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India

Agricultural Situation

Monsoon Update (4)

2008

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Report Highlights:
There was a further deterioration in the monsoon activity during the past two weeks, with rainfall deficiency spreading to most parts of north western and central India, besides the already parched peninsular India. Almost half way through the monsoon season (June – September), the window of opportunity is narrowing for planting of most kharif crops. If rains don't occur within the next two weeks, most kharif crops-- which include rice, sorghum, millet, corn, peanut, soybeans, and cotton-- will be in jeopardy. The most significantly affected states/regions are Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Trade Report
New Delhi [IN1]
[IN]

There was a further deterioration in the monsoon activity during the past two weeks, with rainfall deficiency spreading to most parts of north western and central India, besides the already parched peninsular India. Only 13 of the 36 weather subdivisions received normal or above normal rainfall during the week ending July 23 compared with 19 subdivisions the previous week and 29 subdivisions a year ago. The weighted average rainfall for the country as a whole for the week of July 23 was 33 percent below normal, compared with 19 percent below normal the previous week.

There was virtually no rain in Gujarat (peanut, cotton, millet), Rajasthan (millet, soybeans), and most parts of Maharashtra (sorghum, cotton, soybeans) in the week of July 23. Chattisgarh and Orissa, where rice is the major monsoon season crop, also received significantly below normal rains this week, which could impact rice planting and production in this mostly non-irrigated rice belt. The Telangana region (major corn belt) continued to receive below-normal rainfall for the third consecutive week. Maharashtra continued to remain the worst affected state, which has been experiencing significantly below-normal rainfall for the past six weeks. On the positive side, coastal Andhra Pradesh (rice) and Raylaseema (peanut) received good rains during the week. Rainfall activity during the past two weeks were mostly confined to Bihar, East Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and north-eastern states, where the major kharif season (fall and early winter harvested) crop is rice. Parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar continued to reel under floods, resulting in damage to planted crops and loss of human lives. Figure 1 shows the spatial and temporal distribution of rainfall since the beginning of the monsoon season on June 1.

With a continuous deterioration in the rainfall distribution (Figure 2), cumulative weighted all-India rainfall from June 1 to July 23 fell two percent below normal at 378.1 mm from the previous week's 4 percent above normal. Weather subdivisions receiving normal or above normal cumulative rainfall further dipped to 21 subdivisions for the week ending July 23 from the previous week's 22 subdivisions.

Almost half-way through the monsoon season (June – September), the window of opportunity is narrowing for planting of most kharif crops. If normal rains don't occur within the next two weeks, most kharif crops, which include rice, sorghum, millet, corn, peanut, soybeans, and cotton will be in jeopardy. Early planted peanuts in Gujarat and soybeans in Madhya Pradesh have also become vulnerable due to lack of supporting rains. Poor rains in the catchment areas of major rivers in southern and central India have significantly diminished water levels in major reservoirs forcing many states to resort to power cuts. Unless monsoon activity gains momentum in coming months, the country could be heading for a significant drought.

Initial planting reports from the Agriculture Ministry shows an increase in planted area compared with last year for most crops, except sorghum, corn, peanut, cotton, most pulses, and sugarcane as on July 18 (see http://agricoop.nic.in/ncfcweather/ncfcasJuly-18-2008.pdf). However, lack of rains could retard additional planting and could adversely affect crops already planted.

