

AP agriculture caught between drought and destructive rain

- Cultivation lags far behind national and Telangana levels
- 32.92 per cent rainfall deficit leaves rain-fed crops battered after failed July-August monsoon
- Late depression brings relief to rainfall figures but damages paddy, groundnut, banana and vegetables in North Andhra
- Farmers face mounting losses from crop failures, rising input costs and water stress

K VARAPRASADA RAO
AMARAVATI

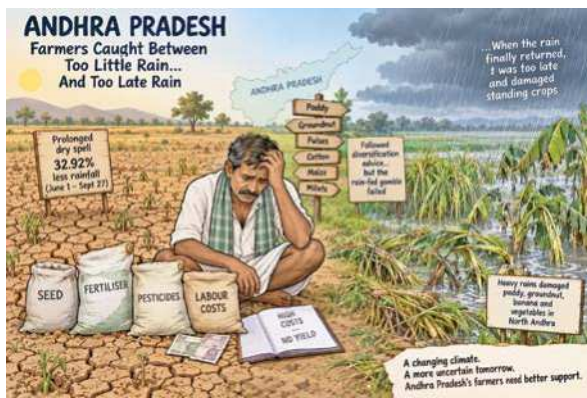
ANDHRA Pradesh's kharif season has slipped into a deep agrarian crisis, with a prolonged rainfall deficit leaving thousands of farmers staring at crop losses after spending heavily on sowing, fertilisers, pesticides and labour.

The state received 32.92 per cent less rainfall than normal between June 1 and September 27, with the deficit widening to 45.10 per cent in Rayalaseema and 21.64 per cent in Coastal Andhra. The situation was even more severe until early September, when the cumulative deficit stood at 55.45 per cent. But the late rains brought by a depression over Coastal Andhra have improved the seasonal rainfall position on paper, but they have come too late for many dryland farmers. In North Andhra, the heavy rains have instead damaged standing paddy, groundnut, banana and vegetable crops.

The scale of the agricultural setback becomes clearer when

Andhra Pradesh is compared with the rest of the country. By September 23, cultivation nationally had reached 100.57 per cent of the normal area, while Telangana had covered 95 per cent. Andhra Pradesh had managed only 83 per cent, with 63.24 lakh acres under cultivation against the projected 76.2 lakh acres.

Farmers followed the diversification advice, but the rain-fed gamble failed. Due to the El Nino effect, the government has repeatedly urged farmers to reduce paddy cultivation and move towards less water-intensive, rain-fed crops. Yet paddy still accounts for 32.86 lakh acres, or 52 per cent of the State's total cultivated area, because large tracts of the delta and other irrigated regions remain structurally dependent on paddy during kharif. The crops that were expected to provide an alternative-groundnut, pulses, cotton, maize and millets—are now among the worst affected. Groundnut was cultivated on only 4.13 lakh acres, 43 per cent of its normal area. Cot-



ton covered 10.80 lakh acres, maize 3.1 lakh acres and pulses 9.41 lakh acres. The sowing window for groundnut and cotton has already closed, leaving little scope for farmers to recover the season through fresh planting.

Four districts — Kurnool, Anantapur, Nandyal and Sri Sathya Sai — alone accounted for 23.75 lakh acres, nearly 38 per cent of the state's cultivated area. These are predominantly rain-fed farming regions. June showers encouraged farmers to sow, but the rains largely disappeared in July and August, when the standing crops needed them most.

The consequences are visible in the cultivation figures. Prakasam managed only 27 per cent of its projected area, Annamayya 33 per cent, Anakapalli 36 per cent, Chittoor 36 per cent, Markapuram 37 per cent, Polavaram 38 per cent and Palnadu 66 per cent.

In several of these districts, farmers had already incurred expenditure on land preparation, seed, fertiliser, pesticides, labour and lease rents before the crops began to fail.

However, El Nino warning adds to the uncertainty over the next season. The crisis has also exposed the vulnerability of Andhra Pradesh's farm economy to a changing rainfall pattern. The State government had already warned farmers about the possibility of El Nino-related weather risks, urging caution in crop planning and water use. That warning has acquired greater significance as the current season has unfolded with long dry spells punctuated by intense rainfall.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had told the Assembly on August 17 that Andhra Pradesh was receiving rainfall at a level far below the national average.

The latest rainfall figures underline the warning. Annamayya recorded a deficit of 63.12 per cent, Sri Sathya Sai 56.10 per cent and Prakasam 56.75 per cent. Five other districts recorded deficits between 40 per cent and 49 per cent. Under the IMD classification, rainfall between -20 per cent and -59 per cent is considered deficient, while -60 per cent or below is classified as scanty.

A recent study by scientists from the India Meteorological Department and the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting, covering weather extremes over India from 1971 to 2022, has also identified South Peninsular India as the region showing the strongest drought trend. Andhra Pradesh is among the eastern coastal States identified as a pronounced drought hotspot. For Andhra Pradesh, the immediate problem is therefore not simply a shortage of rain. It is the collision of failed dryland crops, inadequate irrigation support, depleted groundwater, rising cultivation costs and increasingly erratic rainfall.

