

Kharif sowing up 3.5% on year; area under pulses grows 22%

SANDIP DAS
 New Delhi, July 19

THANKS TO NORMAL monsoon rains in most parts of the country since the last week of June, the sowing of kharif crops is progressing at satisfactory pace.

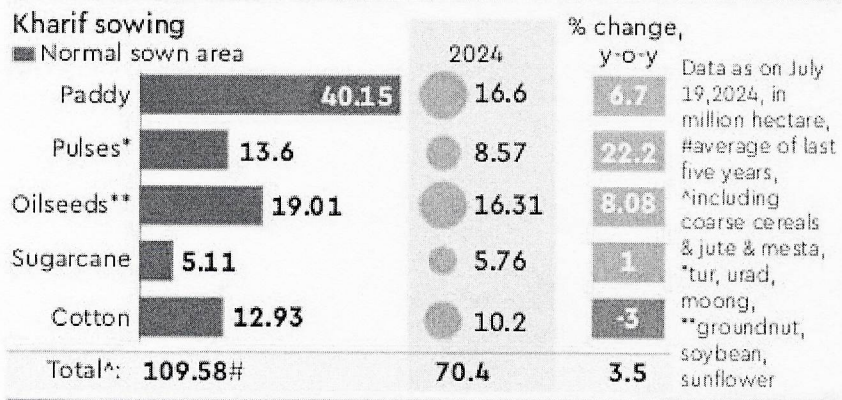
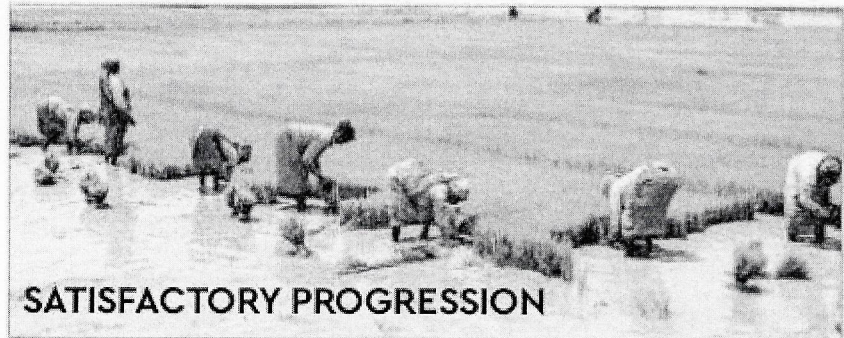
At 70.4 million hectare (MH) or 64% of the normal sown area, the combined sown area of key crops — paddy, pulses, oilseeds and sugarcane — was up 3.5% on-year on Monday, according to data released by the agriculture ministry. Only cotton area is below the last year's level (-3%).

However, the lead over last year's level came down from 10% recorded a week ago. The initial weeks this year reported sharper year-on-year growth in sowing partly because of the low base.

This to the largest extent would dispel fears of spurt in food inflation, which has been stickier than the headline inflation in recent months. The consulting firm Crisil has stated "we expect the progress of monsoon and pick-up in sowing to improve agricultural output and cool off food inflation in the coming months".

A year ago 68.03.6 MH was covered under kharif crops. Officials said that sowing activities will continue till the middle of September.

Monsoon is currently still in active phase while the overall rainfall this season till Friday has been



just 2.5% below the benchmark long period average or normal range. India Meteorological Department has stated that 61% of the 729 odd districts in the country have received rainfall in the range of surplus to normal range.

Till July 19, 2024, while the area under paddy, the most important kharif crop, was up 6% at 16.6 MH on-year, sowing of pulses (22.2%) and oilseeds (8%) saw sharp spikes because of normal to above-normal monsoon rains in key growing states of Karnataka, Maharashtra,

Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

In the southern peninsula, monsoon rainfall has been 23.7% more than the benchmark so far. Going by a five-year average, about 41% of paddy sowing has been completed so far.

Paddy was sown in 16.6 MH, against the normal sown area of 40.15 MH.

Area under pulses such as tur, urad and moong rose sharply at 22% to 8.57 MH on-year, which is expected to boost pulses production in the 2024-25 season.