

# Agri growth may jump to 6% in FY17

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INDIA may achieve 6 per cent agriculture growth in 2016-17, the highest in six years, if the monsoon turns out to be normal, according to NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand.

“Such a jump is possible due to very low base after poor monsoon cut crops’ output for two consecutive years,” he said on Thursday. Agriculture growth tumbled to negative zone at (-) 0.25 per cent in 2014-15 as monsoon was 12 per cent below normal. The growth is expected to recover to 1.2 per cent in 2015-16, he said.

Last year the country received 14 per cent lower rainfall from the 50-year average of 89 cm during June-September monsoon season due to emergence of El Nino weather system in the Pacific Ocean.

El Nino causes floods in South America and droughts in Asia and Australia while it is the opposite in case of La

Nina. Both weather systems are linked to heating or cooling of ocean level.

Indian scientists have forecast that El Nino is declining and, therefore, India will have a normal monsoon this year. The official long-range monsoon forecast will be released in third week of April.

The NITI Aayog member also said the area under crop cultivation as well as productivity will increase with a normal monsoon.

“In past there have been instances where agriculture growth has jumped sharply. And this time the government has ensured procurement at minimum support prices to farmers in eastern India which will also help in higher growth,” Chand said.

India received lowest rainfall in four decades in 2009 that led to 7 per cent fall in grain output. In the subsequent year, due to low base effect and 2 per cent higher than normal rains the country’s farm growth rate jumped to 9.5

## Rain factor

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The grain production during crop year 2014-15 (July-June) fell to 252.02 million tonnes from the record 265.04 million tonnes in 2013-14 as per the final estimate of the agriculture ministry released in February. For 2015-16, the production of rice, wheat, pulses and coarse cereals is estimated at 253.16 million tonnes.

Chand also favoured adoption of genetically modified food crops for commer-

cial cultivation. The government is yet to take a decision on allowing the GM crop in food products.

He said NITI Aayog will also undertake a pilot project in five villages in Bihar along with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on increasing the productivity of pulses.

Chand said India needed to have its own estimate to measure the extent of hunger. It will ensure that food security related norms are used in proper way for human development, he said. “I have started working on multi-dimensional food security indicator as is enshrined in definition of food security of FAO,” he said.

Sshyam Khadka, FAO representative in south Asia, said India’s ranking in terms of nutrition security is lower than Nepal and Bangladesh though it is much more secured on food compared to its neighbours.