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**விவசாயத் திணைக்களம்**  
**Department of Agriculture**

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NRMC/04/Agro-  
met/Advisory/2025/03

10.03.2025

**Agro-met Advisory: March 2025**  
**(For the months of March, April and May)**

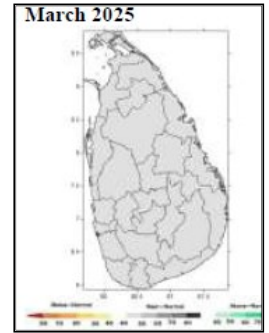
The Natural Resources Management Centre (NRMC), Department of Agriculture (DoA) has released the Agro-met advisory for March 2025, which incorporates weather forecasts provided by the Department of Meteorology (DoM) and the irrigation water availability information from the Irrigation Department (ID), Water Management Secretariat of Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka (MASL-WMS) and the Department of Agrarian Development (DAD). Field-level data and information for this document were collected from the DoA, MASL, ID, DAD and plantation research institutes.

The **Department of Meteorology (DoM)** has issued the seasonal weather forecast for the upcoming three-month period, outlining the anticipated weather conditions;

**Rainfall forecast for March**

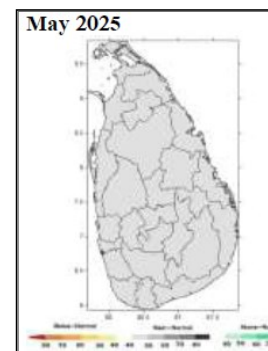
Most parts of the country are likely to experience near-normal rainfall during March 2025.

Additionally, localized strong gusty winds and lightning associated with thundershowers are expected during the month.



### Rainfall forecast for **May**

According to the available global model forecasts, there is a possibility for near normal rainfall over most parts during May 2025.



With the available weather predictions, it is advisable to consider general climatological rainfall values as **near-normal** rainfall values for each month when undertaking agricultural planning. Agro-ecological region-wise expected average rainfall values are attached in Table 1 - 3.

The **Irrigation Department (ID)** stated that the average effective storage in major reservoirs as of March 9, 2025, stands at approximately 90% (Table 4). ID further stated that the carryover storage of major and medium reservoirs is at a satisfactory level to sustain the upcoming 2025 *Yala* season. Most of the irrigation ranges under ID plan to commence *Yala* seasonal cultivation activities before the 1<sup>st</sup> of April.

The **Water Management Secretariat (WMS) of MASL** reported that 95% of irrigation water storage is currently available (01.03.2025) in reservoirs managed by the MASL (Table 5). Additionally, rainfall received so far has already reached 127% of the expected *Maha* season total. Water issuance under the area controlled by the WMS began on February 20 and will continue until April 20. According to proposed plans, approximately 84% of the cultivation area under WMS (including both MASL and ID) will be allocated for paddy, while 16% will be designated for other field crops (OFCs).

According to the **Department of Agrarian Development (DAD)**, about 50% of minor tanks currently have a water level exceeding 50%. Harvesting activities have been completed in certain areas such as Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Kurunegala. However, the harvesting activities are expected to continue until the end of March. Therefore, *Yala* cultivation at most of the Agrarian Service Centres is expected to commence by the late April.

Based on available weather information, the Agro-met Advisory Committee recommends the following agronomic interventions to ensure optimum production during the 2025 *Yala* season.

## Paddy cultivation

- Field observations indicate that approximately 80%–90% of harvesting activities have been completed. However, the sudden intense rains in late February significantly impacted harvesting and post-harvest activities.
- According to the ID and MASL schedules, water issuing will begin immediately after the harvesting activities of the current *Maha* season with regional variations of the dates. Therefore, farmers are advised to start land preparation for the upcoming *Yala* season immediately after harvesting, utilizing the residual soil moisture.
- Although another rain spell is expected in mid-March, it does not indicate the activation of First Inter-monsoon (FIM) or the start of the rainy period. Therefore, rainfed paddy farmers, who are planning to start their cultivation activities for the coming *Yala* season, are advised to wait until the FIM rains. According to the available weather information, FIM rains are expected to begin in late March. An updated short message will be issued later based on the DoM forecast.
- It is recommended to have three weeks for land preparation, including primary, secondary and tertiary tillage and then crop establishment
- Following agronomic practices are proposed to be followed during the recommended **three weeks of land preparation activities**.
  - Utilize a Disc plough (4-wheel tractor) or Mould-board plough (2-wheel tractor) for ploughing (6” – 9”) during the first land preparation.
  - After the primary tillage, clean the bunds and incorporate organic matter (leaf manure and cow dung).
  - Maintain standing water, covering half of each ploughed soil clods, (*Hee-kata*), and allow 10-14 days for weed seed germination.
  - Conduct the second ploughing perpendicular to the primary tillage using a tine tiller or a rotovator. Maintain standing water at a level of 1”- 2” for 7 days.
  - Then repair and re-plaster bunds as needed.
  - Tertiary tillage should include puddling and levelling. Proper puddling followed by thorough levelling is essential for efficient and uniform water management, weed control and proper crop establishment.
  - At levelling, it is advised to incorporate compost (if not added organic matter at the secondary tillage), half burn paddy husk and TSP as recommended by the DOA.

