

# Ditched by rains, crops in trouble

## Rice yield will tank, watch out for drought, says US government report

Zia Haq

New Delhi, July 9

INDIA NEEDS rains and fast.

The country could be heading for a drought worse than the one in 2002 if monsoon rains do not pick up during the sowing window period for kharif crops (summer crops), a US government report has warned.

The sowing window ends by mid-July and areas under rice crops have shrunk by 13.66 lakh hectares due to a truant monsoon, government data said.

And that's not all, there's more to worry on the food front.

A leading farm data provider to the government — the Noida-based Risk Management Solutions India — has found that the patchy monsoon would take a toll on the rice yield this year.

Rice yield could tank by up to 20 per cent, the RMSI, the Indian arm of Risk Management Solutions (RMS), US, found after a simulation study.

With huge food stocks — the government collected 53.8 million tonnes of foodgrains till June 5 — there is no threat of a food crisis, an official assured.

"But even if the rains pick up, we will still have a drop in rice yield of between 15 and 20 per cent," climate scientist Satya Priya, who heads RMSI's risk evaluation wing, told HT.

The US agriculture department's Global Agricultural Information Network (GAIN), part of its Foreign Agricultural Service wing, has said: "If rains come in the next

one week, planting operations will pick up. Otherwise the country will be heading for a drought... more serious than the 2002 drought."

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology, too, has forecast a "marginal" and weak monsoon for India based on predictions of the "Madden-Julian Oscillation" index — a meteorological model used to track the eastward progress of tropical rain.

It has warned of a brewing El Nino as countries struggle to ride out an economic slowdown.

El Nino, literally meaning "Little Boy" in Spanish, is a weather glitch marked by warming Pacific waters, which in turn disturbs normal weather formations over the Asia-Pacific, triggering droughts from India to Australia.

"As a result, the northern hemisphere monsoon may remain marginally active, initially over the longitude range of the western and central Indian

Ocean, with a tendency for eastward propagation of the focus-area of tropical weather," a report posted on its website stated.

Together, these could constitute an early warning for drought, which would cause India's farm economy to totter. The RMSI study says Andhra Pradesh could see a yield drop of about 18 per cent.

Yield could fall by up to 20 per cent in rice-growing states like Orissa and Jharkhand. In West Bengal, cyclone Aila has dented planting by about 10 per cent, the study said.

zia.haq@hindustantimes.com



While the rest of the country is staring at a drought-like situation, Majuli in Assam is flooded.

## Kosi barrage being secured

Manish Tiwari

New Delhi, July 9

THE UPA government is taking no chances with the restoration of the Kosi barrage after the unprecedented devastation the floods caused last year and the resultant politicking, which ensued.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram have been taking keen interest in the flood control measures along the Kosi. Union Water Resources Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal would be flying to Bihar on Saturday to review the progress along the Kosi river, a source in the ministry said.

The visit comes after Chidambaram, on June 22, requested Bansal to visit Bihar for first-hand information on the flood control measures.

Earlier this week, the water resources ministry had submitted a report to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), which said "all works recommended" — restoration and construction of spurs — by the Kosi High Level Committee, set up by the Bihar government, had been completed. The ministry also said besides completing construction work to plug the breach (in the eastern afflux bund of Kosi barrage), the government has taken all necessary measures to protect the area from floods.

Over 30 lakh people had been affected when the eastern afflux bund of Kosi barrage breached near Kusaha village (Nepal) on August 18 and inundated vast areas in Sunsari district in Nepal as well as Supaul, Araria, Saharsa, Madhepura and Purnia districts in Bihar.

The Centre had declared it a national calamity and announced a Rs 1,000-crore relief package. [mtiwari@hindustantimes.com](mailto:mtiwari@hindustantimes.com)

### Situation Report

As on July 9

**151.0 mm**

rainfall till July 8. The normal limit is 234.7 mm.

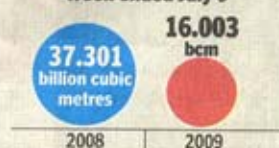
**13.66 lakh hectares**

drop in the total area under rice crops due to delayed monsoon, compared to 51.80 lakh hectares last year



### Water woes

Water in 81 reservoirs for the week ended July 9



Combined live storage in reservoirs at the beginning of June was 19 per cent of designed capacity and stood at 11 per cent of designed capacity on Thursday

- The total design storage capacity in 81 reservoirs is 151.768 bcm
- Last year, the live storage percentage stood at 25 per cent and the average storage during the same period in the past decade was 22 per cent
- The situation is alarming in Punjab, Haryana and western UP as the region is facing 44 per cent deficient monsoon

## Water levels halved in 81 reservoirs

Aurangzeb Naqshbandi

New Delhi, July 9:

A WEAK monsoon this year has more than halved the water levels in 81 important reservoirs in the country.

The weekly report of the Central Water Commission (CWC), which monitors the storage position in these reservoirs, paints a grim picture of the water levels as on Thursday. Water in the reservoirs has fallen to 16.003 billion cubic metres (bcm) according to government data for the week ending July 9, compared to 37.301 bcm last year.

The current water level is 51.5 per cent lower than the average in the last 10 years, the CWC report said.

The situation is alarming for

farmers in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh as the region is facing 44 per cent deficient monsoon so far.

June this recorded the lowest rains in the past 83 years and in the event of a drought, the low water levels in the country's key basins would put more strain on the irrigation system. This is critical as the sowing season for the Kharif crop ends mid-July.

To add to the woes, the region is facing massive power cuts and due to the depleting water table, the water meant for irrigation may be used for drinking.

With monsoons covering the whole of India, it was presumed that water levels in the country's important reservoirs would rise, but this hasn't happened due to uneven rains.