

Fear of infestation by the [pink bollworm](#) may hit sowing of the [cotton](#) crop in [Gujarat](#). Another impediment that could come in the way is the acute scarcity of water.

According to a trade official, even in [Maharashtra](#) and central Indian states like Rajasthan, the situation could be similar to [Gujarat](#).

Their major worry is the monsoon, which got delayed after its initial arrival, especially in [Maharashtra](#). The [pink bollworm](#) had damaged crops in many parts of the country in the last two years and even [BT cotton](#) crop was not complete safe from the pest. “After a humble start, if the monsoon delays, that leaves the [cotton](#) sowing vulnerable to pest attack,” said the official.

According to state government sources in Gujarat, cotton sowing was only 9,339 hectares or 0.37 per cent of the normal three-year average sowing in the first week of this month. During the same period in 2017, it was 49,400 hectares; in 2016, it stood at 15,200 hectares.

In fact, the state government advised farmers to sow later (after the monsoon starts), in order to minimise the risk of bollworm infestation. In the last four years, bollworm infestation had hit cotton cultivation in both [Gujarat](#) and [Maharashtra](#).

Also, Hasmukh Raval, former chairman of the Gujarat State Co-operative Cotton Federation, said, “A majority of the cotton sowing area in Gujarat is facing acute water scarcity. Sowing can begin only after it rains and there is ample water.”

Pink bollworm likely to hit sowing of the cotton crop in Gujarat



He added, “As a result, overall sowing is expected to go down by at least 20 per cent.” During this kharif season, cotton sowing is likely to fall by 10 per cent.

In the last cotton season, the [Cotton Association of India](#) (CAI) had revised 17-18 crop estimates from 36 million bales to 36.5 million. It also revised upward export estimates from 6.5 million bales (170 kg each) to 7 million bales. Meanwhile, import estimates were pared from 2 million to 1.5 million bales. Of this, 850 000 bales have already arrived till May.

President of [CAI](#) Atul Ganatra has pegged the domestic consumption for the season at 32.4 million bales.

The carry-over stock at the end of the 2017-18 crop year is estimated to be 1.6 million bales. The association had finalised the estimates in its participants’ meeting on Monday.