

Will Indian Farmers Plant Less Cotton This Year?

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begun amidst the prevailing uncertainty as a result of incomplete procurement, decline in

demand, falling market prices and huge carry over stock. Every one across the cotton industry policy makers and researchers are keenly waiting to know about the likely production of cotton this year (2020-21). Any forecast on production would require an estimate of the area planted under

> cotton and this article is a step in this direction.



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Principal Scientist (Agronomy) and Head, PME Unit

The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown across the world that followed is impacting all spheres of our lives and economy, including the demand and supply of cotton. Its repercussions on the production, consumption, domestic trade, import and export of raw cotton, yarn and finished goods are being widely debated. The cotton cropping season (2020-21) has just

1. Trend in Cotton Area in the Recent Past

As per data provided by the Directorate of Cotton Development (DCD), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India, during 2019-20, cotton was planted in 12.584 million hectares. The area under cotton during the last decade oscillated between 10.85 m ha (in 2016-17) and 12.85 m ha (in 2014-15). There has been a gradual increase in area during the

We're back in action!

Due to the Corona pandemic and the stringent lock down imposed in Mumbai, the CAI office was not operational from March 25, 2020, neither was our weekly, Cotton Statistics & News. After a hiatus of nearly two and a half months, we are happy to announce that the e copy of our weekly will be published and available from this week. Stay safe, stay healthy.

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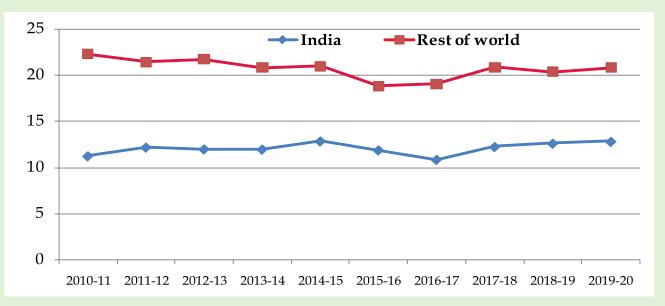


Figure 1: Area under cotton (million ha) in India and the rest of the world during the last decade (Data source: https://www.icac.org/DataPortal/DataPortal/)

last few years (Figure 1) due to an increase in global consumption. The figure also indicates a very weak correlation (r=0.195) between area planted under cotton in India and the area in the rest of the world indicating that under normal circumstances, global clues seldom dictate planting decision in India. Under business as usual situation, the recent increase in global cotton consumption would have pushed up the demand and the price of cotton and eventually the area planted. But the Covid-19 pandemic has reversed this trend. So, will a fall in demand impact the area under cotton this year?

2. Fallout of Covid-19 and its Likely Impact on Cotton Planting Decision

Both the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) and International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) have projected a 4% decline in area planted under cotton to 33.0 m ha during 2020-21. The USDA has also predicted a 6% decline in area planted under cotton in India during 2020-21 due to a fall in prices and increased domestic stocks. The ICAC in its report "Impact of Covid 19 lockdown on the Cotton Market" released on June 2, 2020, indicated that the planting decisions in India would be impacted by lower cotton prices and has predicted a shift away from cotton towards food crops.

It is generally agreed that, factors like a fall in market prices below the Minimum Support Price (MSP), hassles faced during marketing of cotton, ease of cultivation and remunerative price offered to competing crops, would lure farmers away from cotton to other competing crops. Data presented in Figure 2 points out a drastic decline in the average weekly cotton price from Rs. 5221 per quintal in the first week of January 2020 reaching a low of Rs. 4048 per quintal during the first week of April 2020 coinciding with lockdown 1.0 and prices remained sluggish thereafter, ending at Rs.4385 per quintal in the second week of June. Against this background, the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) despite several operational hurdles, intervened and procured a record 98 lakh bales of cotton at MSP from the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Haryana and Punjab till the first week of June 2020. It expects to procure another 5 to 7 lakh bales during the remaining period of the current marketing season. A section of the farmers expressed anguish at the delay and slow pace of procurement during the lockdown period when restrictions or movement and social distancing were imposed.

