



# Incessant rain delays potato harvest in Gangtey

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**W**ith the months July and August experiencing continuous rainfall in Gangtey gewog, Wangduephodrang, the harvest of potatoes has been delayed substantially in the rich potato-growing region.

Farmers said potatoes are still not harvested and harvest usually gets over by the end of July or first week of August according to the farmers.

With farmers delaying their work in the potato fields due to continuous rainfall, this year's harvest season is at a pause according to Sonam Dema from Gangtey gewog. She said, "By this time potato harvests should have been done as we have to prepare for turnip plantation."

Despite farmers expecting a good yield this year, Sonam Dema said that the potatoes might rot if it is harvested in the rain. "Delaying in potato harvest will delay



*The potato harvesting is underway in the affected areas and despite a few harvesting delays due to the rain, the crop has remained unharmed*

turnip plantation and even selling the products at the right time which will have a massive cyclic effect," she added.

She shared that it became problematic with unpredictable weather in their farming routine. She said that sometimes rain stops for a while and thinking it might not rain further, farmers look for labourer.

She said, "We have to pay Nu 500 as wages per day but need to stop the harvest if there is rainfall which otherwise the pota-

atoes will be spoiled." She said that labour charges are wasted and works are not done due to rainfall.

Another farmer from the same village Karma Tenzin said that due to the monsoon season and heavy rainfalls, it is becoming difficult for the farmers to harvest potatoes. He said that at their warehouses since the sorting, processing, and packaging are done in open space and unexpected rainfalls are making it harder for the farmers to carry out their harvest

work as planned.

He said that the potato should be harvested during the dry weather. "If harvested in rain, the potatoes will rot. Even if not rotten, there will be mud stuck to potatoes and it will not qualify for selling as per criteria of Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA)."

Karma Tenzin said that when the first official day of harvest should be around in the month of July and early August, heavy rain showers pre-

vented farmers and their workers from heading outside. He said, "Now farmers are worried that delaying potato harvest will affect their vegetable cultivation rotation."

Duptho from Tokha village under Gangtey gewog shared similar concerns. He said, "It is inconvenient to work in uncertain weather. After calling a labourer presuming there would be no rainfall, but with sudden showers work got to pause paying full wages."

"There are no ways to make up harvest days once you lose them. Usually we finish in the end of July or beginning of August, but everything is weather-dependent. There's no set schedule," Duptho said. "It's hard to tell, but I'd say we're getting close to halfway done."

Currently, the potato harvest is underway in the affected states, but outside of a few harvesting delays due to the rain, the crop has remained unharmed.



*As a part of the Government of India's 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (India@75) celebrations to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence, the Embassy of India organized a virtual conference on the contribution of Assam in India's freedom struggle, connectivities and synergies between Bhutan and Assam on 6 August. The Minister of Economic Affairs Lok Nath Sharma who was the chief guest at the event said that India is a closet neighbor of Bhutan not merely because of sharing a common border but everything in thoughts and beliefs.*

*Speaking at the conference, Indian Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj highlighted that Assam is a key Indian state with whom Bhutan shares close ties from the historical, trade, and tourism perspectives. Ambassador Kamboj remarked on the dynamic leadership role played by the Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma in connecting India's north east region with neighboring countries, including Bhutan.*

*Bhutan recently opened a consulate in Guwahati, the capital of Assam, which has contributed to further strengthening the regional economy and connectivity between Bhutan and India, in particular, with the north-eastern states of India*