

# Floods blessing in disguise, gifts Kuttanad bumper crop

## Paddy Yield Shoots Up To Eight Tonnes Per Hectare

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Alappuzha:** Despite the destruction unleashed by the August floods, farmers in Kuttanad hope to reap a bumper harvest.

After suffering devastating losses the yield per hectare has shoot upto eight tonnes. As per reports last year, the average yield was only four tonnes per hectare.

The region had suffered a complete wash out of crops due to the deluge and the farmers had begin cultivation from the scratch.

Principal agriculture officer Beena Natesh said this harvest season Kuttanad will produce additional 50,000 tonnes of paddy and the profit is estimated at Rs 125 crore.

Harvesting would begin by February 25 and the agriculture department has made arrangements to purchase 500 combine harvesting machines to complete the harvest in a time bound manner.

Mankombu Rice Research Station head Vandana Venugopal attribute the rise in yield to a combination of factors ranging from sedimentation due to the floods to low level of pest incidences.

She said, "the flood waters have brought down the iron toxicity level in paddy fields, which was major issue experienced by farmers across Kuttanad."

As per estimates, the floods had resulted in depositing of silt varying from three centimeters to 20cm across the wetland system.

Vandana added, "the silt disposition improved the physical condition of the fields and level of calcium also shot up."

After the floods, a study

### FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED CROP YIELD

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➤ Silt disposition improved the physical condition of the fields and calcium level also shot up

➤ Farmers this time, could follow the crop calendar for 'puncha' cultivation



➤ Quality of seeds that was distributed by agricultural department was also significantly higher

➤ Favorable climate resulted in low instance of pest and disease

#### From despair to hope

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officer Beena Natesh said, "this harvest season, Kuttanad will produce additional 50,000 tonnes of paddy"

➤ Given the strict adherence to the crop calendar, the harvest would be completed much before the arrival of saline water

➤ The floods had severely affected around 650 paddy polders and bunds of 167 polders were breached. The farmers had incurred a loss of more than ₹200c

on the soil in Kuttanad was conducted, which revealed that level of magnesium and boron were low in the paddy fields. The farmers were provided with instructions on how to tackle the issue.

The most crucial of these could be that after the fields remained submerged for several weeks, farmers this time could follow the crop calendar for 'puncha' cultivation.

The sowing was done in the months of October and November. Given the smooth progress of calendar, the harvest would be completed much before the arrival of saline water.

The quality of seeds that was distributed by agricultural department was also significantly higher. Favorable climate resulted in low instance of pest and disease, thereby boosting the yield.

Vandana Venugopal said, "if farmers follow this trend, it would reduce pollution and further increase paddy production.

Scientific experts had also raised awareness among the farming community on adoption of good agricultural practices post-flood."

It is due to agriculture department's efforts to resume farming that 'puncha' cultivation could be kicked off in September.

Principal agriculture officer Beena Natesh said, "before the floods, only 23,000 hectares was under 'puncha' cultivation. Post-flood, the area increased to 30,500 hectares. Over 32,000 farmers were engaged in 'puncha' cultivation this time."

"Initially we expected only five tonne paddy crops per hectare this time and hoped for an additional 35,000 tonne paddy crop. However, now we are confident that we would get additional 50,000 tonne paddy. This is a historical achievement for us," she added.

The agriculture department had distributed of Jyothi and Uma at free of

cost. The farmers sowed Jyothi seeds in 1,000 hectares and Uma seeds in 29,500 hectares.

The devastating floods had severely affected around 650 paddy polders and bunds of 167 polders were breached. The farmers had incurred a loss of more than Rs 200 crore. The farmers were able to resume cultivation with the help of the state government.

The Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation (Supplyco) has made arrangements to procure paddy from the farmers. The Supplyco will distribute the paddy price to farmers immediately after the procurement. The procurement price offered this season is Rs 25.30.

Yield per hectare would vary based on the nature of the soil. The yield from the kari lands tend to be a bit lower than those classified as Karappadam while the yield from the 'kayal land' will always be on the higher side.