, in a broker contract, the broker raises a tax invoice on the buyer (at the auction) and the seller in turn has to simultaneously raise one on the broker. This is not in line with the TMCO, which says a broker is only an agent — he is not allowed to buy/sell or shift tea and he cannot claim ownership.

The TN model is compliant with the GST rule and in line with the TMCO as well, the source explained.

Dust sale

Meanwhile, the response to the sale of tea dust at the auction centre in Coimbatore saw more buyers participating. Trade sources told *BusinessLine* that exporters and big buyers other than Tata and Unilever participated in the sale that took place this afternoon.

Close to 85 per cent of the catalogued quantity of 3.53 lakh kg (of dust) is said to have been taken up at the time of compiling this report. “Exporters who had resisted the Board’s directive participated in the trade,” the source said, adding: “There were as many as 51 buyers this week against 30 at last week’s sale.”

(This article was published on July 19, 2017)

Karnataka agri markets see higher volumes despite drought hurting farm output

Rising collections!
(Market fee collected from APMCs by Karnataka Govt in ₹ cr)

Year	Market fee	% rise over previous year
2014-15	400.66	4
2015-16	453.28	13
2016-17	511.00	13

Seeking better prices, AP, Telangana farmers bring in paddy, chilli

The electronic trading platforms in the agriculture markets of Karnataka have caught the attention of chilli and paddy growers in neighbouring States such as Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, who are seen increasingly bringing their produce to the markets here, seeking better prices.

The trend, evident from the increase in traded volumes of commodities such as paddy and dry chilli has fetched higher revenue in terms of market fee for Karnataka, where consecutive droughts over the past couple of years have shrunk the farm output.

The collection of market fee, presently 1.5 per cent of the transaction value recorded at the APMC market yards of Karnataka, has registered a 13 per cent annual increase over the past two years, exceeding the 500-crore mark in FY17. The rise in market fee collection is mainly on account of the growing instances of farmers from AP and Telangana bringing their produce such as paddy, chilli and cotton to sell in the Karnataka markets, said Manoj Rajan, MD and CEO of Rashtriya e-Market Services (ReMS).

ReMS, a joint venture between the Karnataka government and NCDEX Spot Exchange, has automated the APMC mandis in the State by rolling out the unified markets platform (UMP) over the past three years.

About 157 of the 162 markets in Karnataka, a pioneer in implementing agri-market reforms, are connected by the UMP, where bidding for farm produce takes place online.

“The rollout of UMP as part of the agri market reforms has enhanced the transparency in the price discovery mechanism in the State, attracting farmers’ interests from the neighbouring States,” Rajan said.

For example, the Byadgi APMC has been attracting dry chillies from AP. Similarly, the market in Raichur, which borders both AP and Telangana, has seen an increase in inflow of paddy from those States.

Recently, when Andhra witnessed a price crash in dry chillies, the price of the spice commodity in the Byadgi market was trading at relatively higher levels, attracting the produce from AP. The chilli market arrivals increased 21 per cent in Byadgi, the key market for the spices crop, over last year.

Rajan further explained that the transparency has improved with computerised billing and dissemination of price information through SMS to the farmers. Besides, the APMCs could be attracting more farmers within Karnataka itself, thereby contributing to growth in market fee through increased transaction volumes.

“Farmers could be bringing more of their produce to the APMC markets now,” said TN Prakash Kammaradi, Chairman of the Karnataka Agricultural Prices Commission.

(This article was published on July 19, 2017)

Heavy rain pounds East; Central India next in line



APA girl holds on to the back of an auto-rickshaw on a flooded street in Ahmedabad

The slow-moving depression in the Bay of Bengal has crossed the Odisha coast and weakened a round but not before dumping heavy to very heavy rain over a large swathe spread practically over the entire landscape.

Its capacity to influence weather over distances of hundreds of kilometres in all directions was evident in the manner in which it pushed the monsoon's reach to the whole country on Wednesday, breaking out of a prolonged gridlock in the north-west.

Covers entire land

The India Met Department (IMD) said the monsoon covered the entire landscape four days behind schedule, after it entered the remaining parts of west Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab.

