

The southwest monsoon, after a relatively lull phase, has become active over the past two days in belts of eastern, central, northern and western India where mainly pulses, oilseeds, cotton, and paddy are grown. There are forecasts of heavy to very heavy rain.

In the case of paddy, the current bout of rain should push transplanting crops from nurseries in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. Tamil Nadu and [West Bengal](#) are expecting a good paddy crop. There has been low sowing in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana because the monsoon became feeble after an early start. The sowing in Karnataka is brisk. However, in north Indian states of UP, Punjab and Haryana, delay in the arrival of the monsoon has not only increased the temperature above 40 degrees Celsius in the Indo-Gangetic plains but also affected the sowing of major [kharif](#) crops in the region. On the flip side, the late and erratic rain may affect overall sowing in Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Tamil Nadu targets higher foodgrain output

The Tamil Nadu government is targeting 11 million tonnes of food grains in 2018-19 as compared to 10.94 million tonnes in 2017-18 and 5.24 million tonnes in 2016-17. Besides food grains, oilseeds, cotton and sugarcane would account for 4.75 million tonnes. Production in 2018-19 would be aided by formulating region-specific and crop-specific technological interventions, said R Doraikkannu, agriculture minister, Tamil Nadu. Among food grains, rice will continue to lead. However, apart from the monsoon, the Cauvery system of irrigation is the major determinant of food grain production, especially paddy, in the Cauvery delta zone.

ALSO READ: [Kharif sowing 9.7% lower as monsoon delayed over Central, North India](#)

Maharashtra acreage may fall marginally

The overall acreage in Maharashtra may reduce. Despite a revival in rain over the past few days, “the acreage under [kharif](#) in Maharashtra is expected to remain marginally lower by 1-2 per cent with farmers moving from soya bean to cotton. While the government has set an ambitious target to make Maharashtra drought-free by 2019, sowing [kharif](#) crops will remain rain-dependent”, said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, Care Ratings.

The late arrival of the monsoon hit kharif crops’ early sowing. Farmers in Maharashtra are also sceptical about realisation at the time of harvesting kharif crops unless the recent upsurge in agri commodity prices encourages them to go in for aggressive sowing this year.

Normal paddy, less jute crop in West Bengal

With the timely arrival of the southwest monsoon, [West Bengal](#) expects a normal paddy crop this kharif season. The state produces annually about 15 million tonnes of rice, of which 70 per cent is grown in the kharif season. However, jute crop sowing is lower by 15-20 per cent owing to poor realisation last year, according to Ghanshyam Sarada, a jute mill owner based in Kolkata. This year, [West Bengal](#) is expected to produce 7 million bales (one bale is 170 kg) of jute.

“If monsoon trends are normal, we expect kharif rice sowing on 4 million hectares,” said

Pranab Chatterjee, agriculture expert. “Till last week, there was an 8-9 per cent deficit in rain in some districts. However, now the situation has improved and we expect normal sowing to take place,” said a government official.

ALSO READ: [What exactly would be the kharif MSP of 2018-19 remains a big question](#)

Brakes applied on sowing in Telangana, Andhra

After an optimistic start in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the dry spell in the third week slowed sowing in the two states. Officials in both states are confident that the operations would regain momentum. Both the states have a normal cropped area of around 4 million hectares in the kharif season. After paddy, groundnut and cotton are prominent in Andhra Pradesh whereas in Telangana cotton occupies almost 50 per cent of the cropped area followed by paddy and maize.

“By this time we would have sown various crops in 1-1.2 million hectares in Telangana, whereas the coverage is only 0.7 million to 0.8 million hectares as of now. The situation is not comfortable,” K Vijay Kumar, additional director in the Telangana agriculture department, told Business Standard.

In Andhra Pradesh, according to officials, sowing was completed only in 200,000 hectares, 30 per cent lower than normal during the period.

Monsoon delay hits sowing in northern states

The delay in the arrival of the monsoon in north India has affected sowing. The sowing of paddy, pulses and oilseeds, on average, has been lower in UP, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and J&K. UP, Punjab and Haryana account for the bulk of agricultural production in the North, including both cash and food crops.

Paddy sowing has been lower than last year by more than 50 per cent in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir. With regard to chief pulses crops, all states except UP and Rajasthan have recorded lower sowing than in the last kharif season.

ALSO READ: [Kharif sowing down by 75% in Gujarat due to chronic water shortage](#)

Brisk sowing in Karnataka

“The sowing area under kharif crops has seen an improvement in Karnataka due to early monsoon rainfall. The total crop area (2.02 million hectares till June 25) is 16 per cent higher than the last year’s,” said K G Anup, joint director of Agriculture.

The area sown under paddy, jowar, ragi and maize, among others, increased 24 per cent as compared to the last season, while the area under oilseeds like soybean and groundnut rose by 25 per cent. Pulses sowing has dropped 6 per cent to 464,000 ha majorly due to a fall in tur and blackgram acreage.

Gujarat sowing improves marginally

The recent spell of monsoon has helped improve the sowing in Gujarat and may gain momentum once fields open after rain. The sowing area under kharif crops has improved marginally compared to last year.
(Inputs from New Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Ahmedabad and Kolkata)