

Coffee farmers take a ₹120cr beating following floods

Rajeev.KR@timesgroup.com

Kozhikode: Coffee Board foresees crop loss of around Rs 120 crore in major coffee growing areas in Kerala, the second largest coffee producer in the country after Karnataka, due to the recent floods. According to board officials, the state's coffee output for the year is likely to decline by 8,000 to 10,000 metric tonnes, as per preliminary estimates.

However, farmers in Wayanad district, which accounts for over 90% of the state's coffee output, says that the loss could be more severe and the district might see around 20% fall in production this year.

"We are currently undertaking a comprehensive calamity survey of the damage to the coffee crop in the state which will be over within a week. But as per the preliminary estimates, the cross loss would be to the tune of 8,000-10,000 metric tonnes this crop year, of which 7,000 tonnes will be from Waya-



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nad alone," said Karuthamani M, deputy director (extension), Coffee Board, Kerala.

He said that apart from the direct damage caused to coffee plantations by flooding and landslides, the continuous rainfall has resulted in build-up of soil saturation and high relative humidity, which has triggered berry droppings apart from fungal disease such as black rot and stalk rot in many areas.

The post-bloom estimates for the state by the Coffee Board

for the year 2018-19 was estimated at 76,000 metric tonnes, of which output from Wayanad was pegged at 66,687 metric tonnes. Last year's production was estimated at 65,735 metric tonnes, of which Wayanad's share was 63,575 metric tonnes. The board had made higher post-bloom estimates considering the good pre-monsoon showers received this season.

"The coffee farmers of Wayanad have been totally devastated. They were yet to recover from the losses suffered last season due to the drought," Prasanth Rajesh, president of Wayanad coffee growers' association, said.

Rajesh further said: "We had requested multiple times to the Union ministry of commerce to make available a proper weather-based crop insurance system. But still the coffee farmers do not have a proper insurance coverage. The central government should announce a special compensation package for the sector."