Tamil Nadu declared Drought-Hit

Why in news?

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The Tamil Nadu government declared a drought on 10 January, 2017, after 144 farmers ended their lives between October and December, 2016.

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What is the cause of Drought?

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- The retreating northeast monsoon — usually unnoticed in India — in 2016 was **the worst ever over the last 140 years,** according to IMD records.
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- Overall, the northeast monsoon was 45 percent short of the average for this period, the state worst hit being Tamil Nadu, where **rainfall for the season was 62 percent short of normal.**
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- Even the southwest monsoon – which was classified as normal across India – was 19 percent deficient in Tamil Nadu.
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How badly was Tamil Nadu affected?

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- After losing the 'kuruvai' crop due to the Cauvery row, **the farmers are on the verge of losing the ‘samba’ too due to an unprecedented drought.** With spike in farmer deaths due to debt coupled with cash crunch, Tamil Nadu’s farm sector is now in the midst of a huge crisis.
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- Hit by shortages from both monsoons, Tamil Nadu, where the winter crop

depends more on the northeast monsoon than in any other Indian state, reported **a 33 percent drop in the winter sowing of rice,** according to latest crop sowing situation report.
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What are the reliefs measures announced?

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- The CM has announced a slew of relief measures, including **waiver of land tax** for farmers, to tackle drought situation in the State.
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- As 17 farmers had ‘committed suicide’ due to ‘various reasons’, the government would grant a solatium of Rs. 3 lakh to families of each of these farmers.
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- As huge funds were required to protect people from drought, **assistance from the Centre would be sought** and a petition sent to the Centre at the earliest.
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- The measures to tackle drought include efforts to convert crop loans from cooperative banks and commercial banks into medium term loans.
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- The days of work for workers under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme would be increased to 150 days from the existing 100 days to ensure livelihood for farmers affected by drought.
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- A sum of Rs. 78 crore would be spent for the fodder needs of cattle and Rs. 160 crore would be earmarked for works for **improving resources for the drinking water needs in urban areas.**
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- A sum of Rs. 350 crore would be allocated for the same in rural areas through Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department.
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- Rs. 25 crore would be allocated to the PWD for improving the groundwater table and to boost drinking water resources.
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Conclusion:

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- Farmers associations have been demanding compensation at the rate of Rs 25,000 per acre for crop loss, a demand that has been endorsed by all the opposition parties.
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- “We had demanded Rs 25,000 per acre compensation but what the government is promising is Rs 5400 per acre compensation,” Tamil Nadu farmers’ association leader said.
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- However, the chief minister said the government was allocating more funds to tackle the immediate problems faced by the farming community.
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Source: First Post & The Hindu

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