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Kochi, Heavy Rain, Plantation Sector

Heavy rains may hurt Kerala's plantation sector

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Kochi: Kerala's plantation industry may lose up to Rs 500 crore to Rs 700 crore due to heavy rains, showed the initial estimate from the Association of Planters Kerala (APK).

"It is a disaster for us this year. We lost almost three months without any crops. Our estimates show a decline of around 40% in crops. Altogether, the plantation industry will suffer a loss between Rs 500 crore and Rs 700 crore this year," said Thomas Jacob, chairman of APK. The affected crops mainly include coffee, tea, rubber, cardamom and black pepper. "Rains will have a tremendous impact on coffee, which we will come to know

only after two weeks, when the rain stops. I'm sure it is going to be down by minimum 30% to 40%," Jacob said.

"Last year, we had a drop of 40% in coffee crop compared to the previous year and we were trying to overcome that loss. On top of last year's decline, we expect another 10% to 15% decline this year," said Prasanth Rajesh, president of Wayanad Coffee Growers Association. According to him, areca nut farmers are also affected by this year's heavy monsoon.

Rubber plantations in Nilambur, Kalikavu and Malappuram were hugely hit by landslides, said Joshy Joseph Manniparambil, general secretary, Kerala Farmers' Federation (KeFF). "A detailed assessment of the destruction is go-

ing on, but initial estimates show that 500 acres of rubber plantations were lost in the landslides. The trees in those plantations value around Rs 20 crore," he said.

Further, the rubber-growing high ranges of central Kerala have been troubled by the continuous rain for the last five months. "We hardly got any tapping days during these months," Manniparambil said.

According to Spices Planters' Association (SPA), the adverse weather may cause a decline of 50% in the current crop of cardamom. "The destruction in Kumily and Aanavilasam areas are much higher - up to 60% - and there are other areas where 80% of the plants have been lost," said MMLambodharan, general secretary of SPA.