

Kuttanad set for 'puncha' cultivation

Over 20,000 Farmers To Cultivate The Crop In 30,000 Hectare By October

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Alappuzha: Though Kuttanad faced the worst of the catastrophic flood in the state, the farmers and agriculture department here are not ready to be run down. They are all set to start 'puncha' cultivation by the end of October this year, with over 20,000 farmers from Kuttanad taking part in the 'puncha' cultivation in 30,000 hectare.

The 'puncha' cultivation was conducted only in 23,000 hectare last season due to the cultivation of wild rice ('vari nellu' in local parlance) in the lands. However, this time the farmers, who suffered heavy losses in the floods, are going to conduct 'puncha' farming in 30,000 hectare in over 630 paddy fields.

"We need at least Rs. 20 crore for the preparation works of the 'puncha' cultivation. At least 125 outer bunds of 250 paddy fields had breached in Kuttanad in July and August. In upper Kuttanad, 100 pad-



File Photo

Flood water being pumped out from a paddy field ahead of preparing the land for cultivation in Kainakary

dy fields were also flooded following the breaching of the outer bunds in the flood. So, we are re-building the outer bunds of these paddy fields. We have allotted Rs 1.42 crore for the preliminary works of these outer bunds," said Beena Natesh, principle agriculture officer.

The flood waters in July and August had completely engulfed the

second-round cultivation conducted in 10,495 hectare in Kuttanad, creating a loss of Rs 14.50 crore.

"We will provide the seeds for 'puncha' cultivation free of cost. Agriculture minister V S Sunilkumar has directed us to give the seeds to all the farmers free of cost. We normally provide 100 kg seeds per hectare. However, this time, we will

provide 125 kg seeds per hectare free of cost. This time, we will be distributing Uma seeds. In some places, we will also distribute Jyothi seeds. The seeds will be given by Kerala State Seed Development Authority. We will provide all the support to do 'puncha' farming successfully. The harvesting of the 'puncha' crops is expected to be held in February-March months," she said.

The worst deluge affected Kainakary which has 26 paddy polders will have 'puncha' cultivation in 25 of its paddy fields. However, one paddy field will need to be excluded for 'puncha' cultivation as water level remains to be higher than normal still.

"We have also completed all the arrangements to give the compensation to the Kuttanad farmers, who have lost their second -round cultivation. We need to give Rs 14.50 crore as compensation to the farmers. The amount will be credited to their bank accounts," she said.