

Wet spell not enough for groundnut bounty

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Rajkot: Despite the rain bounty in Saurashtra, groundnut farmers are not expecting a bumper crop like 2017 kharif season. Reason: It did not rain when required the most, that is after sowing which starts in mid-May and June.

Last year, the groundnut production plummeted to just 16 lakh tons due to drought in many districts. This year, most talukas of Saurashtra and Kutch received significant rainfall in the last fortnight, but it was too late according to farmers.

The sowing area of groundnut as compared to last year is the same this year, but farmers and agriculture experts say the yield is not expected to cross 25 lakh ton.

In 2017, the groundnut production of 31.45 lakh was highest ever. Ratan Dodia, a farmer in Surendranagar said, "Farmers in places like Halvad and Dhrangadhra, who had irrigation facility, will have a good yield but those who are totally dependent on rains in Jamnagar and Devbhumi Dwarka districts will face problems. Sowing was done from mid-May to mid-June but the required rain was received only in August."

During 'Vayu' cyclone, farmers expected good rainfall, but it was not consistent enough in the major groundnut growing districts of Jamnagar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Junagadh, Rajkot and Amreli.

Naresh Virani, a farmers leader from Amreli said,

TIMING MATTERS

- ▶ Delay in rainfall at right time
- ▶ Groundnut requires three rounds of rainfall at an interval of 20 days
- ▶ Saurashtra has received just one round till now
- ▶ Area under cultivation only marginally more than last year



"Farmers in Botad and Bhavnagar have suffered damage to the tune of 25-30% in Botad and Bhavnagar because of delay in rains. We are also worried about pest attack which may hit production."

The crop requires three rounds of rainfall at an interval of every 20 days. "We have received just the first round of rain. Though it's early to estimate total pro-

duction, we can say that there won't be bumper crop. But it won't be as low as seen in 2018. The delayed rainfall has delayed sowing in many districts which will reduce the production," said KL Dobariya, research scientist (groundnut) at Junagadh Agriculture University. According to the figures released by director of agriculture till August 5, the groundnut area under sowing in the

state is 14.62 lakh hectares which was 14.53 lakh hectare last year. The average sowing area in the last three years has been 15.70 hectare.

Last year, over two dozen farmers had committed suicide in Jamnagar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Amreli and Porbandar districts reportedly because of crop failure and most of them had grown groundnut. Samir Shah, president of Saurashtra Oil Mill Association (SOMA), said, "The sowing area has not increased significantly compared to last year. Though if we believe the per hectare yield would be high, it won't be bumper crop that crosses 25 lakh ton mark. Delayed rain has affected the production and still we have to wait for next two three rounds of the rain."