

Early kharif sowing shows healthy progress; rice, pulses area up

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Sanjeeb Mukherjee & Agencies | New Delhi June 03, 2022 Last Updated at 19:56 IST



Although it is very early days, initial sowing of kharif crops has started on a positive note with the areas under pulses rising over the same period last year, while oilseeds area is at about the same level.

The area under rice has risen sharply in early sowing and farmers are expected to bring even more land under the crop to cash in the bullish outlook for cereals.

The actual pick-up in sowing will happen once the monsoon becomes active over Central and Western India.

Data shows that according to initial estimates, kharif crops were sown in about 6.91 million hectares on June 3, as against seven million hectares during the same period last year.

In all, an average of 108.51 million hectares of land is cultivated each year during the kharif season, which extends till mid-August. Rice, coarse cereals, pulses and oilseeds take the lion's share of this area.

Meanwhile, news agency Reuters said in a report published on Friday that cotton planting in India, the world's biggest producer of the fibre, could surge by as much as 15 per cent

to switch from other crops.

Quoting Atul Ganatra, president, Cotton Association of India, Reuters said the higher output could help cool the rally in global and local cotton prices, which is hurting Asian apparel makers.

A 15 per cent rise in India's cotton crop area would lift it to about 13.8 million hectares in 2022 from 12 million hectares last year.

The association expects the largest expansions in cotton area to be in the western states of Gujarat and Maharashtra, which together account for nearly half of the country's production.

in 2022 to an all-time high, as strong prices prompt farmers

TRACKING FROM THE START

till June 3

(mn hectares)



Crops	2022	2021	Change (%)
Rice	0.21	0.17	23.53
Pulses	0.1	0.08	25.00
Coarse cereals	0.17	0.18	-5.56
Oilseeds	0.03	0.03	0.00
Sugarcane	4.66	4.58	1.75
Cotton	1.07	1.3	-17.69
Total	6.91	7	-1.29

Source: Ministry of Agriculture

In another report, news agency Bloomberg reported that rice farmers in India, the top exporter, are working to take advantage of a good monsoon and prospects that the government will boost grain purchases to safeguard food security.

Charanjit Singh Gill, a farmer in Punjab -- a region known as the country's food bowl -- said he will keep planting rice as it's the best option during the rainy season. Rice in most Asian farms requires large amounts of water to grow.

"I expect the government will buy more rice this year from us as they have to ensure the country's food security," Gill said.

Anil Kalyan, 58, a farmer in Haryana, said he has prepared his rice nursery and plans to grow the crop on his entire 40 acres (16 hectares) of land this year.

Indian farmers planted rice on 41.15 million hectares of land during the monsoon season last year, up from 40.01 million hectares a year earlier, according to the farm ministry, Bloomberg reported.

While rice acreage and production are expected to be stable or slightly higher this year, growers say, it may not remain the case for the years to come. It all depends on prices and the availability of water.

“With diesel prices rising sharply in the last one year so also the cost of other inputs, any average farmer will go for those crops in which he gets a remunerative return,” Suresh Agarwal from the All India Dal Millers Association had told Business Standard a few weeks back.

Agarwal had said the actual impact of any shift from pulses towards other crops will be seen around August and if by then oilseed prices come down and rains are normal, then the shift will be less.

The southwest monsoon on which much of the bullish outlook of kharif sowing kept its forward march covering much of North-East and eastern parts of the country and making steady progress across southern India.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in its latest weather outlook said that the southwest monsoon has covered the entire northeastern states and some parts of sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim. Under its influence, intense spell of rainfall was witnessed over Northeast India and Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim in the next 5 days.

In Southern India, the monsoon has reached Tamil Nadu, parts of Karnataka and Kerala.

Private weather forecasting agency, Skymet in a recent report, sounded a warning. It said that the monsoon may remain behind schedule for the state of Maharashtra.

“The central parts of the country including Chhattisgarh, Odisha and East Madhya Pradesh may have to wait longer than normal for the 1st monsoon showers. Monsoon arrival as per normal dates, as such is after 15th June for parts of Gujarat, Jharkhand and Bihar,” Skymet said.