WINDS project to install automatic rain gauges and weather stations in States runs over a year late due to land shortage

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News

The 'Weather Information Network and Data System' (WINDS), executed through the Mahalanobis National Crop Forecast Centre (MNCFC) under the Union Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, is running more than a year behind schedule (The Hindu, 16 Oct 2026). Target: 1,197 automatic weather stations (AWS) and 49,313 automatic rain gauges (ARG) – about 50,500 in all. As of 9 Sept 2026 only 113 AWS (9.4%) and 1,730 ARG (4%) were installed – over 96% pending. Main reason: lack of suitable free land for the instruments; in States such as Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Kerala most proposed sites were rejected. On IMD advice, a 3 Dec 2025 amendment capped rooftop rain gauges at 10–15% of the total. Private partners: Skymet, Ingen Technologies, Azista Industries.

Key facts

Scheme	WINDS – Weather Information Network and Data System; launched July 2023 under PMFBY
Execution	MNCFC (Agriculture Ministry); States via private partners
Density	AWS at taluk/block level; ARG at gram panchayat level
Target	1,197 AWS + 49,313 ARG
Status (9 Sept)	113 AWS (9.4%), 1,730 ARG (4%) – 96%+ pending

Hurdle	Land shortage; rooftop ARG cap 10–15% (3 Dec 2025 amendment)

Background

- Purpose: hyper-local, panchayat-level weather data for computing claims under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), agro-advisories and disaster management. The WINDS portal, YES-TECH (Technology-based Yield Estimation System) manual and AIDE app were launched under PMFBY in July 2023; the WINDS manual is dated 1 Sept 2023.
- PMFBY (2016): farmers' premium – 2% for kharif, 1.5% for rabi, 5% for commercial/horticultural crops; the rest is borne by the Centre and States.
- India Meteorological Department (IMD): founded 1875; under the Ministry of Earth Sciences; HQ New Delhi. Six Regional Meteorological Centres – New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Nagpur, Guwahati. IMD insists rain gauges be ground-mounted for standardised data.
- Science: rain gauge – rainfall (mm); barometer – atmospheric pressure; hygrometer – humidity; anemometer – wind speed. An automatic weather station measures all these together and transmits automatically.

Tamil Nadu link: the news report on WINDS does not mention Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) installed 224 automatic weather stations in 224 blocks under the National Agricultural Development Programme (NADP) in 2007–08. IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre is at Chennai (Nungambakkam).

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