This belt had received surplus pre-monsoon showers, which, in a way, was responsible for the resistance that the monsoon ran into. Cooled surface builds higher pressure, which does not allow rain clouds to form.

On Wednesday, the IMD located the rain-driving well-marked low-pressure area over interior Odisha. It is expected to move to the west with a slight bias to west-northwest, heading towards Gujarat and adjoining south-west Rajasthan.

It may weaken along the way but without any meaningful impact on its rain generating capacity.

It would continue to bring moderate to heavy rainfall over parts of Chhattisgarh, east and west Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

Successor on the way

It will flare up a second time over west Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat on July 22, 23 and 24, bringing even heavier rain even as it induces the formation of another potent low-pressure area over north-west Bay of Bengal by July 25.

In its outlook valid for Thursday, the IMD has warned of heavy to very heavy rain at a few places over Konkan and Goa, which includes Mumbai.

The heavy rain belt will be active over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, central Maharashtra, coastal and south interior Karnataka. Heavy rain has been forecast for parts of north-west India, Gujarat, Marathawada, Telangana and Kerala.

There is not much change in the forecast for the two to three days that follow (i.e. the rest of this week) given that the current weather system will sign off from the West only to usher in a successor announces from the East.

It is likely that the same pattern of rainfall might come back to visit East, Central and West India next week, though the US Climate Prediction Centre doubts if it would be able to match the intensity of the previous round.

(This article was published on July 19, 2017)

Stress on making farming a viable proposition

As part of Agri-Intex 2017, a seminar styled Uzhave Thalai was organised jointly by Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Coimbatore, and Codissia here.

It was resolved at the seminar to implement Organic Agriculture Policy in Tamil Nadu as exists in other states.

The State and Central governments should be persuaded to form new marketing methods and invest in new agro technologies, and the Tamil Nadu Government should refrain from permitting use of fertile agricultural land for any other purpose, the organisers stressed.

The seminar was inaugurated by BK Krishnaraj Vanavarayar, Chairman, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

“Our farmers are good at adopting new technologies. All they need at present is proper guidance and leadership,” he said.

The organisers brought farmers, non-farmers and the younger generation who had taken to farming as a hobby to share their success stories and the innovative ways they had used to make farming interesting and viable. Close to 1,300 persons attended the seminar.

(This article was published on July 19, 2017)



PM Narendra Modi didn't mention MSP in promise to farmers: Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh

Agriculture Minister said the government had appointed a committee in 2015 and implemented its promise last year. The government, he maintained, was striving to pay double the cost of input for agricultural produce



Narendra Modi (Reuters Photo)

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said in Lok Sabha Wednesday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his 2014 Lok Sabha election campaign, had only promised farmers 50 per cent of input cost as profit on farm produce. The Opposition, Singh said, was misleading people by adding “minimum support price”. Responding to a six-hour debate on the agrarian crisis, Singh said Modi had not mentioned “minimum support price” during his speech in Bareilly. He said the government had appointed a committee in 2015 and implemented its promise last year. The government, he maintained, was striving to pay double the cost of input for agricultural produce.

The Opposition asked the government to waive farm loans, hike MSPs and lodge criminal cases against those responsible for recent deaths of farmers in firing in MP. Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, who opened the discussion, said: “This government is not sensitive to the issues of farmers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi immediately tweets at global disasters but he has not tweeted anything on the killings of farmers in Mandsaur.” He said even the agriculture minister has not visited Mandsaur because he was “busy doing yoga with Ramdev Baba”.

Scindia attacked MP Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. As BJP members frequently interrupted him, Scindia described Chouhan’s fast following the firing as nautanki and added certain remarks that Speaker Sumitra Mahajan expunged later. He was also challenged by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananth Kumar, who said, “He should not mislead the House.” Mahajan indicated a special session for a threadbare discussion on agrarian issues could be convened. The suggestion came from BJP member Virendra Singh Mast. The suggestion was “good”, Mahajan said. “One day, I would organise such a session,” she said, adding as representatives of people, “all of us know about issues related to farming”.

