

Centre Reviews Kharif Preparedness Amid El Niño Concerns; Shivraj Singh Chouhan Holds High-Level Meeting with States

Weak Monsoon, Strong Strategy: Centre Rolls Out Special Contingency Plan for 315 Vulnerable Districts

**“We Are Preparing in Advance, Not Waiting for a Crisis”:
Shivraj Singh Chouhan Reassures Farmers**

El Niño Challenge, Farmers First: Centre Unveils Multi-Layered Preparedness Strategy

Every Drop Counts: Massive Push for Water Conservation Through Ponds, Check Dams and Farm Reservoirs

Focus Shifts to Short-Duration, Low-Water Crops; Pulses, Millets and Oilseeds to Get Priority

Seeds, Fertilisers and Fodder Stocks Secured; No Input Shortages Expected Despite Weak Monsoon

PMFBY, KCC and PM-KISAN to Serve as Farmers’ Three Key Safety Nets During El Niño Conditions

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With the possibility of El Niño and a weak or uncertain monsoon this year, the Central Government has intensified its preparedness for the Kharif season. Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Rural Development Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan today chaired a high-level virtual meeting with Agriculture Ministers of states, senior officials, District Collectors, experts from ICAR, ICAR-CRIDA and the India Meteorological Department to review the situation across the country. He assured farmers that the Centre and state governments are jointly undertaking all necessary measures to address any challenge.

Weak Monsoon Scenario and Potential Impact

Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Shri Chouhan said that the southwest monsoon is significantly delayed this year and rainfall so far has been around 43 per cent below normal. According to IMD forecasts, rainfall is likely to remain weak even during the week ending July 2. This could directly affect Kharif crops, particularly in rainfed regions where agriculture is heavily dependent on monsoon rains. Keeping these risks in view, the Central Government, under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has been making advance preparations for several days. Shri Chouhan said the government is not waiting for conditions to deteriorate but is proactively implementing scientific planning and field-level interventions to minimise the impact and safeguard farmers' livelihoods.



Identification of 315 Potentially Affected Districts

Shri Chouhan said that the Ministry of Agriculture and ICAR jointly assessed districts vulnerable to low rainfall and inadequate irrigation based on scientific data. Around 315 districts have been identified as potentially affected by weak monsoon conditions. Of these, 111 districts have been categorised as high priority, where irrigation coverage is below 25 per cent. Another 76 districts fall under the medium-priority category with irrigation coverage between 25 and 50 per cent, while 128 districts have been classified as low priority owing to relatively better irrigation facilities through dams and other sources. A majority of these districts are located across 12 states—Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Detailed discussions were held with Agriculture Ministers and District Collectors of these states, and they were urged to expedite preparedness at the local level.



District Agriculture Contingency Plans: First Line of Defence

Shri Chouhan informed that ICAR and ICAR-CRIDA have prepared District Agriculture Contingency Plans for all districts. These plans incorporate district-specific climatic conditions, cropping patterns, water resources and risk factors and prescribe measures such as suitable alternative crops under low rainfall conditions, crop diversification strategies, optimum use of available water resources and additional income opportunities to mitigate risks. He directed states and district administrations to ensure that DACPs do not remain confined to files but are translated into actionable field plans. The plans should be reviewed and updated according to local conditions and kept ready as operational documents for immediate implementation whenever required. He emphasised that the success of any contingency plan depends on effective implementation at the grassroots level and urged district administrations to execute them with full commitment.

Water Conservation and Irrigation Management

Water conservation has been accorded top priority amid the possibility of a weak monsoon. Shri Chouhan said every drop of water is precious and planning is being carried out with that objective. He directed that ponds, reservoirs, streams, farm ponds, check dams, stop dams and temporary bunding structures be repaired and strengthened immediately. Water conservation and harvesting works under MGNREGA and forthcoming rural development programmes such as VB-GRAMG should receive priority so that employment generation and enhancement of water storage capacity can go hand in hand. Sensitive districts have been advised to accord top priority to drinking water supply and, if necessary, arrange water transfer from surplus regions to deficit areas. Basin-wise reservoir storage positions were also reviewed during the meeting. While some basins have storage levels above normal, others are witnessing deficits ranging from 20 to 60 per cent. States have been asked to prioritise interventions accordingly.



Crop Strategy: Short-Duration, Low-Water and Diversified Crops

The Union Minister said changing crop strategy in rainfed areas has become the need of the hour. States have been advised to promote short-duration crop varieties and those capable of delivering higher yields with lower water requirements. Farmers have been encouraged to adopt crop diversification to reduce dependence on a single crop and distribute risks across multiple crops. Intercropping and mixed farming practices are also being promoted to ensure that if one crop is affected, farmers can still generate income from others. Special emphasis has been laid on pulses, Shri Anna and oilseeds, which perform relatively better under limited moisture conditions. States have also been advised to switch immediately to alternative crop options if there is a prolonged gap between the normal sowing period and the onset of rainfall. "We will not allow fields to remain vacant. There will be sufficient rainfall for some crop to be cultivated, and our preparations are aligned accordingly," Shri Chouhan said.

