

# Hindu

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## Wayanad: Heavy rain, Damages

### Rains prove fatal for Wayanad farmers

Torrential rain during southwest monsoon and fungal diseases upset the gains of good pre-monsoon showers

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Many farmers in Wayanad started cultivation of ginger and elephant foot yam by the middle of March as they usually do. Good pre-monsoon showers in April raised their hopes of a good yield. But that was not to be.

June and July proved tricky with heavy rainfall flooding the fields and fungal diseases (mahali) affecting the crops.

Now, farmers are resorting to premature harvests and it has led to a decline in prices of the produces in the market.

The 'nendran' variety of plantain, especially the crop cultivated in low-lying areas targeting Onam, was the worst affected crop in the recent floods. While the price of ginger rhizomes declined from ₹2,500 (60 kg a bag) to ₹800 a bag in the local market, the price of plantain dropped to ₹15 from ₹35 a kg. The price of elephant foot



Farmers harvesting premature ginger rhizomes affected by quick wilt disease from a ginger farm at Karachal in Wayanad district.

yam was ₹800 to 1,000 for a bag (60 kg) on Friday while it was ₹2,100 a kg last year.

"The price of the nendran variety plantain on Friday was ₹31 a kg for first grade and ₹26 for second grade, but the farmers in the flood-

hit areas were getting only ₹12 to 15 a kg," says K. Raju, a farmer at Kottathara.

He lost nearly 1,000 plantains in rain-related calamities. He had spent nearly ₹1.20 lakh for the cultivation, including rent for the land.

The farmer is in a tight spot as he should repay the money he had borrowed from friends and financial institutions for the cultivation.

Ginger is normally harvested eight months after sowing, but farmers are har-

vesting the crop prematurely to minimise their loss, says Gopi, a small-scale farmer at Meenangadi.

"I have spent nearly ₹2 lakh to cultivate ginger on one acre of leased land but I am not sure whether I can recoup even a quarter of the expenditure," Mr. Gopi says.

The condition of the farmers who have cultivated similar crops is not different. "The district experienced unusual rainfall this year and it has hit the crops," P.Rajendran, Associate Director of Research, Regional Agriculture Research Station, Ambalavayal, says.

Torrential rain, cloudy atmosphere, and high humidity are conducive for an outbreak of fungal diseases such as quick wilt disease in pepper vines, abnormal nut fall in areca nut, and bud rot in coconut and areca nut, Dr. Rajendran says.

Incessant rain has taken a toll on plantation crops such as coffee, pepper, and carda-

mom in the district, a major Robusta coffee growing area. The Agriculture Department has estimated the crop loss at ₹17,64,67,250. Standing crops in 521.84 hectares have been hit, affecting 1,250 farmers in the district.

As per reports, rain and heavy wind affected plantain farmers in various parts of the district. As many as 8,31,350 bunched and non-bunched plantains cultivated in 332.5 hectares were uprooted in the wind.

#### Destroyed

Ginger cultivated in 42 hectares and paddy nurseries prepared in 32.5 hectares were also destroyed in the rains.

According to the data available with the District Disaster Management Authority, Wayanad received 1,820.25 mm rain during the summer starting from January 1 to April 20 as against 756.37 mm during the corresponding period last year.