Mast, who heads the BJP farmers’ cell, took a dig at Scindia, saying it was not an issue of Rajas and Ranis. Rural Development Minister Narendra Singh Tomar accused the Congress of stoking the agitation in Mandsaur. Those who spoke included Kalyan Banerjee (Trinamool

Congress), Bhartruhari Mahtab (BJD), Sudheer Gupta (BJP), Prem Singh Chandumajra (Akali Dal), Bhagwant Mann (AAP), Arun Kumar and Ram Kumar Sharma (both RLSP), Badruddin Ajmal (AIUFD), E T Mohammad Basheer (IUML), Dushyant Chautala (INLD), CN Jayadevan (CPI), Joice George (Independent), Rajesh Ranjan (RJD rebel).

Rains resume, give fresh impetus to kharif sowing

Maharashtra, however, has still not received rainfall that it generally receives in July.



The sowing season this year started early owing to sufficient rains in the month of June. Maharashtra received 97.9 per cent of its total average rainfall for the month of June. (Representational Image)

With the rains having picked up pace over the past few days across the state, sowing activity for the kharif season has once again regained momentum. In the backdrop of considerable rainfall in the past few days across the state, so far, sowing has been completed on 1.01 crore hectares of land, which is 72 per cent of the 1.39 crore hectares on which kharif crops are grown.

The sowing season this year started early owing to sufficient rains in the month of June. Maharashtra received 97.9 per cent of its total average rainfall for the month of June. However, monsoon appeared to ebb in the first half of July leading the state government to issue an advisory to farmers to postpone sowing till further notice. The lack of rainfall would have led to farmers being forced to take up another round of sowing. However, rainfall resuming in the past few days seems to have allayed such fears.

Maharashtra, however, has still not received rainfall that it generally receives in July. The normal rainfall for the month of July is 246.8 mm and the state has currently received only 182 mm, which is 73.8 per cent of its normal July rain. In the last five days, Maharashtra has received nearly 95 mm of rain.

Of Maharashtra's 36 districts, only four — Kolhapur, Nagpur, Gondia and Chandrapur — have received less than 50 per cent of the average rainfall. The area to be sown under kharif crops is 1.39 crore hectares in Maharashtra. Till date sowing has taken place on 1.01 cr hectares which is 72 per cent of the total. Interestingly, the sowing percentage for the same period last year was 90 per cent.

Institutional reforms: Building a 21st century institutional architecture for water governance

The Central Water Commission and Central Ground Water Board need to reinvent their role in today's vastly different irrigation and water use scenario. CWC has to break out of its limited role of project design and planning, and reinvent itself for a far more ambitious responsibility of irrigation governance.



The Sardar Sarovar dam. (Express Photo)

In July 2016, a high level committee constituted by the Narendra Modi government, chaired by the former Planning Commission member Mihir Shah, delivered a comprehensive report on improving water governance in India. Among other things, it called for a 21st century institutional architecture to meet the country's increasingly serious water challenges.

One year on, the report's many wide-ranging recommendations remain largely ignored, even as we now have a debate that's centered around merging the Central Water Commission (CWC) and the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) under a National Water Commission. This, when the real issue highlighted by the committee was about both these organisations risking becoming bystanders to the goings-on in the Indian water scene. Merely merging the two will only yield a larger entity equally at the risk of marginalisation.

CWC was created in 1952 as a technical organisation comprising mainly civil engineers for planning large irrigation and hydropower projects. Similarly, CGWB was founded in 1968 as a groundwater investigation and monitoring agency staffed with hydro-geologists. Both built solid technical capabilities and met the requirements for those times rather well. But the water challenges today are different and far more complex. CWC and CGWB need to break out of their narrow technical groove and morph to meet these new challenges.

Today, we have almost exhausted our best sites for irrigation and hydro projects. The challenge now is of managing these projects well. On this, CWC should actually be our pathfinder. Since the 1990s, the more money we have invested in irrigation projects, the less has been the actual area irrigated by government canals. CWC ought to know why this has been so and guide states in closing the widening gap between irrigation potential created and utilised. This requires more than just conventional engineering.

It is interesting here that when Shivraj Singh Chauhan wanted Madhya Pradesh's canal systems to irrigate to their potential, CWC wasn't his go-to place for knowhow. Instead, he used a generalist-bureaucrat to squeeze four times more water out of the state's canals, by simply tightening irrigation management. As the custodian of the country's irrigation systems, CWC should have made a thorough assessment of MP's success and launched a nationwide campaign to replicate it in other states.

