

**Drought contingency plan for sugarcane crop (2026)**

In view of anticipated impacts of El Nino phenomenon on the monsoon rains during 2026 in sub-tropical region of the country a brain storming session was held on 8 July 2026 under the Chairmanship of Director, ICAR-ISRI to devise actionable measures for successful cultivation of sugarcane crop in sub-tropical region. Following adaptation measures are hereby suggested for adoption to mitigate the rain deficit and alleviate the adverse effects of poor monsoon rains on the sugarcane crop.

**Water management:**

- As the sugarcane crop is there in the field, in case of prolonged dry spell during rainy season it is advised to go for frequent light irrigations in place of heavy irrigation. For water saving, drip laterals may be laid for surface drip irrigation in standing crop of sugarcane, wherever feasible.
- Furrow irrigation with cut off at 85% furrow length should be adopted and flood irrigation need to be discarded to save the water and cover more crop area. Irrigating only alternate furrows would further enhance the irrigation efficiency and water saving.
- Dust mulching by shallow hoeing of inter –row spaces to break the capillaries would effectively prevent the moisture loss from deeper layers of the sugarcane fields.
- Sugarcane planting after wheat harvest if delayed till June should be entirely avoided.

**Other measures:**

- Lower dried leaves of standing sugarcane crop may be stripped and laid in the inter-row spaces as a mulch to conserve moisture and prevent weed growth.
- Earthing up on sugarcane rows should be done especially in autumn planted and autumn initiated ratoon crops to prevent wasteful tillering and also to effectively harvest water from likely rains.
- Spray of ethrel (12 ml in 100 litres of water) should be done on sugarcane leaves during the dry spell to mitigate the adverse effects of moisture stress.
- In order to maintain the crop growth and the resilience against dry weather foliar spray of urea (2.5%) alone or in combination with MoP (2.5%) should be done.
- Control measures against sugarcane pests like top borer, black bug (ratoon), inter-node borer etc. need to be timely adopted. Monitoring and surveillance is required recording

infestation of sugarcane crop by sucking pests such as mealy bug, white fly and pyrilla. Use of recommended insecticides should be done as per the requirement.

- As a long term measure varietal planning encompassing balanced distribution of early and mid-late sugarcane varieties is strongly recommended as early varieties currently occupy more than 90% acreage in UP. Promising mid-late varieties viz., CoLk 09204, CoLk14204, CoLk 15466, CoLk16470 and others should be promoted to cover about 50% sugarcane area in a mill zone.
- As observed, infection with Pokka boeng disease gets stimulated with intermittent dry and wet spells in sugarcane growing areas. A vigil needs to be kept and fungicides approved by CIB& RC should be applied as recommended.

All the above recommendations shall be applied at ICAR-ISRI Research Farm as well for demonstrating its effectiveness to sugarcane growers and other visitors. The plan is to be uploaded on the ISRI website at once.