

Farm experts not surprised by lower estimate of kharif crops

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The Indian government's first advance estimate of kharif crops this season has not surprised agriculture experts, industry and analysts in view of the south-west monsoon's behaviour this year. However, some feel that the production will likely be even lower and some of the estimates could be pruned in the next round, particularly in the case of tur.

The south-west monsoon was impacted by warm ocean water phenomenon El Nino with July witnessing excess rainfall and August experiencing a 32 per cent deficiency in precipitation.

Former Agriculture Secretary Siraj Hussain said, "Lower estimate of production of various kharif crops is not surprising. It is good that the government has realised the importance of releasing correct estimates."

Noted economist and former Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) Chairman Ashok Gulati said there was consumer bias in the system and farmers stand to lose.

In particular, he differed with the Agriculture Ministry estimates on tur (pigeon pea) production. "I disagree with the government's estimate on tur output and its prices will remain firm and even can flare up. Because the area under tur was less, so how come the production will be the same or more?" he wondered.

WEATHER IMPACT

Bimal Kothari, Chairman, IPGA, said there is no significant difference between the first advance estimates of tur and last year's crop size. While September rains had rekindled prospects of a good crop, heat conditions in October are seen hurting tur yields. "It is very difficult to assess



GLOOMY PROSPECTS. Some feel that the production could be even lower and some of the estimates could be pruned in the next round, particularly in the case of tur

the crop size as there has been a big impact of the erratic weather due to El Nino on the pulses crop," he said.

Rahul Chauhan of IGrain India said the projections of tur crop are on the higher side in the first advance estimates, while urad and moong are quite realistic. We expect tur crop to be less than 3 million tonnes this year due to lower crop in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Gulati said the only concern (over pulses) was about tur. I feel it is late (for the Centre to act). "The government should have imported it earlier. Let's wait till December-January," he said.

ERRATIC DISTRIBUTION

Kothari said, "We will have to wait and see how the harvest of tur turns out from December onwards." Even with the estimated production of 3.4

million tonnes (mt) of tur, there will be a shortage of 1.2 mt for which India has to depend on imports and prices are unlikely to come down.

DK Pant, chief economist at India Ratings, said, "The estimates are clearly as per the impact of 2023 monsoon which was below normal. Though acreage was not affected due to the uneven monsoon, there was a decline in productivity of foodgrain crops since rainfall did not come at the right time when farmers needed".

Shashank Srivastava, Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, said, "The projections regarding kharif production are not unexpected as the spatial and timeline distribution of monsoon rainfall was erratic. Clearly, lower agricultural output will weaken rural consumer sentiment," he said.

Rohan Kanwar Gupta,

Vice-President and Sector Head, Corporate Ratings, said the decline in crop production follows an uneven monsoon precipitation with the country recording precipitation at 94 per cent of the long period average during the monsoon season.

BV Krishna Rao, The Rice Exporters Association of India President, said rice production was lower by 3.8 per cent and it was not a concern. "Rice production is ample to meet domestic demand," he said. Gulati said, "There is no worry for rice because of ample stock with the government and inflation of rice has been checked. The government has also brought down wheat inflation as it has been unloading the grain from official reserves almost at its minimum support price (MSP). In rice, the reserve price (by FCI) is lower than its new MSP value, which is more than ₹30."