

Kharif sowing gathers pace, 35% of area covered

GOOD SIGNS. Overall, acreage under all crops up 14%; paddy, pulses, soya, cotton and maize gain while groundnut trails

Our Bureau

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Helped by early coverage of monsoon and revival of rainfall in central and north-west India from the last week of June, India's kharif crop sowing has gained momentum with 35 per cent of the country's normal area of 1,096 lakh hectares (lh) getting covered by July 5, latest data show.

Overall, the kharif acreage is up 14 per cent at 378.72 lh compared with 331.9 lh in the same period a year ago, data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare showed.

Early setting in of the monsoon on May 30 and coverage of the entire country six days earlier than its normal schedule have helped the higher coverage. Last year, the south-west monsoon got impacted with the emergence of El Nino and resulted in below-aver-

Area coverage under kharif crops (lakh hectare)

	2023	2024	% Change
Paddy	50.26	59.99	19.3
Pulses	23.78	36.81	54.8
Arhar	4.09	20.82	409.7
Urdbean	3.67	5.37	46.0
Moongbean	11.79	8.49	-28
Shree Anna	82.08	58.48	-28.8
Jowar	7.16	3.66	-48.8
Bajra	43.02	11.41	-73.5
Maize	30.22	41.09	36.0
Oilseeds	51.97	80.31	54.5
Groundnut	21.24	17.85	-16.0
Soybean	28.86	60.63	110.1
Sugarcane	55.45	56.88	2.6
Jute & Mesta	6.02	5.63	-6.5
Cotton	62.34	80.63	29.3
All Crops	331.90	378.72	14.1

Data as on July 5; Source: Agriculture Ministry

age rainfall in the June-September season. In August, the country received less than 64 per cent of normal rainfall, which was the lowest since 1901.

"The rainfall in the rain-fed areas is critical for the kharif crop as irrigated area anyway will gain from the higher water getting accu-

mulated in reservoirs," said an agriculture scientist. The quantity of rainfall and its distribution will have to be monitored up to July 20, by when maximum sowing takes place, he said.

SOYA UP

The acreage under paddy, the key cereal crop of the



UPTICK. The acreage under paddy, which was almost at par with last year until a fortnight ago, has jumped 19 per cent to nearly 60 lh as on July 5 from 50.3 lh a year ago G N RAO

kharif season, which was almost at par with last year until a fortnight ago, has jumped 19 per cent to nearly 60 lh as on July 5 from 50.3 lh a year ago.

Soybean coverage has more than doubled to 60.6 lh while groundnut trails at 17.9 lh. Earlier there were reports of a possibility of

farmers shifting to groundnut from soyabean or cotton. But, it seems otherwise as sowing of both soyabean and cotton is higher this year. The total area under cotton has reached 80.6 lh until July 5 as against 62.3 lh a year ago, up by 29 per cent.

The sowing area under arhar has reached 20.8 lh,

which is five times more than the acreage reported a year ago as farmers have picked up the price signal to expand the area under the crop. Currently, arhar dal is selling at ₹175-230/kg in retail markets of the national capital region of Delhi. The area under urad too is up by 46 per cent at 5.4 lh. But, moong acreage has declined by 28 per cent at 8.5 lh. Overall, the sowing of all pulses has reached 36.8 lh, which is 54.8 per cent higher than 23.8 lh year-ago.

MAIZE HIGHER

On the other hand, area under Shree Anna (nutri cereals) has dipped 28.8 per cent at 58.5 lh as both jowar and bajra acreage is lower this year. But, area under maize has been higher at 41.1 lh, up by 36 per cent from 30.2 lh.

Sugarcane acreage, too, has increased a tad to 56.9 lh from 55.5 lh. But area under jute and mesta is down at 5.6 lh from 6 lh.