

# If Monsoon's Here, Can Sowing Preparations be Far Behind?

**MADHVISALLY**  
NEW DELHI

Preparations for the sowing of paddy, soyabean, pulses and cotton are on full swing with the timely arrival of the monsoon, raising hopes of a bigger harvest of grains this year.

Deficient and erratic rains in the previous season is expected to impact grain production in the 2012-13 crop year (July-June) to 252.36 million tonne from 259.32 million tonne in 2011-12.

"Rains will be a big relief to farmers, people and government," said Ashish Bahuguna,

secretary, department of agriculture and cooperation.

He said the timely arrival of rains will help Maharashtra farmers to plant cotton, groundnut, millets, soya and pulses by the month-end. "We have reviewed the preparations for kharif sowing," he said. Till May 31, farmers planted rice, cotton and other kharif crops on over 6.48 million hectare according to the agriculture ministry's data.

On June 4, the southwest monsoon further advanced towards parts of central Arabian Sea, Goa, parts of south Konkan, south central Maharashtra, Te-

langana, south coastal AP, south interior Karnataka, Rayalaseema, north interior Karnataka and some parts of central Bay of Bengal. Farmers have started

preparing the land for paddy sowing and raising nurseries across the south. In Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka, farmers have started preparing the land for seeding sorghum, bajra, ragi and black gram.

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"Our focus is to increase oilseed and pulses sowing. Acreage under moong, urad and arhar should rise across Karnataka, Maharashtra, AP, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh," said Bahuguna.

In the irrigated belts of Punjab and Haryana, farmers have raised nurseries and will take up transplanting by the second week of June. Ramesh Chand, director, National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research, said a good monsoon would largely benefit paddy growers. "Over 42% of the area under paddy is rainfed across Uttar Pradesh, Bi-

har, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal," he said.

With nearly two-thirds of farms dependent on rain, a good monsoon is the lifeline for farmers and food security of the country. The country saw below-normal monsoon in 2002, 2004, 2009 and 2012, which impacted sowing pattern, yield and production.

After paddy, soyabean is the second largest cultivable crop followed by cotton and arhar and moong. Millets or coarse cereals like bajra and jowar are also sown in rain-fed areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka.

"Acreage will definitely in-

crease by 5-7% if the rains are on time and are equally distributed," said Rajesh Agrawal, chief coordinator for Soyabean Processors Association of India. Sowing will begin by June end across Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, AP, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The area under cotton is also expected to rise, largely in Gujarat this season, according to Dhiren Sheth, president of the Cotton Association of India. India, the world's second largest cotton exporter and producer, plants on an average 11-12 million hectares during the early to late kharif season across nine states.

# Agri, processed food exports cross ₹1-lakh-cr mark in FY13

■ Rise in global demand for guar gum, rice, wheat boosts growth

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**Sandip Das**  
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A sharp rise in the global demand for products such as guar gum, rice, wheat, meat, fresh fruits and vegetables has pushed agricultural and processed food exports up by more than 41% to ₹1.16 lakh crore in 2012-13. The country's farm product exports have crossed the ₹1-lakh-crore mark for the first time.

A commerce ministry official told *FE* these products, which made more than 77% of the country's total agricultural goods exports last fiscal, are expected to push up the shipments from India in the current fiscal as well. Gulf countries, US, UK, Germany, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia are some of the leading export destinations for Indian products.

According to the data compiled by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority (APEDA), the key driver behind the surge last fiscal is attributed to a rise in the shipment of commodities such as guar gum (₹21,190 cr), basmati rice (₹19,391 cr), non-basmati rice (₹14,416 cr), wheat (₹10,488 cr), fresh fruits (₹3,290 cr) and vegetables (₹3,096 cr).

Though volume-wise, exports of guar gum — mostly used in the petroleum industry in the US — increased by more than 29% last fiscal in comparison to 2011-12, the biggest rise in exports has been seen in commodities such as non-basmati rice and wheat.

India lifted the ban on non-basmati rice exports in September 2011 and the



## India's agricultural exports trend

Year	Export (₹ cr)	% change
2012-13	11,6331	41%
2011-12	82,480	97%
2010-11	41,794	15.5%
2009-10	34,825	-4%
2008-09	36,294	13.88%
2007-08	31,870	46%
2006-07	21,805	



## Key drivers of agri exports

(in ₹ cr)

Company	2011-12 (₹ cr)	2012-13 (₹ cr)	% change
Guar gum	16,356	21,190	29%
Basmati rice	15,450	19,391	25%
Non-basmati rice	8668	14,416	66%
Meat products	14,111	17,902	27%
Wheat	1023	10,488	924%
Fresh fruits	2530	3290	30%
Fresh vegetables	2890	3096	7%

Source: APEDA



country has started to export wheat following a bumper crop last year.

Since the lifting of restriction of rice exports, there has been huge global demand for Indian rice, especially in Africa, EU and West Asia. In-

dia has retained its biggest rice exporter tag with shipments of 10 million tonne (mt) during 2012-13.

The country was the world's largest exporter of rice in 2011-12 with exports of close to 10 mt, Thailand ex-

ported 6.9 mt and Vietnam sold 7.8 mt overseas.

"India has exported rice worth of close to ₹32,000 crore during the last fiscal. It would be challenging for us to maintain our position in the global rice trade this year," Asit Tripathy, joint-secretary (agriculture), commerce ministry, told *FE*.

Other key commodities that saw growth in shipments included dairy products (₹1,763 crore), pulses (₹1,279 crore) and floriculture (₹423 crore).

APEDA has identified 20-odd clusters located across the country for maintaining a healthy growth in the country's food product exports during the current fiscal.

These clusters include basmati rice (Haryana and Punjab), buffalo meat (western Uttar Pradesh), grape and grape wine (Nasik region, Maharashtra), pomegranate (Satara and Pune regions of Maharashtra), dehydrated onions and garlic (Gujarat), poultry or egg (Namakkal) and mango pulp (Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra).

"Indian agriculture seems to have a greater comparative trade advantage than manufactured goods. This has been possible as the sector has responded by undergoing a structural transformation," a paper by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) chief Ashok Gulati recently stated.

The CACP paper also points to the changing composition of India's agricultural exports basket between 2001 and 2012. In the last fiscal, rice was the leading agriculture export product (12%), followed by raw cotton (11.4%), marine products (9.9%), oil meals (7.9%) and meat (7.6%).