

## Cotton sowing touches record high on good rains

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**Coimbatore:** Cotton sowing has reached a record high of about 120 lakh hectares in the country during the ongoing kharif season on the back of good rainfall in key growing regions. The area under cotton has grown 6.4% year-on-year, or an increase of 7.23 lakh hectares, as on August 24, data with the union agriculture ministry showed.

Telangana has seen the highest increase in cotton acreage. Cotton sowing has risen by nearly 3 lakh hectares in Telangana. The area under cotton has increased by 2.26 lakh hectares in Maharashtra, which is the second largest producer of cotton in the country after Gujarat.

Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (MP) have also reported increase in cotton sowing. The area under cotton has moved up by 0.42 lakh hectares in Gujarat. Sowing has declined only in Karnataka, which has seen a drop in monsoon rains and Punjab.

"Rains have been timely in most places. The crop has been advancing well. We could have a bumper crop (for the 2017-18 cotton season)," said Atul P Asher, secretary, Indian Cotton Federation (ICF). While Telangana is expected to see the maximum increase in production, the crop is estimated to be good in Maharashtra and MP as well, he said. Cotton production is projected to cross the 1 crore bales mark, a more than 10% increase, in Maharashtra for the 2017-18 season while output is forecast to jump 20% to around 90 lakh bales in Telangana. Farmers have switched over to cotton in the current kharif season as prices have remained stable in the last one year, ICF officials said. "Farmers have benefited from stable prices throughout the year," said P Nataraj, vice president, ICF. "In view of normal monsoon and higher price realisation compared to other cash crops, farmers have sown more than last season," he said on the sidelines of ICF's 38th annual general meeting here on Sunday. Cotton prices have ruled above the Rs 40,000 mark per candy (a candy is about 355 kgs) for most of the 2015-16 season.

The Cotton Advisory Board (CAB), which comprises representatives from the textile industry, trade, ginners and government officials, has estimated the crop at 345 lakh bales for the 2016-17 season at its meeting held on August 18.

If yields also go up, the country, which is the largest producer of cotton in the world, would be faced with a huge crop in the new season amid a tepid increase in demand from textile spinning mills. "Marketing such a huge crop is going to be a tough task. We are going to have a huge carryover stock at the end of the 2017-18 season," ICF officials said.

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/cotton-sowing-touches-record-high-on-good-rains/articleshow/60265483.cms>