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Tea output may fall by 40%

Tea production and transportation from Kerala is estimated to come down significantly due to rains and infrastructure damages.

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Tea production and transportation from Kerala is estimated to come down significantly due to rains and infrastructure damages. Idukki, Wayanad and Pathanamthitta, where most of the big plantations are located bore the brunt of heavy rainfalls and consequent landslides.

India is the second-largest producer of tea in the world and makes up 26% of the global tea production. Association of Planters Kerala (APK), the apex body of planters, claims that the sector is crippled with infrastructure damages leading to a halt in operations.

Thomas Jacob, chairman, Association of Planters of Kerala (APK) told FE that the tea production in the state could fall by 40% due to the rain related damages, while infrastructure damages could hamper the production and transportation of the tea further. “Road, power and other infrastructure damages have crippled most of the plantations with Nelliampathy the worst hit. Roads to Nelliampathy has been damaged and it would take at least one month to restore it.

“With no power and diesel, the tea and coffee factories are shut and 4,000 workers stranded,” Ajith Balakrishnan, secretary of APK told FE. Ajith said that tea has to be plucked or it will go waste and in inaccessible estates the plucked tea cannot be taken to the factories to process. He added that small culverts, dams, embankments and roads have been damaged in the rain and landslides.

“September-October is the peak cropping season for plantations.

“So far, we are down by 22% in production from April-June and it seems that the production loss would be much higher,” he added.

R Sanjith, commodities head, United Planters’ Association of Southern India (Upasi), told FE that the heavy downpour of the Southwest Monsoon has affected the south Indian tea production, with Kerala being the most severely affected.

“Barring Nilgiris, all tea producing regions in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have been impacted by the rains. In short, the obvious thing is the crop loss, but the long-term impact of the asset loss would be higher,” he added.

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