Likewise with the CGWB. Over past 30 years, India has emerged as the world's largest groundwater economy with the most complex hydro-geological, socio-economic and institutional dimensions. CGWB's job in today's scenario cannot stop just at mapping aquifers. It needs also to map the socio-economics of groundwater exploitation and analyse its institutional and eco-system implications.

In this connection, isn't it odd that some of the biggest water initiatives in recent times have originated from chief ministers of states, rather than from our apex technical organisations? Telangana's Mission Kakatiya, Maharashtra's Jalyukta Shivar, Rajasthan's Jal Swavalamban Yojana or Gujarat's Sardar Patel Sahabhagi Jal Sanchay Yojana are all flagship water conservation schemes of state governments. Neither CWC nor CGWB have had a role in their design or implementation, or even in drawing lessons of success and failure from these programmes. This is a measure of how far removed the two organisations have become from water action on the ground.

Can merely merging CWC and CGWB into a National Water Commission, then, produce a 21st century architecture for water governance? Hardly. What is needed is effecting deep changes in their operational and management functions, starting with how they view themselves.

CWC has to break out of its limited role of project design and planning, and reinvent itself for a far more ambitious responsibility of irrigation governance. It should be judged not just by irrigation potential created, but also by potential utilised. It must work towards improving the

financial viability of canal systems, promoting conjunctive management of surface and ground water, and providing the lead for farmer participatory irrigation management. States, in turn, should not resent CWC for its coercive power, but indulge it for its expertise and referent power.

CGWB similarly must transcend beyond its groundwater investigation and monitoring role. That function remains critical, no doubt, but CGWB has to also learn to preside over a complex groundwater irrigation economy that supports over Rs 4,00,000 crore-worth of annual crop and milk revenues of our predominantly small farmers. The Supreme Court, in 1996, had designated CGWB as India's Central Groundwater Authority. But it made nothing of this godsend opportunity and remained a mere paper tiger.

Transforming CWC and CGWB into truly strategic water management organisations requires changes in their organisational culture and processes. In all such organisations, the new entrants are preoccupied with technical specialities, whereas those reaching the top acquire a broader view of the world. In CWC and CGWB, the opportunities for a broadening of outlook and developing a trans-disciplinary worldview are limited, which needs to change. The top leadership of CWC and CGWB should be selected, even if from within, on merit and must be given at least five-year terms. Broad-based capacity building needs to be carefully planned for the top management cohort, which would include interactions with leading practitioners of their craft around the world.

How organisations groom their people is, perhaps, also an indicator of how seriously they pursue their mandate. Both CWC and CGWB have their captive training schools, but their limited faculty and training focus means they are stuck in a narrow groove. Reform must begin by preparing their technical professionals for a larger role. The Shah committee recommended induction of social scientists into these organisations. Alternatively, the core technical competencies of these institutions could be retained, along with the regular exposure of their engineers and hydro-geologists to economics, the social sciences, eco-systems and relevant management concepts.

With a stroke of his pen, the Prime Minister may well merge the CWC and CGWB into a National Water Commission. But to expect that doing this will create a 21st century institutional architecture for water governance would be optimistic. The long and arduous road to water governance reform needs careful and painstaking change management within CWC and CGWB.

(The writer is Senior Fellow at the International Water Management Institute and was a member of the Mihir Shah Committee.)

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu's turn to be singed by drought

The consecutive monsoon failures have led to an almost continuous decline in both sugarcane crushed and sugar produced by Tamil Nadu mills. Between 2011-12 and 2016-17, the quantity of cane crushed has plunged with sugar output also more than halving.



