

CO₂ fear over mass tree deaths in Amazon

Damian Carrington

Caused by the 2010 drought, the occurrence could see the forest turn from carbon sink to carbon source.

- PHOTO: AFP



ISSUE: Huge emissions of carbon from the Amazon would make it even harder to keep global greenhouse gases at a low enough level to avoid dangerous climate change. An overview of an area near Anapu in the Amazon rainforest area.

Billions of trees died in the record drought that struck the Amazon basin in 2010, raising fears the vast forest is on the verge of a tipping point, where it will stop absorbing greenhouse gas emissions and instead increase them.

A major blow

The dense forests of the Amazon soak up more than a quarter of the world's atmospheric carbon, making it a critically important buffer against global warming. But if the Amazon switches from a carbon sink to a carbon source, that prompts further droughts and mass tree

deaths, such a feedback loop could cause runaway climate change, with disastrous consequences.

“Put starkly, current emissions pathways risk playing Russian roulette with the world's largest forest,” said tropical forest expert Dr. Simon Lewis, at the University of Leeds, England, who led the research published on February 3 in the journal *Science*. Lewis was careful to note that significant scientific uncertainties remain and that the 2005 drought — thought then to be of once-a-century severity — and the 2010 drought might yet be explained by natural climate variation.

“We can't just wait and see because there is no going back,” he said. “We won't know we have passed the point where the Amazon turns from a sink to a source until afterwards, when it will be too late.” Dr. Alex Bowen, from the London School of Economics Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change, said huge emissions of carbon from the Amazon would make it even harder to keep global greenhouse gases at a low enough level to avoid dangerous climate change. “It therefore makes it even more important for there to be strong and urgent reductions in man-made emissions.” The revelation of mass tree deaths in the Amazon is a major blow to efforts to reduce the destruction of the world's forests, one of the biggest sources of global carbon emissions. The recent use of satellite imagery by Brazilian law enforcement teams has drastically cut deforestation rates and replanting in Asia had slowed the net loss.

The 2010 Amazonian drought resulted in several states-of-emergencies declared and the lowest ever level of the major tributary, the Rio Negro. Lewis, with colleagues in Brazil, examined satellite-derived rainfall measurements and found that the 2010 drought was even worse than the very severe 2005 drought, affecting an area 60 per cent wider with a harsh dry season.

The researchers have 126 one-hectare plots spread across the Amazon, in which every single tree is tagged and monitored. After 2005 they counted how many trees had died and worked out how much carbon would be pumped into the atmosphere as the wood rotted. In addition, the reduced growth of the water-stressed trees means the forest failed to absorb the 1.5bn tonnes of carbon that it would in a normal year.

Applying the same principles to the 2010 drought, they estimated that 8.5bn tonnes of CO₂ will be released — more than the 7.7bn tonnes emitted in 2009 by China, the biggest polluting

nation in the world. This estimate does not include forest fires, which release carbon and increase in dry years.

“The Amazon is such a big area that even a small shift [in conditions] there can have a global impact,” said Lewis.

Drought

He also expects the drought to have an impact on the animals that live in the region, one of the most biodiverse places on Earth.

Lewis said that two such severe droughts in the Amazon within five years was highly unusual, but that a natural variation in climate over decade-long periods could not be ruled out. The driving factor of the annual weather patterns is the warmth of the sea in the Atlantic. Increasing droughts in the Amazon are found in some climate models, he added.

This means the 2005 and 2010 droughts are consistent with the idea that global warming will cause more droughts in future, emit more carbon, and potentially lead to runaway climate change. “The greenhouse gases we have already emitted may mean there are several more droughts in the pipeline,” he said.

Lewis said that the 2010 drought killed “in the low billions of trees”, in addition to the roughly four billion trees that die on average in a normal year across the Amazon. The researchers are now trying to raise £500,000 in emergency funding to revisit the plots in the Amazon and gather further data.

Brazilian scientist Paulo Brando, from the Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazonia (Amazon Environmental Research Institute), and co-leader of the research, said: “We will not know exactly how many trees were killed until we can complete forest measurements on the ground. It could be that many of the drought-susceptible trees were killed off in 2005. Or the first drought may have weakened a large number of trees so increasing the number dying in 2010.” Brando added: “Our results should be seen as an initial estimate. The emissions estimates do not include those from forest fires, which spread over extensive areas of the Amazon during hot and dry years and release large amounts of carbon.”— © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2011

Growth versus environment?