- Proper land preparation practices are highly effective for both pest and weed control. Seed treatment is recommended under Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as an environmentally friendly and cost-effective approach, particularly for controlling thrips.
- For paddy fields affected by nematode damage, it is recommended to follow the DOA guidelines during land preparation. The disease can be managed during ploughing by drying the soil. However, if drying is not feasible due to expected rainy spells, applying a chemical treatment is advisable to ensure the cultivation area remains free of weeds.
- Major and medium irrigated farming systems that have a full capacity water level, are able to select three and a half (3½) months-aged paddy varieties. Other irrigated farmers are advised to select three (3) months-aged paddy varieties.
- Two and half (2½) or three (3) months-aged paddy varieties are recommended for minor irrigated and rainfed rice systems.
- The availability of paddy seeds (Registered Seed) of different age classes at Seed and Planting Material Development Centre (SPMDC) for the 2025 *Yala* season is presented in the following table.

No	Age class	Total (bushel)
1	2 ½Month	936
2	3 Month	13,616
3	3 ½Month	52,916
4	4 ½Month	5,678
	TOTAL	73,146

### Other Field Crops (OFCs)

- It is necessary to strictly adhere to the targeted percentages of paddy and OFCs at the beginning of the season. Exceeding the initially recommended OFCs over paddy or the other way may lead to water supply issues during the latter part of the season.
- Initiating the seasonal cultivation of OFCs on time is essential for achieving a successful yield with minimal damages from pests and diseases.
- However, if farmers have access to a reliable water source, they can plan their cultivation based on market demand, adjusting the cultivation period within the season while prioritizing pest and disease management.
- Farmers are advised to ensure proper drainage conditions when cultivating crops in paddy lands, to ensure the continuity of the season, even in the event of unexpected rains.
- Since water availability, as indicated by the ID, DAD, and WMS-MASL, is favorable, farmers can proceed with seasonal cultivation of green gram during the upcoming *Yala* season.

- Harvesting activities of paddy for the *Yala* season should be planned by at least the end of July, especially if those lands are intended to be used for the third season.
- According to available weather information of DoM, there is a possibility of heavy rains due to the formation of low-pressure systems or depressions during the last two weeks of May. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the short and medium-term weather forecasts issued by the DoM, especially for crops such as big onion.
- The availability of OFCs at the SPMDC for the 2025 Yala season is presented in the following table. SPMDC also announced that a price revision for seeds and planting materials has been in effect since February 21.

<b>SEED AVAILABILITY FOR 2025 YALA SEASON (kg)</b>		
No	CROP	SEED AVAILABILITY
1	Black Gram	154,100
2	Green Gram	133,280
3	Cowpea	50,790
4	Soya Bean	118,000
5	Groundnut	77,280
6	Finger Millet	2,500
7	Red Onion	140
8	Big Onion	29
9	Maize	13,800
10	Sesame	540

## **Vegetable**

- Misty conditions at night and high temperatures during the day can accelerate the spread of fungal diseases such as powdery mildew and downy mildew in vegetables belonging to the Solanaceae, Cucurbitaceae, and Leguminosae (common bean) families. These diseases can be controlled by pruning lower (mature) leaves to improve ventilation, followed by the application of recommended fungicides.
- The anticipated high temperatures may also increase the occurrence of collar rot/ basal rot (fungal diseases) in vegetables of the Solanaceae, Cucurbitaceae, and Leguminosae families, particularly in poorly drainage lands. Drainage improvement, removing infected plants followed by application of recommended fungicide could be used to control the disease.
- Comparatively low rainfall combined with high temperatures will increase the incidence of sucking pest attacks and viral diseases in vegetables of the Solanaceae,

Cucurbitaceae, and Leguminosae (common bean) families. Farmers are advised to implement integrated pest management (IPM) practices to control vectors effectively.

- Farmers are advised to improve the drainage conditions when cultivating vegetables in paddy lands since unexpected rains may occur.

## **Plantation Crops**

### **Tea**

Low tea harvest has been reported due to the dryness of the last few weeks. Though there have been some scattered rains to tea growing areas, rain ceased during last week. Rainfall for March will be near normal, resulting in a drier condition for the month.