The state's farm economy has entered a season in which farmers spent money to sow when the rain came and lost the crop when the rain stopped. Now, when the rain has finally returned, it is damaging crops that survived.

APSEC moves cybercrime police over fake local body poll schedule

Fabricated messages circulated using SEC letterhead, logo and signature

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE State Election Commission (SEC) has lodged a complaint with the cybercrime police station seeking a probe into two incidents involving the circulation of fabricated messages and documents in the name of the Commission ahead of the forthcoming rural and urban local body elections. The SEC said it was making preparations for the second ordinary elections to rural and urban local bodies in the State when a fake election schedule was circulated through WhatsApp and social media on August 21. The fabricated communication used tampered letterheads, official logos and a signature, falsely projecting it as an official SEC communication.

The commission issued a press note on August 24, clarifying that the schedule was fake and urging the public and media to rely only on its



official press notes and press conferences for authenticated information.

A second fabricated message surfaced in WhatsApp groups on September 28. It claimed that the State Election Commissioner had said another two months would be required to announce the local body election schedule and that the election process would begin only after court clearance on electoral rolls and reservations. It also claimed that internal preparations had already begun despite any delay.

The SEC categorically rejected the claims in a press note issued on September 29,

stating that the information had neither been issued nor authorised by it.

The commission said repeated circulation of such material was creating confusion among the public, media, political parties and government officials. It said the resulting calls seeking clarification were also affecting its normal functioning and diverting officers and staff from election preparations.

Taking the matter seriously, the SEC lodged a complaint with the cybercrime police station seeking a thorough investigation into both incidents. It asked the police to identify those involved in creating, modifying, transmitting and circulating the fabricated communications and initiate action under applicable law, including the Information Technology Act, 2000, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and other applicable cyber laws and statutory provisions.

AP aims to be land-dispute-free state by March

- Re-survey 2.0 to be conducted in presence of farmers: Survey director Kurmanath
- 2,800 teams equipped with advanced Rovers undertaking re-survey across state

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE state government is working to make the State land-dispute-free by March 2027, with the survey, settlements and land records department intensifying the ongoing re-survey by involving farmers at every stage, said state survey, settlements and land records director Ronanki Kurmanath.

He conducted surprise inspections of the re-survey being carried out at Kapileswarapuram in Pamidimukkala mandal and South Valluru in Thotlavaluru mandal of Krishna district on Tuesday, along with district revenue and survey officials. Expressing satisfaction over the participation of farmers during the survey, he said field-level inspections were being conducted to ensure transparency and prevent recurrence of errors.

Speaking on the occasion, Kurmanath said Re-survey 2.0 was being implemented to correct



State survey, settlements and land records director Ronanki Kurmanath inspecting the re-survey at the field level and interacting with farmers in Krishna district on Tuesday

errors, resolve existing land-related issues and prevent future disputes. He inspected the field-level survey along with revenue and survey officials and expressed satisfaction over farmers participating in the process.

Kurmanath directed officials to inform farmers in advance about the survey and ensure that the concerned farmer or a family member was present when the survey was conducted. He said boundaries should be determined through field

measurements and subsequently verified with relevant documents in the presence of farmers.

He said e-KYC was being made mandatory as part of the process to ensure transparency and keep farmers informed. Farmers would also be provided details through notices before the finalisation of land records, he added.

The director said re-survey was being conducted in 628 villages in Phase-I, 748 in Phase-II, 729 in Phase-III and 1,645 in Phase-IV.

Under Phase-V, the process was under way in 1,343 villages with the active participation of farmers.

Around 2,800 teams equipped with advanced Rovers were conducting the re-survey across the State. Field-level measurements were being matched with documentary records to ensure accuracy and prevent future disputes, he said.

Kurmanath said a mechanism had been put in place to resolve problems identified during field-level surveys immediately.

He directed officials to ensure that farmers received pattadar pass-books with accurate measurements after completion of the process.

Later, Kurmanath inspected the Vuyyuru tahsildar's office and reviewed the VRO-related records and logins pertaining to the mandal. He said Re-survey 2.0 was being implemented across the state with the objective of avoiding errors and providing a permanent solution to land-related issues. After the field survey, land details would be communicated to farmers through notices and verified against relevant documents, he said.

District assistant director of survey Pujari Lakshmana Rao, Vuyyuru RDO S Karuna Kumari, tahsildars of Vuyyuru, Pamidimukkala and Thotlavaluru, survey inspector Suresh Babu, survey and revenue officials, village representatives and farmers were present.

Crane collapse at Tirupati construction site claims three lives

- Three others injured in a crane accident at a private hotel construction site
- The crane reportedly tilted suddenly and plunged into a deep pit while construction work underway
- YSRCP Tirupati leaders question the alleged use of the adjoining municipal school premises for private construction activity

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TIRUPATI

THREE workers died when a heavy crane suddenly tilted and plunged into a deep pit at a construction site in Tirupati on Tuesday. Three others were injured in the accident that occurred at a private hotel construction site on DBR Road.