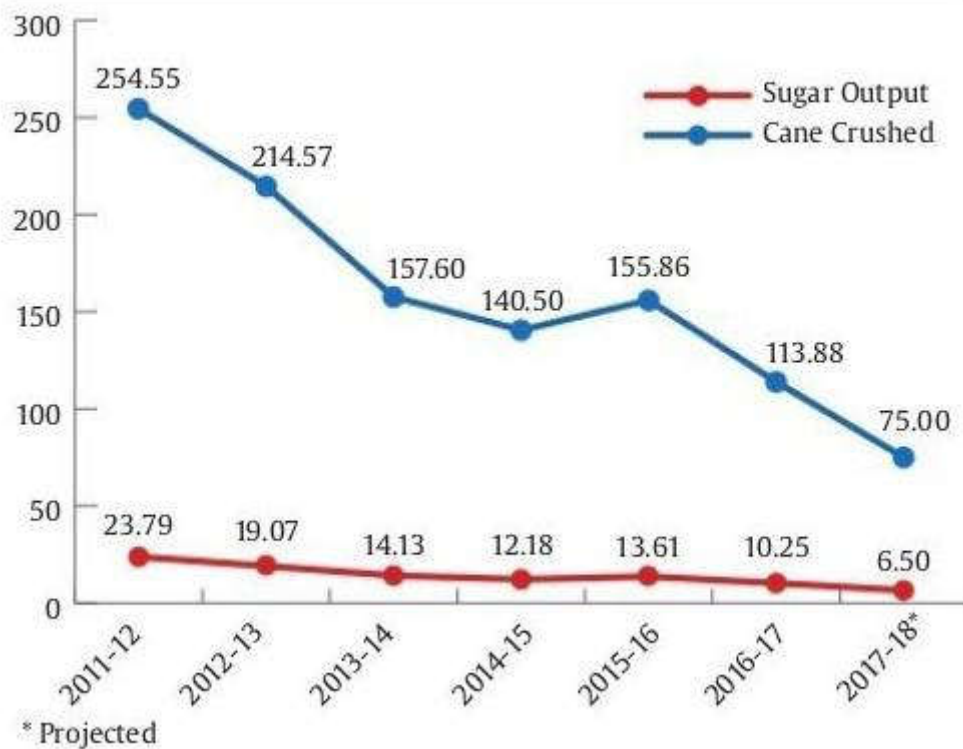
The consecutive monsoon failures have led to an almost continuous decline in both sugarcane crushed and sugar produced by Tamil Nadu mills

Few crops, perhaps, capture the intensity of drought better than sugarcane. Given that this is a crop largely grown under irrigated conditions, one wouldn't expect its production to take a severe knock — except under the most exceptional circumstances when there's no water available to draw from even reservoirs or underground.

We saw this in Maharashtra. Back-to-back droughts resulted in the total cane crushed by mills in the state plummeting from 930.41 lakh tonnes (lt) in the 2014-15 sugar season (October-September) to 742.94 lt in 2015-16 and a mere 373.13 in 2016-17. Sugar output, too, fell correspondingly from 105.14 lt to 84.15 lt and 42 lt.

A similar thing is happening now in Tamil Nadu (TN), which during the last five years has experienced drought in three of them (2012, 2013 and 2016) and seems headed for yet another, if rainfall trends so far for the current southwest monsoon season are any indication. The consecutive monsoon failures have led to an almost continuous decline in both sugarcane crushed and sugar produced by Tamil Nadu mills (see graphs). Between 2011-12 and 2016-17, the quantity of cane crushed has plunged from 254.55 lt to 113.88 lt, with sugar output also more than halving from 23.79 lt to 10.25 lt. With lack of water prompting farmers to sharply cut down on plantings, the coming 2017-18 season could register further drop in these numbers.

TAMIL NADU SUGAR FUNDAMENTALS IN LAKH TONNES



Being basically a tropical crop that thrives in warm conditions (although requiring more water), cane yields in TN are roughly two-thirds more than the average for sub-tropical states such as Uttar Pradesh, where the winter months act as a dampener for plant growth and sucrose accumulation. Mills in TN, therefore, have enough cane to be able to crush for 250-260 days in a normal year. They start crushing from early-October and run until mid-June.

In the last season, however, the TN mills could run for just 150-160 days. They began crushing operations only towards end-November and had to wind up by April. “In 2017-18, we will have only a 90-day season, with crushing starting sometime in end-December and finishing by March. There’s hardly any cane available for crushing,” said M Manickam, chairman of the Coimbatore-based Sakthi Sugars Ltd.

Moreover, mills are also having to crush immature cane, as farmers have no water to grow the crop for its full duration of about 12 months. “The cane that my mill crushed in April this time should ideally have been crushed in October. So, it was crushed six months early, which also translates into sugar recovery of just 6-6.5 per cent as against the normal of 9-9.5 per cent,” added Manickam.