Vinod Thomas

The reality is that it will not be possible to sustain high growth in the coming years without environmental care.

PHOTO: AFP



MORE FREQUENT:Hydro-meteorological events, and not geological ones, have increased, suggesting an ominous link to global warming. A view of the recent flood devastation in Brisbane, Australia.

The universal drive for higher incomes in the face of mounting environmental destruction has heightened the expressed tension between fast growth and environmental protection. The perception of a trade-off between the two goals rests on the view often held — wrongly — that environmental protection, not environmental degradation, is the obstacle to rapid growth. The reality, however, is that it will not be possible to sustain high growth in the coming years without environmental care.

Interlinked

The reason is that we are facing a twin crisis — economic and environmental — and the two are highly interlinked. The spike in food prices, the second in three years, signals in good measure,

pressures on production that are exacerbated by the deleterious effects of environmental devastation and climate change. While some may set aside the global risks of climate change as being distant, recent extreme weather events point to changes that may already be upon us.

To be clear, sustained growth has been the most powerful means to reduce poverty, especially in China, India and elsewhere in Asia. China's growth averaged 10 per cent yearly for the past 25 years, lifting some 400 million people out of poverty. Developing countries need to grow a great deal: their average incomes are one-sixth that of rich nations.

That said, climate change presents the greatest threat to sustaining high growth. In the past 100 years, the world economy expanded sevenfold, the global population increased from 1.6 billion to 6.5 billion and the world lost half of its tropical forests. Consequently, atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are now 385 parts per million (ppm) and rising fast. This is close to the 450 ppm threshold beyond which it may be impossible to achieve the Cancun-agreed goal of limiting global temperature rise to 2° Celsius.

Natural disasters on the rise

National economies are already seeing the effects of climate on local agriculture. Natural disasters are on the rise: remarkably it is the hydro-meteorological events, not the geological ones that have shot up, suggesting the ominous link to global warming. The proximate reason for the doubling of wheat prices over the past year is the collapse of production in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere linked to unprecedented heat waves and floods.

The economic costs, including the losses caused by air pollution, water contamination and solid wastes as well as deforestation are estimated to amount to some three per cent of GNP in China as well as India, Argentina, Turkey and elsewhere. Strikingly, prevention is often far cheaper than cure — whether it's curbing industrial pollution, arresting deforestation or reinforcing structures in disaster-prone areas. Why then don't governments and businesses universally favour environmental safeguards?

One reason is that when it comes to the global aspects, no country, rich or poor, has the economic motivation or the political will to confront them alone. That's because only a part of the benefits accrue to those taking action, while others can grab a free ride. And even when the gains are local, they may only appear after politicians leave office.

Second, the split between what's good for society and what drives private interest is perpetuated as many policy and business leaders still do not view the environment as integral to the growth agenda. Mainstream economics has not been helpful in this regard. Most economic projections still assume that high growth can proceed independently of environmental action.

Third, policy often worsens the situation by encouraging the waste of natural resources. Growth models are silent on subsidies purportedly used to speed growth — farm subsidies of some \$150 billion a year and subsidies to fossil fuels of \$650 billion a year worldwide — that encourage energy intensity, emissions and waste. Cutting these subsidies would increase economic efficiency and improve the prospects for growth.

If high growth is to continue — be it in Brazil, China, India, or elsewhere — we need to fundamentally correct the calculus that environmental protection hampers economic growth. Economics can be highly influential in this respect. But mainstream economics must reverse its past advice and indicate that the drive for higher incomes can succeed only by including — not excluding — environmental care in growth policies.

(Vinod Thomas is the director-general of the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank. The views expressed here are his alone.)

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The public and issues of science

Wiebe E. Bijker

A public debate on nanotechnologies in The Netherlands raises awareness about the risks involved, and also creates support for the development of the field of science.

Science and technology are now more important for the development of a country than ever before. Increasingly, however, the public seems to be suspicious of scientists' work.

In India, Minister for Environment Jairam Ramesh was led by public consultations to declare a moratorium on Bt Brinjal. Last year in Germany, opposition to nuclear power reached a new

high. And in 2009, a vaccination campaign against cervical cancer in The Netherlands failed when the majority of 12-16 year old girls, for whom the campaign was designed, refused vaccination against the almost unanimous advice by scientists.

