

Cropping Pattern in India, Types, Importance, Factors Affecting

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Cropping Pattern in India refers to the distribution and arrangement of crops in a region, including the sequence in which they are grown and the share of land allotted to each crop during different seasons. The choice of Cropping Pattern in India is largely shaped by factors such as rainfall, temperature, soil characteristics, and overall climatic conditions of the area.

Cropping Pattern in India

Cropping Pattern in India refers to the variety of crops grown in a region at a given time. In India, this pattern is influenced not just by natural factors such as temperature, rainfall, wind, and soil quality, but also by economic aspects like minimum support prices, market demand, crop value, and the availability of labour.

For example, rice dominates during years of good monsoon rainfall, whereas in years of weak monsoons, farmers often switch to hardier crops like millets. Similarly, certain regions have developed strong associations with particular crops, cotton in Maharashtra, tea in Assam, and jute in West Bengal continue to be the mainstay due to favourable conditions for their cultivation.

Cropping Pattern in India Types

- **Mono-cropping:** In this system, the same crop is cultivated on the same piece of land year after year. While simple to manage, it often reduces soil fertility over time.
- **Multiple cropping:** This involves growing more than one crop on the same land in a single year. It can be of two types:
 - **Intercropping:** Different crops are grown together on the same field in a planned row arrangement, helping farmers make better use of space and resources.
 - **Sequential cropping:** Different crops are cultivated one after another in the same field within a year, ensuring continuous use of the land.
- **Mixed cropping:** In this method, farmers grow two or more crops simultaneously on the same land, but without a fixed row pattern. It reduces the risk of complete crop failure, as one crop may survive if another is damaged.
- **Relay cropping:** A variation of multiple cropping, relay cropping involves planting the next crop before the first one is fully harvested. This overlapping use of time helps maximize productivity.

Factors Affecting Cropping Pattern in India

The Cropping Pattern in India is a mix of geographical, economic, political, and historical factors which are discussed in brief below:

Geographical Factors

- **Relief:** The landscape directly influences what can be grown. For example, rice thrives on irrigated hill terraces, while tea and coffee need well-drained slopes with ample rainfall. In irrigated plains with warm climates, crops like rice and sugarcane dominate, while wheat prefers regions with moderate temperatures and rainfall.
- **Rainfall:** The amount and distribution of rain create distinct cropping zones:
 - **Heavy rainfall areas (150+ cm annually):** East India and the West Coast plains grow rice, tea, coffee, jute, and sugarcane. Livestock is also common due to abundant fodder.
 - **Medium rainfall areas (75-150 cm):** Eastern UP, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh (east), and Vidarbha in Maharashtra support rice (higher rainfall), wheat (lower rainfall), maize, soybeans, and cotton.
 - **Low rainfall areas (25-75 cm):** Semi-arid stretches cultivate millets, jowar, bajra, ragi, and oilseeds. Wheat is grown in irrigated tracts, and mixed cropping with pulses is common to reduce risk.
- **Soil:** Each soil type has its own crop preference. Clayey soils favour rice, loamy soils suit wheat, and black regur soils of the Deccan are perfect for cotton. Coarse grains thrive in lighter soils, while delta soils of Bengal, renewed by annual floods, make jute cultivation ideal. In Darjeeling, the humus-rich soils nurture tea plantations.

Economic Factors

- **Irrigation:** Areas with strong irrigation support multiple crops annually—rice in southern belts, wheat in the north, while coarse grains receive less attention.
- **Size of Landholdings:** Small farmers often grow subsistence crops like food grains, while larger holdings allow for cash crops and commercial farming. Still, monocultures of rice and wheat dominate many large farms.
- **Risk and Insurance:** Access to crop insurance influences patterns. Plantation crops in southern states, for example, expanded because insurance schemes made them less risky.
- **Inputs and Infrastructure:** Seeds, fertilisers, water storage, transport, and market access play a big role in deciding what farmers grow.
- **Value and Demand:** High-value crops like apples are replacing millets in Himachal and Uttarakhand. Similarly, rice dominates in densely populated regions because of high demand and assured markets.

Political Factors

Government policies often shape Cropping Patterns in India. Legislation like Food Crops Acts, subsidies, or land reforms can push farmers toward certain crops. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) system has made rice and wheat dominant, leading to monocultures in many regions. In times of drought or inflation, policies shift again, encouraging or discouraging specific crops.

Historical Factors

Tea plantations in Assam and Kangra Valley trace back to British times. Sugarcane expanded in North India because colonial rulers promoted it as a replacement for indigo when artificial dyes killed its market.

Post-Green Revolution, the surplus production of rice and wheat shifted the focus to diversification. Oilseeds and pulses gained more space in fields, marking a new chapter in India's cropping story.

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