A Normal Monsoon - Not For Crops

What is the issue?

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- Indian Metrological Department has recognised the latest south-west monsoon rainfall as 'normal' in statistical terms.
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- However, the spatial and temporal distribution of rains shows a different picture.
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What is a normal monsoon year?

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- Long-Period Average (LPA) rainfall of India for the entire monsoon season is around 887 mm.
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- IMD deems a season ‘normal’ if the all-India quantum of rain falls within a 10% range of the LPA.
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- In this south-west monsoon season (June to September), India has received a total 841.3 mm of rain.
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- This is short of the LPA by 5%.
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- Thus, statistically south-west monsoon for 2017 has turned out to be normal.
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Why is it not 'normal' for agriculture?

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- IMD categorises India into 36 meteorological sub-divisions for measuring the spatial spread of rainfall.

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- In this monsoon, 5 of the 36 sub-divisions received excess rains, 25 received normal rains and 6 witnessed deficient rains.
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- Also, the first two months of the season witnessed an excess rainfall than the latter two.
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- Thus, however the quantum of rainfall this season was normal, the distribution was quite unusual.
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- Notably, the spatial and temporal distribution of rains decides the crop prospects.
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What could the impact be?

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- **Spatial variation** - This year's monsoon has been deficient in some key food-bowl States, affecting crop production. E.g.
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1. Deficient rains in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab is bound to affect kharif rice production.
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2. Deficient rains in Madhya Pradesh would impact rabi wheat crop and pulses output.
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3. Patchy distribution in Madhya Pradesh and Haryana could affect oilseeds' prospects.
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- Besides, there are wide variations within each state between growing regions.
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- **Temporal variation** - This year witnessed excess rains in June and July

contributing to good sowing and coverage of the kharif crops.
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- However, August and September months saw below normal rains, impacting the eventual output by reducing crop yields.
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- Also, rainfall in these two months decides reservoir storage and soil moisture and eventually helps planting of the winter crops.
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- Notably, the rabi season and winter crops has been equally important to the agricultural prospects in recent years.
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- Therefore, dry spells in the latter half of this monsoon, taken with deficient rains in key rabi growing regions, has reduced rabi prospects.
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Source: The Hindu

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