Do we need new forms of relating the public to science and technology? Do we need to innovate the social contract between science and society as it has existed since the times of Wilhelm von Humboldt's (1767-1835) autonomous university for the Bildung of citizens, or Vannevar Bush's (Science The Endless Frontier, 1945) pure science that could be trusted to deliver the goods?

On January 27, 2011, the Dutch public's agenda on nanotechnologies, titled "Responsibly forward with nanotechnologies," was presented to Joop Atsma, State Secretary of Infrastructure and Environment, Government of The Netherlands. In this public's agenda, the people of The Netherlands speak out about their priorities for nanotechnologies research and development: what to do and what not to do, what do they fear and what do they hope for, how to balance the risks and the benefits? This public's agenda resulted from the Societal Dialogue on Nanotechnologies, held between January and November 2010.

Nano science and technology deal with the very small: building blocks smaller than one millionth of a metre are used for new materials and instruments. Several products in the market such as sunscreens, anti-bacterial surfaces, automobile tyres, and some anti-cancer drugs already incorporate them. The promised benefits are large, and there is no field of science and technology that does not have potential applications of nanotechnologies (hence the use of the word here in the plural).

But there are possible hazards, too. Scientific evidence points to toxicological risks. Nanoparticles of gold and silver seem to be seriously toxic, while gold and silver as bulk materials are inert and safe. This is worrying: there is scientific evidence of toxicity, but not yet absolute scientific certainty about that nanotoxicity. Unlike in the cases of asbestos or radioactive radiation, where we have absolute scientific certainty about the risks, nano-scientists do not yet have the complete story on nano-risks. But we know enough to be worried about the application of especially synthetic nanoparticles.

The most striking result of the Dutch Societal Dialogue on Nanotechnology is that now, after the dialogue, the general public in The Netherlands is more aware of the risks of nanotechnologies, and at the same time more supportive of the further development of nanotechnology.

At first sight this is surprising and in sharp contrast to the long-held views on the relation between the public and science. The standard views about the “public's understanding of science” and the need for better “risk communication” are that the general public does not understand science and technology sufficiently to appreciate its benefits, and that because of this lack of knowledge it irrationally fears new science. We now know, however, that the Dutch people are more fearful of a government that hides the potential risks of nanotechnologies than of those risks themselves — when monitored and researched well.

Let me give an example. Several hundred Tenth Grade students in schools around Maastricht worked during three months on nanotechnologies, often in their physics or chemistry classes. They started with laboratory experiments related to nanotechnologies and did literature studies using the Internet. They then broadened their agenda to also address questions of benefits and risks. Project groups prepared reports and films about the future of specific nanotechnologies, which finally were presented at a conference attended by students, teachers, some politicians, industrialists and scientists.

As a physicist and teacher, I was impressed by the level of knowledge displayed in these presentations; I was equally excited by the students' well-informed personal positions on the future of nanotechnologies.

They certainly did not all agree with each other. Some were suspicious of the multiplier effect that nanotechnologies might have on existing power relations: “Most developments are spurred by commercial aims, and multinational companies will acquire even more unchecked influence than they already have.” Others especially valued the promises of better medical diagnosis and treatment. But the latter group asked for prudent studies of risks, as much as the first group concluded that nanotechnologies research should proceed.

Four elements were crucial in the set-up of the Societal Dialogue on Nanotechnologies. One element was that an independent committee was responsible for the organisation of the dialogue. This clearly added to the credibility of the process, since the Dutch government could

not interfere and push its own agenda. Whether the price of a consequentially limited political clout was worth paying is still to be seen.

The second was that the committee created a three-step process of providing information, raising awareness and having the dialogue. This was necessary because knowledge about nanotechnologies amongst the Dutch people was weak. First, information had to be given and awareness raised, before a proper dialogue was possible.

The third element was that most of the substantive work was outsourced, to keep the organising committee credibly independent. Almost 40 projects performed the information, awareness and dialogue activities. The committee had a budget of euro 4.5 million (Rs. 28 crore) and selected these projects after an open call for proposals. A broad variety of scientists, NGOs, firms, and individuals was responsible for these projects.

