

Indian Express
15 June 2018
Thiruvananthapuram, Monsoon

Strong monsoon augurs well for farm sector

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THE strong onset of the South-west monsoon in the state has raised the prospects of higher farm output and economic growth this year as it is expected to aid farm output in the state — about 85 per cent of its total 25.84 lakh hectares (ha) cropped area is rain-fed.

Though the state witnessed a drought in 2017, a normal monsoon recorded in the past year helped the state bridge the gap in production of various food crops and record a significant stride in the production of pad-

dy, which occupies around 6.6 per cent of the total cropped area. Paddy output jumped to a high of 6.17 lakh tonnes last year, bucking the previous trend of falling harvests triggered by drought and other reasons.

According to the Economics and Statistics Department, the total arable paddy fields in the state was 1.71 lakh ha in 2016-17 and the production was 4.36 lakh tonnes, with an average production of 2,547 kg/ha. It has jumped to 2.20 lakh ha in 2017-18 and production to 6.17 lakh tonnes of paddy, with an

average production of 2,800 kg/ha.

Considering the fact that the previous drought has affected a total area of 50,917.62 ha of rice cultivation, including crop damage in 36,927.62 ha in various districts, a good monsoon is expected to boost the farm output of various crops in Kerala where cropping pattern is dominated by cash crops. According to the state planning board, of the 62.46 per cent of the total cropped area, rice, tapioca and pulses constitute 9.35 per cent. Among cash crops, coconut has the largest area under crop cov-

er (30 per cent) followed by rubber (21.3 per cent), pepper (3.3 per cent) and coffee (3.28 per cent).

“Though a normal South-west and Northeast monsoon will have a direct impact on the state’s agricultural economy, the distribution and timing of rain across the state are more important,” said agriculture economist P Indiradevi of Kerala Agriculture University. However, a normal rainfall augurs well for the projected target of the government which looks to double the income of farmers by 2022, she said.

Vision of 13th Five-Year Plan

- Sustainable Agricultural development ensuring maximum productivity, profitability and ecological stability
- Enhance area under cultivation of rice to 3 lakh ha
- Self-sufficiency in vegetable production
- Doubling of farmers income by 2022
- Promotion of crop-based Special Agricultural Zones (SAZ)