Monsoon likely to be 'below normal'

Deficit rains are likely to spill into July, says Skymet report

The monsoon this year is expected to be 'below normal', which is 93% of the long period average of 887 mm of rainfall between June and September, according to the Kharif Estimate 2019, released by Skymet on Friday. The report also indicated that soyabean and cotton production is likely to go up, as paddy cultivation is expected to go down this kharif season. "In terms of geographical risk, we expect east India along with a major portion of central India to be at a higher risk of being rain deficient, especially during the first half of the season," the report said.

Skymet Weather Services, a leading weather and agriculture risk monitoring company, said that the Pacific Ocean had become strongly warmer than average. "The model projections call for 80% chance of El Nino during March-May, dropping to 60% for June to August. This means, it is going to be a devolving El Nino year, though retaining threshold value all through the season," it said.

According to the report, June is going to be sluggish, and deficit rains are likely to spill into July. Second half of the season would see better rainfall and August is expected to be a shade better than September. Both months would manage to see normal rains. Live storage of water in 91 reservoirs as per May 30 bulletin, is 114% of the same period last year. The Central Monitoring Commission keeps tab on the status of these reservoirs every week. Live storage available in these reservoirs is 31.65 BCM, which is 20% of the total live storage capacity of these reservoirs.

Deficient rains, it said, were expected over Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal along with central parts of the country predominantly Vidarbha, Marathwada, southern parts of Madhya Pradesh and some parts of Gujarat. "With below normal monsoons, the possibility of deficient and largely deficient rains is more than 40% in 66% districts of the country," the report said.

The Skymet data revealed that between January and April, India received 10% lower than normal rainfall for the period. Winter rains (January and February) was 24% higher

than the normal while pre-monsoon showers (March and April) were 30% lower than the normal rainfall for the period. "With 50% of India's population dependent on agriculture and more than 50% of the cultivable area being rain-fed, the farm economy could be in a precarious situation with the ongoing rain deficiency," it said.

As per the analysis, 2019 being the second consecutive below normal monsoon year, yields will be adversely impacted in States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. These States are already under severe moisture stress, hence water scarcity at critical growth stages may damage the yield. In case of cotton, rains in September has the biggest impact on the yield. As per Skymet's estimates and the monsoon forecast, expected national average yield will be 449 kg per hectare for Kharif 2019.

Soybean and pulses in Maharashtra, groundnut in Gujarat, maize and turmeric in Telangana, paddy and groundnut in Andhra Pradesh are the competitive crops for cotton. Given the prices of cotton from last season and erratic and delayed rainfall in Maharashtra and Telangana, it is expected that some of these areas may shift towards cotton production this season. "Prices are expected to trade with firm undertone up to September 2019. Firm prices at the time of sowing is also expected to support higher area coverage under cotton," it said.

Similarly, paddy production the report said was likely to go down by about 4% in the upcoming Kharif season, to 97.78 as compared to the 101.96 million tonnes produced a year ago. In case of paddy, rains in July has the biggest impact on the yields. As per Skymet estimates and looking at forecast monsoon conditions, national average yield of paddy is expected to be around 2,545 kg per hectare.