Sowing under way, only 29 per cent crop loans disbursed in Maharashtra so far

Public sector banks have come criticism for their failure to disburse loans on time. Kishore Tiwari, chairman of the government’s committee for alleviation of loan distress, alleged that public sector banks were “not cooperating” with farmers.



Banks have blamed the poor cash situation for their inability to disburse the loans. Also, in many cases, farmers have not repaid their existing loans for years, banks point out. While the government has announced a loan waiver, it is yet to be implemented. (Representative Image)

Along with poor rain in some parts of the state, another major crisis brewing in the farmlands of Maharashtra is the lack of institutional credit provided to farmers so far. With only 29 per cent of the loan target disbursed even as the kharif season is well under way, farmers are finding it difficult to raise capital for their activities. Last year, by the middle of July, around 50 per cent of loans had been disbursed.

Figures from the department of cooperation show that of the targeted Rs 40,547.20 crore kharif crop loan, only Rs 11,802.39 crore has been disbursed till July 15. Crop loans are availed by farmers ahead of the sowing season to buy seed, fertilisers, etc. In the absence of institutional finance, they are forced to turn to private money lenders, which often ends in a debt trap for the farmer. Unpaid debts are said to be one of the top reasons for farmer suicides. In Maharashtra, commercial banks, regional rural banks, scheduled commercial banks as well as district central cooperative banks advance crop loans to farmers.

So far, the districts of Beed, Hingoli and Buldhana have seen the worst loan disbursal at 0.04 per cent, 8 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively. The financially weak District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCB)s seem to have fared better than the stronger banks. While the 31 DCCBs have managed to reach 47 per cent of their target, disbursal by the commercial banks stood at 21 per cent. Regional rural banks and scheduled commercial banks had disbursed 13 and 20 per cent of their target respectively.

Banks have blamed the poor cash situation for their inability to disburse the loans. Also, in many cases, farmers have not repaid their existing loans for years, banks point out. While the government has announced a loan waiver, it is yet to be implemented.

With the state setting an ambitious target of 91 per cent loan disbursal by the end of the kharif season, the present situation falls way sort of the mark. Rajiv Satav, Congress MP from Hingoli, blamed the state government for its failure to ensure proper disbursement of crop loan. Satav said he had spoken about the matter in April and the guardian minister of Hingoli had assured of action against bank officials if they fail to give out loans on time. “However, till date, nothing has happened and farmers are left with no option but to go to money lenders for loans,” Satav said.

Public sector banks have come criticism for their failure to disburse loans on time. Kishore Tiwari, chairman of the government’s committee for alleviation of loan distress, alleged that public sector banks were “not cooperating” with farmers.

Business Standard

Monsoon picks up pace, weekly rainfall up by 11%: IMD

Data collected pertained to the week ending on July 19



The south-west monsoon showed strong signs of revival across parts of the country with the week ending on July 19, recording 11 per cent excess rainfall.

According to the latest weather update by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), India received 75.3 millimetres (mm) of rainfall from July 12 to July 19. According to the IMD, the country was expected to witness 67.6 mm of rainfall.

The surplus showers in the central and western parts of the country pushed the overall average into the positive territory, taking the cumulative average for the whole season, as on July 19, 1 per cent above the normal estimate.

The revival should boost planting of oilseed crops mainly soybean and groundnut in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Deficient rainfall from June-end onwards had pulled back the pace of sowing of kharif crops, particularly soybean and groundnut.

Data furnished by the department of agriculture showed that the area covered under soybean cultivation was almost 12 per cent less than the year-ago period, based on figures until July 14, this year. During the same period, the area covered under groundnut cultivation decreased by 8 per cent, when compared to the same season last year.

However, with the rains showing a strong revival in central and western parts of the country, all this could change in the subsequent weeks.

The surplus rain would also help in replenishing the water reservoirs by increasing overall water levels by at least 2 per cent, as compared to last week.

The IMD data also showed that rainfall was normal in almost 71 per cent of the country, while the remaining 29 per cent suffered from deficient monsoon showers in the given week.