The expected price realisation, and Government interventions including MSP offered have a huge bearing on the area allocated to cotton. The Government of India has announced an MSP Rs. 5825/q for long staple cotton for the 2020-2021 season. This amounts to an increase of Rs. 275/q offered during 2019-20. If farmers continue to repose their trust in CCI to continue to procure cotton irrespective



Figure 2: Weekly average price of cotton (Rs/Kg) from the first week of December 2019 to the second week of June 2020 (data source:https://agmarknet.gov.in/PriceTrends/SA_Week_Pri.aspx Price Rs/q)

of a fall in market price, the area under cotton is unlikely to decline.

3. Prevailing Zonal and Local Factors Impacting Cotton Planting

North zone: In this zone, cotton is planted in the last fortnight of April and sowing is completed by 10th of May. During the preplanting period, the Government of Punjab made conscious effort to convince farmers to direct a part of the area which is otherwise sown under paddy to cotton and maize. This diversification was to reduce water use and more importantly to mitigate air pollution caused by the burning of paddy stubbles after harvest. had set a target to wean away 0.12 m ha from paddy to cotton. The Government of India, through its Crop Diversification Programme (CDP) campaigned vigorously to reduce the area under paddy in Punjab and Haryana towards less water demanding crops like cotton.

Most of the farmers in this zone sold their cotton during November 2019 - January 2020 when cotton prices were high (5000-5300 Rs/q) and low price realisation would not be a disincentive to plant less cotton during 2020-21. During the Covid-19 lockdown period, there was a mass exodus of migrant labours who are well versed in the art of transplanting paddy and they are unlikely to return soon. This would compel some paddy growers to switch over to cotton.

Central and South zones: In these zones, cotton is predominantly a rainfed crop. some areas critical irrigation is provided using harvested rainwater. Extended rainfall in several tracts during the last season, prolonged the harvesting of the crop beyond February. The marketing of the produce commenced in November - December 2019 and continued till May 2020. With the onset of Covid-19 crisis in January in China, the market price plummeted from Rs. 5251 per quintal in mid-January to a low Rs.4048 per quintal in the first week (Figure 2). Despite timely market intervention by CCI to procure cotton at MSP, several farmers faced hardship in marketing their produce. This may encourage farmers to switch over to alternate/competing crops. The alternate crops include groundnut in Gujarat, soybean and pigeon pea in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, pigeon pea and maize in Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. A shift towards maize is unlikely partly due to the fear of the newly emerged pest, the Fall Army Worm, and also due to a reduced demand for maize by the poultry industry that has been badly hit across the globe due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A section of the farmers may opt for groundnut in Gujarat, soybean and pigeon pea in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

However, since the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted a normal monsoon for 2020-20 season with 103% and 102% of the Long Period Average (LPA) in the Central

COTTON STATISTICS & NEWS

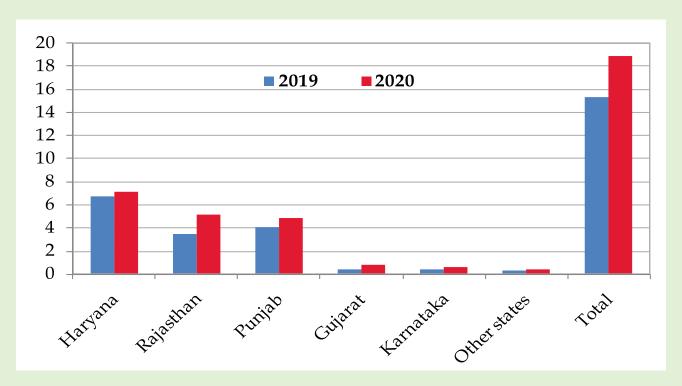


Figure 3: Progress of cotton sowing (area in lakh ha) upto June 11, 2020 and the corresponding period during 2019 (data source- http://agricoop.nic.in/sites/default/files/CWWG%20Data%20as%20on%2012.06.2020.pdf)

and Southern peninsula; its timely onset and satisfactory progress will encourage farmers to plant more cotton. Normally, farmers opt for soybean and pigeon pea in years whenever there is a delay in monsoon.

