

Poor rice production in Assam expected due to less rain



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Mowsam Hazarika 13 August 2010 7638 views

The State has set a target of 46 lakh MT rice production for the year 2010-11 but abnormal weather conditions, i.e., dry spell and low rainfall, could hinder accomplishment of the target. State Agriculture Minister Pramila Rani Brahma told that while rice yield during 2008-09 was a record 40.70 lakh MT, the figure for the year 2009-10 was under assessment and likely to be around 42 lakh MT. According to her, for attaining self-sufficiency, the State requires around 41 lakh MT rice a year.

“For the current year (2010-11), we have set a target of 46 lakh MT but adverse weather conditions might affect realization of the goal. Still, we are working out a number of interventions such as irrigation through pump sets, stocking of seedlings, popularizing high-yielding and hybrid varieties, etc., to tide over any potential crisis,” Brahma said.

Vagaries of the weather apart, another menace in the form of pest attack is taking a heavy toll on crops this season. Sporadic attacks of pests like caseworm, leaf folder, hispa and stem borer have been reported from 44,531 hectares of Sali paddy cultivation. In addition, another disease (ronga pora bemar) which makes the plants turn red, has also hit cultivation.

“I have personally visited nine districts and interacted with farmers from 11 districts. While pest attacks are common in all the districts, the situation is serious in parts of Lakhimpur. An amount of Rs 4 lakh together with machineries and equipment has been made available to the districts to take prompt action against pest attack,” Brahma said, adding that seedlings raised under community nursery were ready for planting.

On the ‘red disease’, the Minister said that directives had been issued to the districts to hold workshops with AAU scientists, as the cause of the disease could not be established as yet. “The dry spell could have been a reason but we have asked the officers to involve the scientists for ascertaining the causes and finding the correct remedy,” she said.

Dwelling on some new initiatives, Brahma said that the department had set up 19 cold storages, 51 rural godowns, 18 seed godowns and nine seed processing units; augmenting production of quality seeds in seed villages; providing 350 electric pump sets (2010-11) and 23,688 diesel pump sets (2009-10, 2010-11); making provision for providing 68 tractors to self-help groups (SHGs) run by women, etc.

Brahma said that to achieve higher production of rice, the steps taken include mass adoption of system of rice intensification (SRI), large-scale adoption of hybrid and high-yielding varieties of rice by farmers, ensuring timely availability of quality seeds through certification process and encouraging seed replacement rate (SRR), prophylactic plant protection measures, and better soil health management through liming.

The Minister revealed that procurement by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) from the State had gone up to 12,300 MT in 2009-10, encouraging farmers to go for higher production. On the agriculture credit front, 1,49,822 Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs) had been provided to the farmers, which marks a quantum jump from 20,000 cards in 2008-09.

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BY MOWSAM HAZARIKA

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