Figure1: Spatial and Temporal Distribution of Monsoon Rains

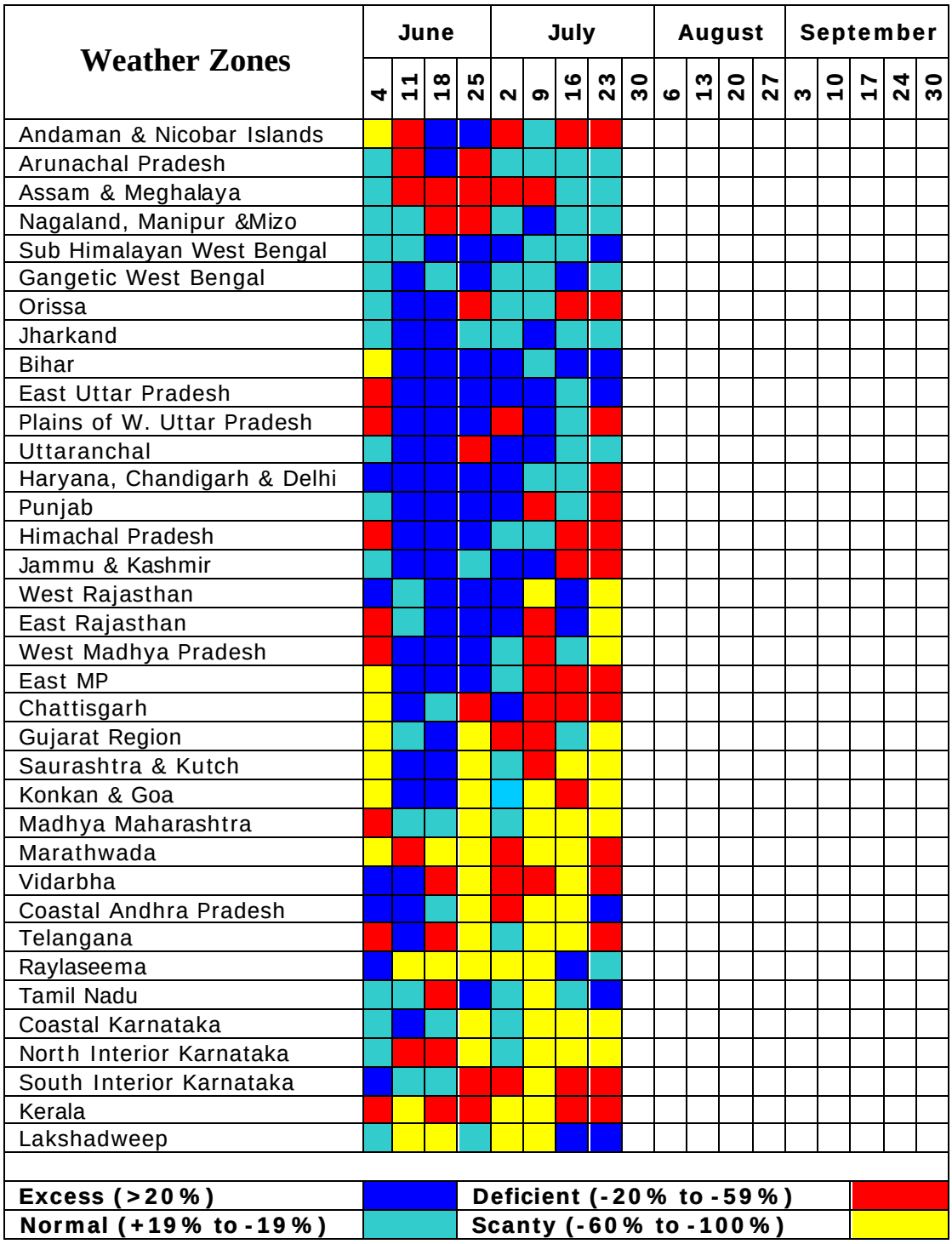
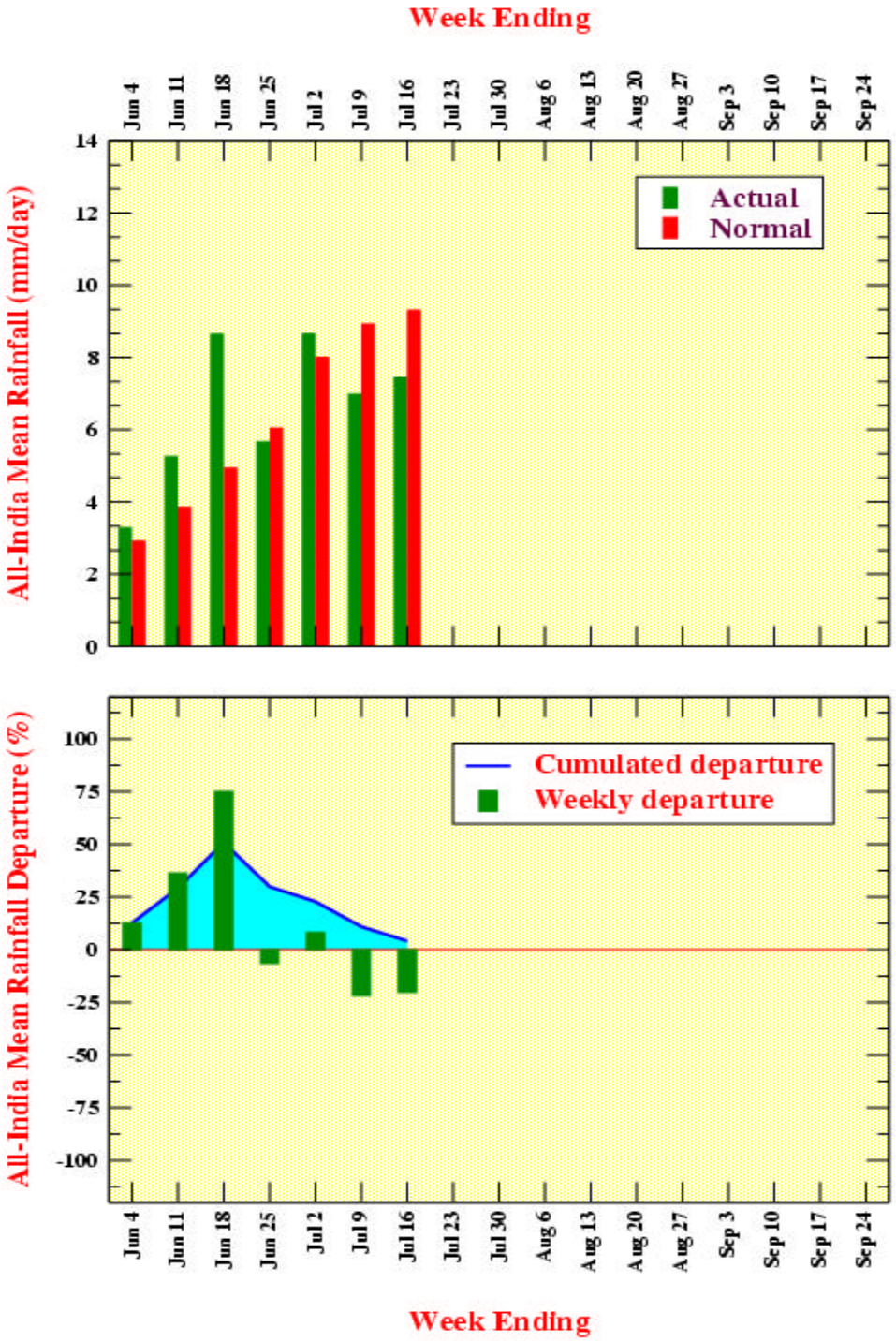


Figure 2: Trend in cumulative rainfall



Source: Monsoon Online
(www.tropmet.res.in/~kolli/MOL/Monsoon/frameindex.html)