The Govt. of Telangana recently announced a regulated agricultural system for the state and announced a restriction in the area under different crops. The state has prohibited maize crop in the kharif season and has decided to increase the area under cotton from 17.61 lakh ha in 2019-20 to 26.3 lakh ha in 2020-21. If farmers adhere to this, the likely loss in acreage in the Central zone would be compensated by an increase in area under cotton in Telangana.

4. The Emerging Cotton Scenario - Progress of Cotton Sowing

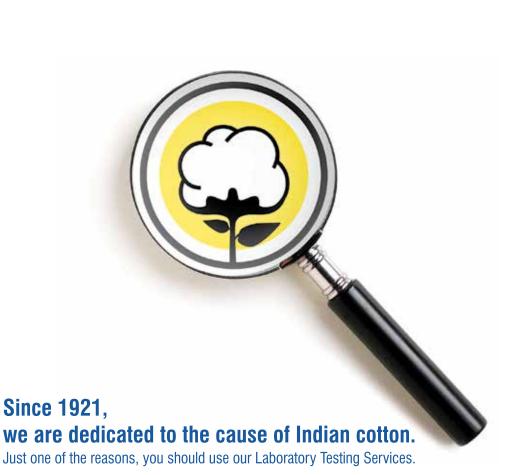
Data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India (http://agricoop.nic.in/sites/default/files/CWWG%20Data%20as%20on%2012.06.2020. pdf) on the extent of cotton crop sown indicates that as on 11th June 2020, 18.91 lakh ha has been sown, as against the normal area coverage of (2015-2019) of 16.16 lakh ha and 15.138 lakh ha during the corresponding week last year (Figure 3). The overall gain over the last year was 23.4%.

The increase was significant in Punjab (from 4.0 lakh ha to 4.9 lakh ha), Haryana (from 3.72 lakh ha to 7.13 lakh ha) and Rajasthan (from 3.40 lakh ha to 5.81lakh ha) over the area sown during the corresponding period last year. Currently, the sowing operations have just began in other states and it would be preposterous to visualise any trend. Although, there is an early swing in favour of cotton, it may take a month for a clear picture to emerge.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the possible impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown; the market situation, the prevailing sentiments of the farmers, the Government interventions including MSP and the actual trend in the progress of cotton sowing thus far, a significant reduction in the area under cotton is not foreseen. A bountiful harvest at the backdrop of a favourable monsoon could actually end up in a massive surplus of cotton.

(The views expressed in this column are of the author and not that of Cotton Association of India)



The Cotton Association of India (CAI) is respected as the chief trade body in the hierarchy of the Indian cotton economy. Since its origin in 1921, CAI's contribution has been unparalleled in the development of cotton across India.

The CAI is setting benchmarks across a wide spectrum of services targeting the entire cotton value chain. These range from research and development at the grass root level to education, providing an arbitration mechanism, maintaining Indian cotton grade standards, issuing Certificates of Origin to collecting and disseminating statistics and information. Moreover, CAI is an autonomous organization portraying professionalism and reliability in cotton testing.

The CAI's network of independent cotton testing & research laboratories are strategically spread across major cotton centres in India and are equipped with:

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- HVI test mode with trash% tested gravimetrically

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Current locations: • Maharashtra: Mumbai; Yavatmal; Aurangabad • Gujarat: Rajkot; Kadi; Ahmedabad • Andhra Pradesh: Adoni • Madhya Pradesh: Khargone • Karnataka: Hubli • Punjab: Bathinda • Telangana: Warangal, Adilabad



