

# Incessant rain dashes hopes of coffee farmers

The Hindu 08-09-18, P-4

Plantations destroyed, plants affected by diseases

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Coffee farmers in the State were relieved when the flowers bloomed after good pre-monsoon showers in April. They hoped this season would help them recoup the loss they had incurred last year owing to the drought-like situation. However, incessant rain since June has dashed their hopes as the coffee berries have been affected by various diseases.

"I have two acres of Robusta coffee plantation and



A coffee plantation at Venniyodu in Kottathara grama panchayat in Wayanad that was destroyed in floods.

the yield last year was 94 bags of coffee bean, each 54 kg," says Joy of Parekkattil, a small-scale farmer at Venniyodu in Kottathara grama

panchayat. This time, the coffee berries were washed away after the 36-year-old plantation remained inundated for five days. I could

not harvest a single coffee berry this season, he said. The torrential rain and floods had adversely affected 643 farmers in Kottathara grama panchayat alone, he added.

## **In Idukki, Palakkad**

Land subsidence and landslips have destroyed plantations in the hills, including coffee-growing areas in Idukki and Palakkad.

Krishnan of Kodukalam, a farmer at Plamoöla hills in Thirunelly grama panchayat, said he had lost his house in land subsidence, which also destroyed 1.5 acres of his coffee plantation.

According to official sources, 242 land subsidence and landslip cases were re-

ported in the district, affecting 1,526 families.

Prasanth Rajesh, president, Wayanad Coffee Growers Association, said there was 20-25% crop loss in Wayanad.

The spread of diseases such as black rot disease and heavy berry dropping owing to the infestation of meele bugs had increased, he said.

The Coffee Board had estimated a crop loss of about 9,000 to 10,000 tonnes of coffee, M. Karuthamani, Deputy Director, Coffee Board (Extension) Kerala, told *The Hindu*. The Coffee Board had launched a calamity survey to assess the loss in the sector. The board would submit a report to the Union and State governments, he said.