Advance Arrangements for Seeds, Fertilisers and Inputs

Providing details regarding availability of agricultural inputs, Shri Chouhan said adequate seed arrangements for the Kharif season have already been made. Additional seed stocks have been earmarked for potentially affected districts. Around one per cent extra seed stock has been reserved specifically for districts where resowing may become necessary. According to reports from the Ministry of Fertilisers, the availability of all major fertilisers, including urea, DAP, MOP, NPK and SSP, is satisfactory for the Kharif season. Separate monitoring mechanisms are in place to ensure timely distribution and delivery in districts vulnerable to weak monsoon conditions so that farmers can undertake sowing immediately when weather conditions become favourable. The Minister stressed that sowing should be undertaken only after cumulative rainfall of 75–100 mm and adequate soil moisture. Premature sowing after light rainfall increases the risk of seed damage and resowing.



Scientific Advisory Through KVKs and Digital Platforms

Highlighting the importance of timely scientific advisories, Shri Chouhan said the country's 731 Krishi Vigyan Kendra serve as the principal link for delivering technical guidance and crop management information to farmers. KVKs and Agro-Meteorological Advisory Units have been instructed to work closely with districts and continuously guide farmers regarding the possible effects of El Niño and weak monsoon conditions. Information dissemination will be strengthened through Agro-Met advisories, SMS and WhatsApp messages, call centres, radio and television broadcasts, and social media platforms. The objective is to ensure that every farmer receives timely information and scientific guidance to make informed decisions regarding sowing, crop changes and input use.

Livestock and Fodder Management

Shri Chouhan said a severely weak monsoon could lead to fodder shortages for livestock. To address this possibility, advance supply plans are being prepared to transport fodder from surplus regions to deficit areas. Fodder stocking, alternative fodder sources and supply chains are being planned in advance to prevent sudden disruptions for livestock owners. The Centre and states will jointly strengthen monitoring mechanisms to prevent black marketing and hoarding of fodder.



Financial Security for Farmers: PMFBY, KCC and PM-KISAN

The Union Minister emphasised that preparedness should not be limited to crops and water alone and that financial security of farmers is equally important. Special focus is being placed on expanding coverage under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana in potentially affected districts to ensure timely compensation in the event of crop losses. States have been directed to expedite issuance of Kisan Credit Cards to eligible farmers so that they have adequate resources to deal with seed losses, resowing and other agricultural investments. Referring to the recently released instalment under PM-KISAN, Shri Chouhan said farmers can utilise these funds for seeds, fertilisers and other essential agricultural inputs. He said PMFBY, KCC and PM-KISAN together would act as a comprehensive support system for farmers during challenges such as El Niño.



Multi-Tier Coordination and Monitoring Framework

Shri Chouhan said the success of contingency measures ultimately depends on district-level implementation. Accordingly, a multi-tier coordination framework has been developed at the Centre, state, district, block and village levels with clearly defined responsibilities. Regular meetings and real-time data-sharing mechanisms are being established among District Collectors, Agriculture Departments, Water Resources Departments, Rural Development Departments, Animal Husbandry Departments, KVKs, ATMA and other institutions. At the national level, an 'El Niño Monitoring Cell' and a 'Crop Weather Watch Group' have been constituted in New Delhi to continuously analyse monsoon progress, crop sowing, crop conditions, input supplies and market indicators. States have also been instructed to establish control rooms and designate nodal officers for coordination with the Centre. Most states have already nominated their nodal officers. The Minister informed that secretary-level reviews are being conducted every week and that he personally reviews the El Niño situation every Tuesday.

Production Targets, Storage and Food Security

Several major production targets set for Kharif 2025, including rice, maize and total foodgrain output, have already been achieved or exceeded. For Kharif 2026, a foodgrain production target of around 176 million tonnes has been set, taking into account monsoon forecasts, MSP, demand trends, previous performance and ongoing government schemes. Buffer stocks of both rice and wheat remain comfortable, and therefore there is no immediate threat to food security despite concerns over a weak monsoon.

Message to Farmers: Stay Prepared, Do Not Panic

Directly addressing farmers, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that despite the possibility of a weak monsoon, the country is fully prepared to collectively deal with any challenge. "There is no need to panic. What is required is preparedness and collective action. If the Centre and states, scientific institutions, district administrations and farmers work in coordination, the challenge posed by El Niño can be converted into an opportunity where water conservation, crop diversification, scientific advisories and social security schemes together provide a protective shield for farmers," he said. Expressing confidence in the collective efforts of all stakeholders, Shri Chouhan said India's agriculture, livestock and rural economy can be protected from major disruptions and farmers' livelihoods can be strengthened through every possible means.

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