

A Normal Monsoon - Not For Crops

What is the issue?

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- Indian Metrological Department has recognised the latest south-west monsoon rainfall as 'normal' in statistical terms.
- However, the spatial and temporal distribution of rains shows a different picture.

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What is a normal monsoon year?

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• Long-Period Average (LPA) rainfall of India for the entire monsoon season is around 887 mm.

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• IMD deems a season 'normal' if the all-India quantum of rain falls within a 10% range of the LPA.

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• In this south-west monsoon season (June to September), India has received a total 841.3 mm of rain.

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• This is short of the LPA by 5%.

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- Thus, statistically south-west monsoon for 2017 has turned out to be normal. \n

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Why is it not 'normal' for agriculture?

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• IMD categorises India into 36 meteorological sub-divisions for measuring the spatial spread of rainfall.

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- In this monsoon, 5 of the 36 sub-divisions received excess rains, 25 received normal rains and 6 witnessed deficient rains. \n
- Also, the first two months of the season witnessed an excess rainfall than the latter two.

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• Thus, however the quantum of rainfall this season was normal, the distribution was quite unusual.

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• Notably, the spatial and temporal distribution of rains decides the crop prospects.

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What could the impact be?

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 Spatial variation - This year's monsoon has been deficient in some key foodbowl States, affecting crop production. E.g. \n

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1. Deficient rains in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab is bound to affect kharif rice production.

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- 2. Deficient rains in Madhya Pradesh would impact rabi wheat crop and pulses output.
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- 3. Patchy distribution in Madhya Pradesh and Haryana could affect oilseeds' prospects.

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• Besides, there are wide variations within each state between growing regions.

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• Temporal variation - This year witnessed excess rains in June and July

contributing to good sowing and coverage of the kharif crops. \n

- However, August and September months saw below normal rains, impacting the eventual output by reducing crop yields. γn
- Also, rainfall in these two months decides reservoir storage and soil moisture and eventually helps planting of the winter crops. \n
- Notably, the rabi season and winter crops has been equally important to the agricultural prospects in recent years.
- Therefore, dry spells in the latter half of this monsoon, taken with deficient rains in key rabi growing regions, has reduced rabi prospects. \n

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Source: The Hindu

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