- Fertilizer application should be practiced, only if adequate soil moisture is available in the field.
- It should refrain from carrying out agronomic operations like pruning and replanting, with drier conditions.
- Light plucking should be practiced. Plucking should not be carried out if drought continues severely.
- Soft weeds can be kept in the fields, after slashing the weeds. Pre-emergent weedicide can be applied for weed control.
- With the continuation of drought anti-transpirant can be applied.
- Green manure crops should be trimmed and lopping should be thatched between tea rows
- Irrigation can be applied specially to young tea fields, if resources are available.

### **Cinnamon**

- Land preparation can be done on the selected lands for new cinnamon plantations. It is advisable to dig the holes in late March as planting can be done with the onset of the first inter-monsoon rains.
- Since normal rainfall is expected in the coming month, it is advisable to apply dolomite as required to cinnamon plantations, followed by fertilization six weeks later.

**Note:** Please consider that this advisory was prepared based on national-level information. If available, it is advisable to consider localized detailed information as a supplementary to this advisory.

An updated Agro-met Advisory will be issued in early April 2025 in consultation with members of the technical advisory committee, other relevant resource persons and stakeholders.

## **Technical Advisory Team Members**

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### **For Plantation Crops:**

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Special Thanks:

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- Ms. Roshni Hafeel (Director – Agriculture) Ministry of Plantation and Community Infrastructure
- Mr. D.M.P.T. Dissanayake (Deputy Director and Crop coordinator - Mung Beans)
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Compiled by,



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**Copy:**

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 Commissioner General of Agrarian Development (f. y. i. pls.)  
 Director General - Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka (f. y. i. pls.)  
 Chairman – Paddy Marketing Board (f. y. i. pls.)

Table 1: Agro-ecological region-wise expected rainfall values for **March**

Dry Zone (mm)			Intermediate Zone (mm)			Wet Zone (mm)	
AER	Mar		AER	Mar		AER	Mar
DL1a	77.7		IL1a	29.4		WL1a	110.8
DL1b	26.0		IL1b	34.2		WL1b	65.6
DL1c	21.3		IL1c	77.0		WL2a	86.2
DL1d	3.4		IL2	47.9		WL2b	58.0
DL1e	4.6		IL3	19.3		WL3	47.3
DL1f	12.3		IM1a	58.9		WM1a	119.2
DL2a	26.6		IM1b	55.4		WM1b	141.9
DL2b	30.2		IM1c	46.6		WM2a	46.3
DL3	10.3		IM2a	95.0		WM 2b	57.2
DL4	8.5		IM2b	83.0		WM3a	53.4
DL5	28.6		IM3a	36.9		WM3b	33.3
			IM3b	30.0		WU1	88.7
			IM3c	43.8		WU2a	54.6
			IU1	64.9		WU2b	76.2
			IU2	56.6		WU3	54.5
			IU3a	123.0			
			IU3b	100.3			
			IU3c	66.1			
			IU3d	44.6			
			IU3e	55.0			

(Source: Punyawardena *et al.* 2003, Agro-ecological Region Map)

Table 2: Agro-ecological region-wise expected rainfall values for **April**

Dry Zone (mm)			Intermediate Zone (mm)			Wet Zone (mm)	
AER	Apr		AER	Apr		AER	Apr
DL1a	150.9		IL1a	123.4		WL1a	250.2
DL1b	87.7		IL1b	98.1		WL1b	184.5
DL1c	57.0		IL1c	113.2		WL2a	161.3
DL1d	15.6		IL2	84.0		WL2b	195.4
DL1e	38.0		IL3	113.5		WL3	146.9
DL1f	72.3		IM1a	119.8		WM1a	236.4
DL2a	45.6		IM1b	108.1		WM1b	229.7
DL2b	26.1		IM1c	91.1		WM2a	179.7
DL3	43.3		IM2a	175.4		WM 2b	167.3
DL4	41.8		IM2b	158.7		WM3a	162.6
DL5	51.7		IM3a	98.4		WM3b	118.8
			IM3b	106.5		WU1	189.8
			IM3c	92.9		WU2a	161.3
			IU1	125.6		WU2b	184.5
			IU2	123.4		WU3	123.0
			IU3a	250.4			
			IU3b	197.5			
			IU3c	144.4			
			IU3d	100.3			
			IU3e	99.9			

(Source: Punyawardena *et al.* 2003, Agro-ecological Region Map)Table 3: Agro-ecological region wise expected rainfall values for **May**

