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Rain casts shadow over mango, cashew growers

Unseasonal showers have severely affected production of fruit in the Konkan region

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Unexpected rain over the last 48 hours dealt a major blow to mango and cashew growers in key regions such as Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg. Around 70 per cent of mango production and 60 per cent of cashew nuts have been affected severely.

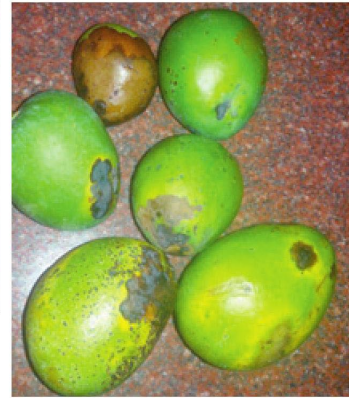
According to state agriculture department records, 1.82 lakh hectares is under mango cultivation in the Konkan region. On an average, the state gets three lakh tonnes of fruit from the region. However, the state horticulture department has predicted that this year, production will be at least 25 per cent less due to unexpected rain-fall and adverse atmospheric conditions.

Deepak Nagvekar, a member of the Mango Growers Association of Ratnagiri district, who has 2,000 trees of Hafus mango there, said, "The hailstorm and rain in the first two weeks of March affected the crop. To make matters worse, the district has been receiving unseasonal rain since the last four days. As a result, 70 per cent of actual production of the fruit has been affected. Mango farmers cannot even recover their pesticide expenses from the crop this year. Also, most of the fruits have black spots on them as pesticides could not be used on time."

"Pests and disease have affected both the fruits drastically in the region. We fear



Mango production may go down by as much as 25 per cent this year; much of the fruit also has black spots as farmers could not afford pesticide



that more than 25 per cent of the mango production will be affected. Also, most mango-growers use strong pesticides nowadays and we are worried that there the residue might remain in the fruits. This will also affect export," said Dr Sudam Adsul, director of the state horticulture department. Adsul added that the cashew crop has also been affected."

Interestingly, mango prices have not fluctuated too drastically in the open market as there is a lukewarm response from small-scale traders, who do not have a system to ripen the fruit.

"We used to use 'carpet' (calcium car-

bide) to ripen mangoes, but it has been banned now. We cannot afford to spend money on ripening and so we are not taking mangoes. If buying mangoes is going to invite trouble, why do it?" asked Kisan Shinde, a trader from Vishrantwadi.

The price of mangoes has increased in the international market, too. An official of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), who did not wish to divulge his identity, told *Mirror*, "We have not received any complaint from exporters yet, though there was news that mango production would be less."