

AGRICULTURE

The fiscal 1998-99 experienced several setbacks related to weather phenomenon unrelated to the performance of 1998 Monsoon which was normal, as predicted by the Meteorological Department. Weather related setbacks occurred first in May-June when northern India experienced unprecedented heat wave conditions for many days with maximum temperature touching a high of 48°C. This unusual phenomenon, had caused an extreme state of moisture stress, in some crops, especially in case of fruits and vegetable crops. Second, severe floods during the monsoon season affected production in parts of the country, especially Eastern India. The third weather related aberration occurred in the post monsoon period

in late October, 1998 when there was a heavy rainfall around Diwali resulting in damage to standing and matured paddy and cotton crops, besides vegetables such as potato and onion crops.

2. Notwithstanding these weather related setbacks, Monsoon in 1998 was the eleventh successive normal monsoon in terms of quantum and distribution of rainfall. The Meteorological Department had in early May, 1998 predicted that the much feared El Nino effect may not really be so pronounced as far as Indian monsoon was concerned. This prediction proved to be right in respect of spatial and temporal distribution of monsoon rain.