

El Nino may hit maize, soya, rice output

TESTING TIMES AHEAD. FAO says impact of the weather event 'uncertain' as no two events are the same

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The country's maize (corn), soya-bean and rice production could be affected by the likely El Nino weather event, which can cause severe droughts over Australia, Indonesia, and parts of southern Asia, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has said. "After experiencing three consecutive years of La Niña that brought bumper crops for some and crop failures for others, we are likely heading right into an El Niño," said FAO's Agriculture and Market Information System (AMIS) in its latest Market Monitor.

MORE IMPACT ON MAIZE

AMIS said the impact of the "potential" El Nino is uncertain as no two events are the same with regards to strength, duration, or loc-

alised mitigations. "However, based on historical data, some crops and regions can be highlighted as being likely to have yield impacts," it said.

El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events are estimated to affect crop yields on over 25 per cent of global croplands, AMIS Market Monitor said. In general, they tend to slightly improve global-mean soyabean yields, while decreasing global-mean maize, rice, and wheat yields. "Maize tends to be impacted more than the other crops. Also, negative impacts tend to be lessened for irrigated crops compared with those that are rainfed," it said. Maize and soyabean productivity will likely be affected in India, north China plain, southern Mexico, north-east Brazil, Indonesia, West Africa and southern Africa.

IMPACT MAY BE OFFSET

The weather event, which on an



LOWER YIELD. The weather event is likely to impact rice production across all of South-East Asia, including in India

average occurs every 2-7 years usually lasting 9-12 months, is likely to impact rice production across all of South-East Asia, including India.

El Nino, which according to the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) of the US has a 60 per cent chance of setting in during May-July and increasing to 70 per cent during

June-August, may drag wheat production in south-east Australia.

While El Niño can significantly lower crop yields in some regions, there is a chance that any potential negative impact might be offset at global level, AMIS said in its Market Monitor. "Thus, reductions in yields in one region might be balanced by increases in an-

other. Over the next couple of months, AMIS will keep a close watch on El Niño and its possible impact on global agriculture," it said.

POSITIVES

On the positive side, maize and soyabean production will likely gain in Midwest US and southeast South America. Wheat yields may rise in the US southern Great Plains, China, Central Asia and southeast South America, the FAO arm said.

The alert comes on the heels of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOP), a body backed by FAO's weather arm World Meteorological Organization (WMO), saying the south-west monsoon could witness normal to below normal rainfall over most parts of South Asia. However, at this stage there is no indication of the strength or duration of El Niño, the WMO said.