

# Heavy rain puts coffee farmers in distress

## Berry dropping, fungal infections reported from Wayanad district

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Berry dropping and fungal diseases owing to excess rain have put coffee farmers in the State in distress.

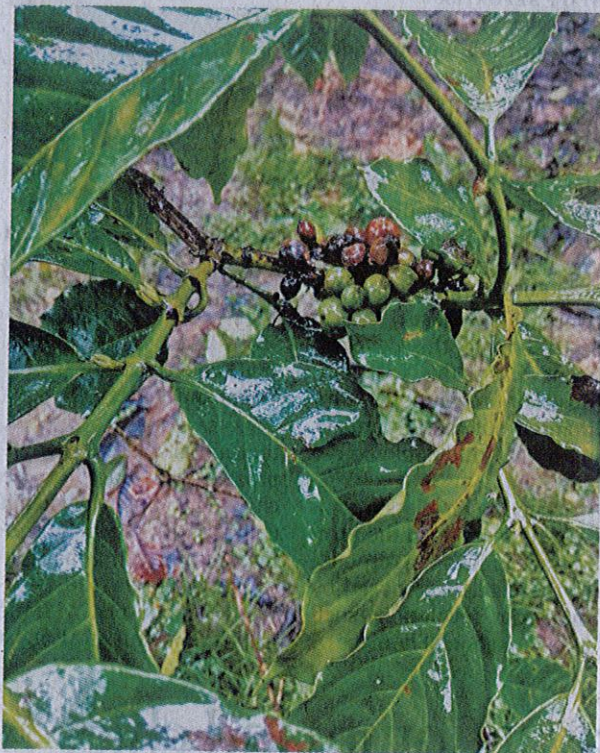
Wayanad, one of the major Robusta coffee producing regions in the country, has received 57% excess rain this year, compared to last year.

The other coffee-growing areas, including Idukki and Nelliampathy in Palakkad district, also received excessive rain this monsoon season, Coffee Board sources said.

There have been reports of outbreak of black rot, a fungal disease that results in rotting of tender berries. Also, there had been reports of berry dropping because of nutrient deficiency owing to heavy rains, M. Karuthamani, Deputy Director, Coffee Board (Extension) Kerala, told *The Hindu*.

A clearer picture would emerge after the assessment of crop loss after the rains, Dr. Karuthamani said.

However, Prasanth Rajesh, president, Wayanad



A Robusta coffee plant affected with black rot disease at a plantation at Muttill in Wayanad district.

Coffee Growers Association, said nearly 10% crop loss had occurred in Wayanad district alone owing to the rains. If

the rain continues for a few more days, farmers fear that there would be no returns for their investment this year

too, like it was last year, Mr. Rajesh said. An abrupt change in climate could also worsen the situation as the pathogens multiplied in high humidity, he said.

### Pepper crop hit

To make matters worse, pepper, an inter-crop in coffee plantations, has also been badly hit. Many a pepper plantation in the district was facing threats from quick-wilt disease and growers are already facing the heat owing to fall in pepper prices, Mr. Rajesh said.

According to the data available with the board, coffee cultivation is spread across 84,696 hectares in the State, including 67,366 hectares in Wayanad district, 12,680 hectares in the Travancore area, and 4,650 hectares in the Nelliampathy area of Palakkad district.

As many as 77,210 farmers are engaged in coffee cultivation in the State, including 59,621 growers in Wayanad, 17,035 in the Travancore area, and 554 in Palakkad district.