The three victims were trapped beneath the crane after it fell into the pit and died at the spot. The deceased were identified as Rama Rao (45), a migrant worker from Odisha, site engineer Sandeep Kumar (35) of Srikakulam district and Gangayya (40), a watchman from Tirupati.

The injured were identified as crane operators Sheikh Farahan and Naushan, both from Bihar, and labourer Muragayya of R Mallavaram in Rypedu mandal. They were shifted to SVR Rupa Government General Hospital for treatment after locals alerted the police about the accident.

Police personnel, rescue teams and officials rushed to the site and began efforts to remove the crane from the pit. Police have taken up an inquiry to ascertain how the crane lost balance and whether any safety lapses were involved in the incident.

The accident also led to questions over the alleged use of the premises of the adjoining Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Municipal Corporation Government School for private construction activity.

YSRCP Tirupati unit leaders alleged that private construction workers and a heavy crane had been allowed inside the school premises in connection with the hotel project. They questioned how such activity was permitted when classes were in progress.

The leaders also sought clarification over the alleged cutting of an old tree on the school premises and excavation of a deep pit close to the school. They questioned who had authorised the work and whether the required permissions had been obtained from the Tirupati Municipal Corporation.

Claiming that nearly 1,000 children were present in the school, the YSRCP leaders raised concerns over the safety arrangements at the site. They demanded a detailed inquiry into the permissions granted for the construction activity, compliance with safety regulations and the responsibility of those involved. Police are continuing their investigation, while officials are expected to examine the construction site and relevant permissions to determine the circumstances leading to the accident.

APCRDA signs agreement with Rainbow for hospital

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AMARAVATI

THE Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) has entered into an agreement for lease with Rainbow Children's Medicare Limited for allotment of two acres of land in Amaravati for establishment of a super specialty paediatric and perinatal care hospital of up to 250 beds, along with ancillary healthcare facilities. The agreement was executed at Amaravati on September 26 for a lease period of 60 years.

The land is located in Ananthavaram and Thullur villages and has been allotted under the Social Development Objective of the Amaravati Land Allotment Regulations, 2017. The proposed hospital will provide specialised paediatric and perinatal healthcare services and is envisaged to be developed in a phased manner. The project will also include ancillary facilities as proposed in the detailed project report, including residential accommodation for doctors and paramedical staff, a nursing school and a healthcare training institute, subject to applicable regulations and approvals.

The project is expected to add specialised healthcare infrastructure in Amaravati and support the availability of quality paediatric and perinatal care services.

The lease agreement was signed on behalf



APCRDA and Rainbow Children's Medicare Ltd officials exchange copies of land lease agreement in Amaravati on September 26

of APCRDA by Jubin Cheeran Roy, joint director, estates, APCRDA, and on behalf of Rainbow Children's Medicare Limited by K Ramadhara Naidu, group projects consultant, authorised by the company.

As per the terms of the agreement, the project is to be implemented in accordance with the approved detailed project report, applicable regulations and stipulated development milestones. The lease deed will be executed upon fulfilment of the prescribed conditions, including completion of the project, obtaining the required occupancy and compliance certificates, and commencement of operations.

Domestic market vital to strengthen aqua sector: NFDB chief

- Industry urged to reduce dependence on exports and boost seafood consumption
- NFDB offers 40% premium subsidy under Aqua Crop Insurance scheme

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

NATIONAL Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) chief executive Dr Vijay Kumar Behera said that developing a strong domestic market was essential to protect India's aquaculture sector from geopolitical uncertainties, US tariffs and international trade restrictions.

The Shrimp Retail-2026 conference was held at a hotel here on Tuesday. On the occasion, dignitaries unveiled the Aqua Post journal. The conference was attended



NFDB chief executive Dr Vijay Kumar Behera releasing the 'Aqua Post' journal during the Shrimp Retail-2026 conference in Vijayawada on Tuesday

by aqua farmers, processors, retailers and researchers from across the country. Participants presented strategies through PowerPoint presentations aimed at promoting the sustainable long-term growth of the domestic aquaculture sector.

Speaking as the chief guest at the conference, Dr Behera said the aquaculture industry

should reduce its dependence on exports and focus on increasing domestic consumption of fish and shrimp. This, he said, would help ensure stable and remunerative returns for farmers and processors.

Referring to climate-related risks, including the El Niño phenomenon, Dr Behera said the NFDB was

offering a 40% premium subsidy under the Aqua Crop Insurance scheme to protect farmers against possible yield losses. He urged aqua farmers to make use of the scheme. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Deputy Director General (Fisheries Science) Dr Joykrushna Jena and Shrimp Retail Convenor

Prabhas Pradhan said India ranked second globally in shrimp production, with Andhra Pradesh contributing more than 70% of the country's shrimp output.

They stressed the need to increase seafood consumption in India, which remains low compared with countries such as China and the US. They said robust marketing strategies, an extensive retail network and an efficient supply chain across the country, with a population of over 140 crore, would help expand the domestic market and ensure stable and remunerative prices for aqua farmers.

They also called for efforts to dispel the misconception that shrimp was prohibitively expensive and urged stakeholders to promote it as an affordable, high-quality source of protein, particularly in non-coastal and northern states.