Dry Zone (mm)			Intermediate Zone (mm)			Wet Zone (mm)	
AER	May		AER	May		AER	May
DL1a	44.5		IL1a	104.0		WL1a	358.3
DL1b	31.8		IL1b	88.5		WL1b	345.7
DL1c	27.1		IL1c	62.9		WL2a	205.3
DL1d	17.5		IL2	40.0		WL2b	142.4
DL1e	24.3		IL3	60.7		WL3	198.8
DL1f	27.5		IM1a	67.3		WM1a	293.3
DL2a	29.5		IM1b	42.0		WM1b	252.8
DL2b	14.5		IM1c	34.5		WM2a	158.7
DL3	18.5		IM2a	121.4		WM 2b	143.4
DL4	13.7		IM2b	78.4		WM3a	107.3
DL5	21.0		IM3a	82.9		WM3b	85.6
			IM3b	46.7		WU1	244.5
			IM3c	55.0		WU2a	170.5
			IU1	81.4		WU2b	156.4
			IU2	84.1		WU3	123.0
			IU3a	94.2			
			IU3b	84.6			
			IU3c	78.0			
			IU3d	95.8			
			IU3e	70.6			

(Source: Punyawardena *et al.* 2003, Agro-ecological Region Map)

Table 4: Summary of daily water levels and storage of major reservoirs (09.03.2025)

NO	RANGE	NO OF TANKS	STORAGE (Acft)				
			GROSS	DEAD	PRESENT	EFFECTIVE	
						Acft.	%
1	AMPARA	9	1,052,221	14,909	929,936	915,027	88.2%
2	ANURADAPURA	10	558,572	42,735	510,679	467,944	90.7%
3	BADULLA	7	78,492	6,149	75,913	69,764	96.4%
4	BATTICALOA	4	140,133	1,085	85,115	84,030	60.4%
5	HAMBANTOTA	10	377,738	33,172	347,332	314,160	91.2%
6	GALLE	2	3,081	-	3,010	3,010	97.7%
7	KANDY	3	28,450	386	28,419	28,033	99.9%
8	KURUNEGALA	10	140,920	5,561	133,560	127,999	94.6%
9	MONARAGALA	3	44,872	2,815	35,874	33,059	78.6%
10	POLONNARUWA	4	352,010	24,300	342,576	318,276	97.1%
11	PUTTALAM	2	74,261	8,400	74,233	65,833	100.0%
12	TRINCOMALEE	5	191,288	2,555	184,827	182,272	96.6%
13	MANNAR	4	67,383	551	58,050	57,499	86.0%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>3,109,420</b>	<b>142,618</b>	<b>2,809,523</b>	<b>2,666,906</b>	<b>89.9%</b>

(Source: Water Management Division, Department of Irrigation)

**Table 5:** Summary of Major Reservoir/Tank Storage - Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka (01.03.2025)

<b>Major Reservoir/Tank Storage - Mahaweli Authority</b>					
<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>River Basin</b>	<b>System</b>	<b>Tank Name</b>	<b>Full Capacity (MCM)</b>	<b>Storage at 2025/03/01</b>
1	Maduru Oya	B	Pimburaththawa	49.34	49.34
2	Maduru Oya	B	Aralaganwila	14.96	14.96
3	Maduru Oya	B	Randiyawewa	6.37	5.73
4	Maduru Oya	B	Madurangala wewa	4.11	4.11
5	Maduru Oya	B	Sewanawewa	3.69	3.69
6	Maduru Oya	B	Muthugala wewa	3.64	3.64
7	Mahaweli	C	Henanigala	12.80	12.67
8	Kala Oya	H	Konwewa	3.95	37.69
9	Kala Oya	H	Paindikulama	3.85	3.16
10	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Randenigala	801.50	777.10
11	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Victoria	721.20	595.90
12	Maduru Oya	MD&RO	Maduruoya	596.60	616.40
13	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Moragahakanda	557.90	540.20
14	Walawa	MD&RO	Udawalawa	268.70	269.40
15	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Kaluganga	248.00	248.00
16	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Kothmale	170.90	130.10
17	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Uthitiya	146.10	126.40
18	Kala Oya	MD&RO	Kalawewa	104.00	105.50
19	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Loggaloya	48.00	48.15
20	Kala Oya	MD&RO	Kandalama	33.80	33.80
21	Walawa	MD&RO	Chandrikawewa	27.70	27.70
22	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Bowathenna	23.50	18.50
23	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Hepolaoya	12.60	12.05
24	Kala Oya	MD&RO	Dambuloya	11.70	11.00
25	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Rantambe	7.00	5.10
26	Mahaweli	MD&RO	Polgolla	4.45	4.03
27	Walawa	Walawa	Kiriibbanwewa	16.53	15.70
28	Walawa	Walawa	Urusitawewa	4.73	4.73
29	Walawa	Walawa	Habaraluwewa	3.79	3.03
30	Walawa	Walawa	Galwewa	3.79	3.22
31	Walawa	Walawa	Andarawewa	3.21	2.89
<b>Total</b>			<b>mcm</b>	<b>3,918.41</b>	<b>3,733.90</b>
			<b>Acft</b>	<b>3,173,913</b>	<b>3,024,456</b>
<b>% Available</b>				<b>95%</b>	

(Source: Water Management Secretariat - Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka)