

Drought preparedness must become a priority

After many years, India's kharif output this year is **set to** fall. **Rice output**, according to a recent report in this newspaper, **is** expected to be 3.8 per cent lower than kharif 2022 output, according to the first advance **estimates put out** by the Agriculture Ministry. With pulses and coarse grains output down by 6.6 per cent and 6.5 per cent, respectively, overall kharif foodgrains output is expected to be nearly 5 per cent lower at 148 million tonnes (rice at 106 million tonnes, four million tonnes less than last year).

The **shortfall** in oilseeds (nearly five million tonnes), cotton (two million bales) and sugarcane (six million tonnes) **is** estimated at 17.7 per cent, 5.9 per cent and 11.4 per cent, respectively. **Meanwhile**, the US weather agency has said that 21.6 per cent of the country faces "drought conditions". The **effects** of **deficient** rainfall **can vary** across the country. There is no **dire** situation as yet. The rainfall has been deficient (20-59 per cent below **the long period average**) in south interior Karnataka, the north-east, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, eastern UP and Kerala, although the all-India report card **points to** a shortfall of 6 per cent from the long period average. These regions could need immediate relief measures. However, ground reports suggest that **the standing crop** in parts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar **is** unfit for human consumption but usable as **fodder**.

Livestock GDP, which **accounts for** about a quarter of agri GDP, **may** not be severely hit. It is **undeniable** that improved **irrigation** has reduced the impact of rain shortfall on crop output. Groundwater levels are not low everywhere, as the monsoon was good last year. But in the badly hit areas, there is no time to be lost. The States must be proactive in declaring drought, so that the central teams can follow up and take necessary relief (and crop insurance) steps. Earlier this month, Karnataka declared almost all its taluks as drought hit. In doing so, a State is supposed to follow **norms laid down** in the Centre's drought manual of 2016, which include: three or four weeks of **dry spell** in a region; a rainfall deficit of over 60 per cent; completion of **sowing**; 50 per cent of crop loss.

However, the Karnataka government may have a point in asking for a **fine-tuning** of these conditions, **keeping in mind diverse** agro-climatic conditions across regions, be it water availability or farm practices. The 60 per cent **bar** for drought seems high when a **deficiency** of 20-59 per cent can **wreak havoc**. The same could hold true for dry spell period. The distribution of a particular level of rainfall over time could impact crops differently. Upon declaration of drought, the Reserve Bank of India's 2018 rules can be **invoked**, which lay down conditions for **restructuring** of crop **loans** if the crop losses are at over 33 per cent. Fasal Bima Yojana authorities must **assess** damage without delay. We have emerged from bigger monsoon failures.

[\[Practice Exercise\]](#)

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.
- **Bar** (noun) – standard, criterion मापदंड/ कसौटी

Vocabulary

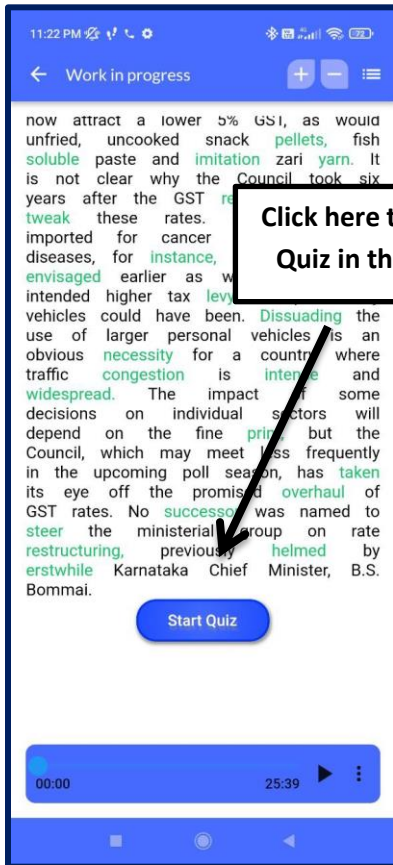
1. **Drought** (noun) – Dryness, aridity, water shortage, dry spell, dearth सूखा
2. **Preparedness** (noun) – Readiness, alertness, readiness, primed state, anticipation तैयारी
3. **Set** (to) (verb) – ready, prepare तैयार होना
4. **Estimate** (noun) – Approximation, guess, calculation, projection, assessment अनुमान
5. **Put out** (phrasal verb) – Release, issue, publish, disseminate, circulate प्रकाशित करना
6. **Meanwhile** (adverb) – Simultaneously, at the same time, concurrently, in the interim इसी बीच में
7. **Deficient** (adjective) – Insufficient, inadequate, lacking, scarce, short कमी
8. **Vary** (verb) – Differ, change, alter, fluctuate, deviate अलग होना
9. **Dire** (adjective) – Grave, serious, critical, drastic, extreme घातक
10. **The Long Period average** (noun) – The average value of a particular metric (e.g., rainfall) over an extended period of time, typically used to understand trends or deviations
11. **Point to** (phrasal verb) – Indicate, show, signal, denote, signify सूचित करना
12. **Fodder** (noun) – Feed, forage, silage, hay, straw चारा
13. **Account for** (phrasal verb) – Constitute, represent, comprise, make up, form के लिये उत्तरदायी होना
14. **Undeniable** (adjective) – Indisputable, irrefutable, incontrovertible, unquestionable, certain निर्विवाद
15. **Irrigation** (noun) – Watering, hydration, moistening, flooding सिंचाई
16. **Norm** (noun) – Standard, guideline, criterion, rule, benchmark मानक
17. **Lay down** (phrasal verb) – Establish, set, fix, determine, stipulate निर्धारित करना
18. **Dry spell** (noun) – A period without rain, drought, dry period, water shortage सूखा समय
19. **Deficit** (noun) – Shortfall, deficiency, shortage, lack, dearth घातक
20. **Sowing** (noun) – Planting, seeding, scattering, spreading of seeds बुआई
21. **Fine-tuning** (noun) – The act of making very small changes to something in order to make it work as well as possible. ठीक करना

22. **Keep in mind** (phrase) – To remember or consider something while judging a situation. ध्यान में रखना
23. **Diverse** (adjective) – Showing a great deal of variety; very different. विविधतापूर्ण
24. **Deficiency** (noun) – A lack or shortage. कमी
25. **Wreak havoc** (phrase) – To cause a great amount of disorder or damage. भारी तबाही मचाना
26. **Invoke** (verb) – To call on (a deity or spirit) in prayer, as a witness, or for inspiration; to put into effect or operation. अमल में लाना
27. **Restructuring of loan** (noun) – The act of revising the terms of a loan agreement, usually to provide relief to the borrower by extending the payment period and reducing the amount of each installment.
28. **Assess** (verb) – To evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, or quality of. आकलन करना

Summary of the Editorial

1. India's kharif crop output is set to decrease this year, with rice production dropping by 3.8%.
2. Pulses and coarse grains output are expected to decrease by 6.6% and 6.5%, respectively.
3. Total kharif foodgrains output is predicted to be 5% lower at 148 million tonnes.
4. Significant shortfalls in oilseeds, cotton, and sugarcane production are also estimated.
5. The U.S. weather agency reports that 21.6% of India is experiencing drought conditions.
6. Deficient rainfall affects regions differently, with some areas not yet in a dire situation.
7. Specific regions like south interior Karnataka and others are showing significant rainfall deficits.
8. Some areas have standing crops unfit for human consumption but can be used as fodder.
9. Livestock GDP may remain stable, accounting for a quarter of the agricultural GDP.
10. Improved irrigation has helped mitigate the impact of rainfall deficits in some areas.
11. Urgent action is needed in areas severely affected by drought.
12. States are encouraged to declare drought early to initiate relief and crop insurance measures.
13. Karnataka has declared drought in many taluks, questioning the current drought declaration norms.
14. The RBI has rules for restructuring crop loans when losses exceed 33% following a drought declaration.
15. Authorities of Fasal Bima Yojana must quickly assess and respond to the crop damage due to deficient monsoons.

Practice Exercise: Banking Pattern Based



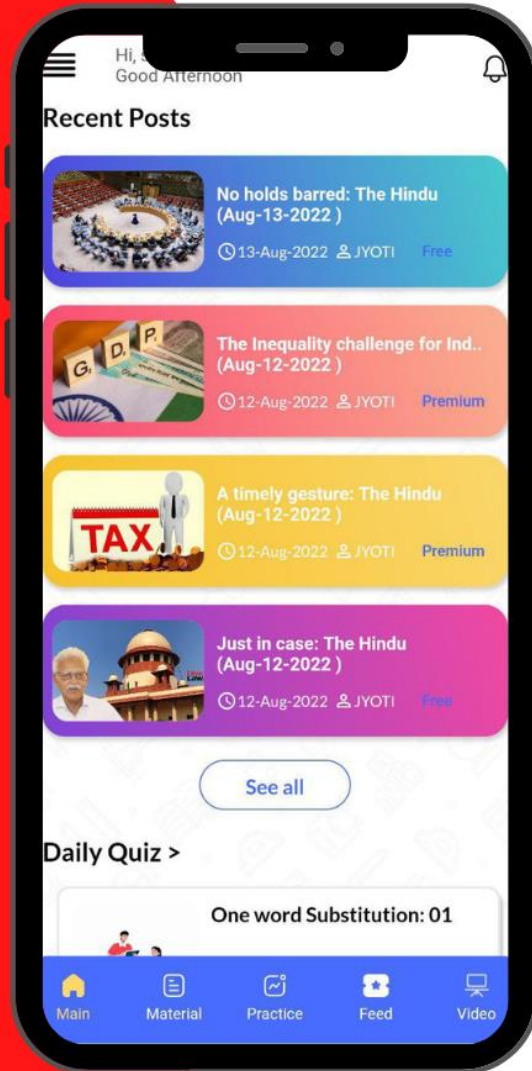
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