COTTON ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

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2	P/H/R (SG)	ICS-201	Fine	Below 22mm	5.0 - 7.0	4.5%	15	10404 (37000)	10404 (37000)	10461 (37200)	10489 (37300)	10489 (37300)	10489 (37300)
3	GUJ	ICS-102	Fine	22mm	4.0 - 6.0	13%	20	5821 (20700)	5821 (20700)	5821 (20700)	5821 (20700)	5821 (20700)	5821 (20700)
4	KAR	ICS-103	Fine	23mm	4.0 - 5.5	4.5%	21	7592 (27000)	7592 (27000)	7592 (27000)	7592 (27000)	7592 (27000)	7592 (27000)
5	M/M (P)	ICS-104	Fine	24mm	4.0 - 5.5	4%	23	7874 (28000)	7874 (28000)	7874 (28000)	7874 (28000)	7874 (28000)	7874 (28000)
6	P/H/ R (U) (SG)	ICS-202	Fine	27mm	3.5 - 4.9	4.5%	26	9758 (34700)	9758 (34700)	9758 (34700)	9786 (34800)	9786 (34800)	9786 (34800)
7	M/M(P)/ SA/TL	ICS-105	Fine	26mm	3.0 - 3.4	4%	25	7030 (25000)	7030 (25000)	7030 (25000)	7030 (25000)	7030 (25000)	7030 (25000)
8	P/H/R(U)	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.5 - 4.9	4%	26	9842 (35000)	9842 (35000)	9842 (35000)	9870 (35100)	9870 (35100)	9870 (35100)
9	M/M(P)/ SA/TL/G	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.0 - 3.4	4%	25	7367 (26200)	7367 (26200)	7367 (26200)	7367 (26200)	7367 (26200)	7367 (26200)
10	M/M(P)/ SA/TL	ICS-105	Fine	27mm	3.5 - 4.9	3.5%	26	8773 (31200)	8773 (31200)	8773 (31200)	8773 (31200)	8773 (31200)	8773 (31200)
11	P/H/R(U)	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.5 - 4.9	4%	27	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)	9983 (35500)	9983 (35500)	9983 (35500)
12	M/M(P)	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.7 - 4.5	3.5%	27	9645 (34300)	9645 (34300)	9645 (34300)	9645 (34300)	9645 (34300)	9645 (34300)
13	SA/TL	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.7 - 4.5	3.5%	27	9729 (34600)	9729 (34600)	9729 (34600)	9729 (34600)	9729 (34600)	9729 (34600)
14	GUJ	ICS-105	Fine	28mm	3.7 - 4.5	3%	27	9589 (34100)	9589 (34100)	9589 (34100)	9589 (34100)	9589 (34100)	9589 (34100)
15	R(L)	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.7 - 4.5	3.5%	28	9926 (35300)			9954 (35400)		9954 (35400)
16	M/M(P)	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.7 - 4.5	3.5%	28	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)	9983 (35500)	9983 (35500)	9954 (35400)
17	SA/TL/K	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.7 - 4.5	3%	28				100039 (35700)		
18	GUJ	ICS-105	Fine	29mm	3.7 - 4.5	3%	28	9926 (35300)	9926 (35300)	9926 (35300)	9954 (35400)	9954 (35400)	9926 (35300)
19	M/M(P)	ICS-105	Fine	30mm	3.7 - 4.5	3.5%	29	10067 (35800)	10067 (35800)	10067 (35800)	10095 (35900)	10095 (35900)	10067 (35800)
20	SA/TL/K/O	ICS-105	Fine	30mm	3.7 - 4.5	3%	29	10151 (36100)	10151 (36100)	10151 (36100)	10179 (36200)	10179 (36200)	10151 (36100)
21	M/M(P)	ICS-105	Fine	31mm	3.7 - 4.5	3%	30	10404 (37000)	10404 (37000)	10404 (37000)	10432 (37100)	10432 (37100)	10404 (37000)
	SA/TL/ K / TN/O	ICS-105	Fine	31mm	3.7 - 4.5	3%	30	10461 (37200)	10461 (37200)	10461 (37200)	10489 (37300)	10489 (37300)	10461 (37200)
23	SA/TL/K/ TN/O	ICS-106	Fine	32mm	3.5 - 4.2	3%	31	10686 (38000)	10686	10686	10714 (38100)	10714	10686 (38000)
24	M/M(P)	ICS-107	Fine	34mm	3.0 - 3.8	4%	33	14763 (52500)	14763 (52500)	14763 (52500)	14763 (52500)	14763 (52500)	14763 (52500)
25	K/TN	ICS-107	Fine	34mm	3.0 - 3.8	3.5%	33	15185	15185	15185		15185	15185

(Note: Figures in bracket indicate prices in Rs./Candy)