The fourth crucial element was that the use of a broad spectrum of media (from TV and Internet to science cafés, theatre plays and teaching materials) and the participation of a wide range of people (from children to scientists, from fundamentalist Christians to Muslims, from patient organisations to industrialists) contributed to the solidity of the resulting public's agenda.

This set-up worked well. Parallel to the process of the dialogue, the knowledge and opinions of a representative sample of the Dutch population was surveyed. "Having heard of nanotechnologies" increased during the societal dialogue from 54 per cent to 64 per cent of the Dutch population, and "knowing the meaning of nanotechnology" increased from 30 per cent to 36 per cent. An analysis of the process brings the committee to conclude that it was especially the heterogeneity of means that proved successful. Rather than a naïve belief in the Internet as a "global panchayat," the committee used a combination of small-scale but specifically targeted activities, with large-scale broadcasting and publishing via TV, printed media, and the Internet (see www.nanopodium.nl).

This dialogue thus yielded an interesting result that is potentially farther reaching in terms of its societal importance than the regulatory governance of nanotechnologies. A decade ago, the Dutch people opposed GM foods. Most analysts agree that this resulted from a public debate that many perceived as biased towards the pro-GM lobby. In contrast, the Dutch people are now in favour of cautiously proceeding with nanotechnologies, while recognising its risks. The general attitude certainly is not anti-science; but the public is not prepared, as in the 1950s, to

give scientists a blank cheque either. Instead, a continuous critical appraisal of the risks and the benefits of science seems to be called for: a new form of democratic risk governance.

The mechanisms to provide such a risk governance of science and technology are not readily available. The Societal Dialogue I described is just one example. Countries need to experiment with such innovations of democracy, as much as scientists experiment with the new technologies that shape our world. It is unlikely that what worked in The Netherlands will work in India, and vice versa: the difference between the proverbial consensus-oriented Dutch and the equally iconic diversity-celebrating Indians may be too large. But the democratic issues remain just as pressing.

Can The Netherlands find ways of democratically coping with the oppositions around nuclear power: the 'new' benefits of lower CO2 emissions versus the 'old' risks of nuclear waste storage, the 'old' benefits of energy autonomy versus the 'new' risks of international terrorism? Can India find ways of democratically reaching a well-informed and broadly shared policy on Bt Brinjal by moving the current moratorium to a next phase?

(Wiebe E. Bijker is Professor of Technology & Society, Maastricht University, and was vice-chair of the committee that organised the Societal Dialogue on Nanotechnologies in The Netherlands.)

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Climate tipping points

Damian Carrington

Scientists know from the geological record that the Earth's climate can change rapidly. They have identified a number of potential tipping points, where relatively small amounts of global warming caused by human activities could cause large changes in climate. Some tipping points, like the losses to the Amazon forest, involve positive feedback loops and could lead to runaway climate change.

Arctic icecap: The white icecap is good at reflecting the Sun's warming light back into space but, when it melts, the dark ocean uncovered absorbs this heat. This leads to more melting.

Tundra: The high north is warming particularly fast, melting the permafrost that has locked up vast amounts of carbon in soils for thousands of years. Bacteria digesting the unfrozen soils generate methane, a potent greenhouse gas, leading to more warming.

Gas hydrates: Also involving methane, this tipping point involves huge reservoirs of methane frozen on or just below the ocean floor. The methane-water crystals are close to their melting point and highly unstable. A huge release could be triggered by a little warming.

West Antarctic ice sheet: Some scientists think this enormous ice sheet, much of which is below sea level, is vulnerable to small amounts of warming. If it all eventually melted, the sea level would rise by six metres.— © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2011

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Ban on export of non-basmati rice, 'rose' onion partly lifted

Gargi Parsai

Farmers were badly hit by crash in wholesale prices

Barring the 'rose' variety, ban on onion will continue: Anand Sharma Pawar for opening up exports of non-basmati rice, onion, sugar, cotton

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Wednesday decided to partially lift the three-year-old ban on export of non-basmati rice and also allowed export of a particular variety of onion grown in Karnataka.

The Department of Food will prepare a detailed report on the production, consumption and

prices of onion to enable the government to take a further view on lifting the ban on export of regular onion in the face of protests by Nashik onion growers against the crash in wholesale prices.

Onion export was banned in December after the domestic prices shot up to Rs.60-70 in most retail markets due to shortfall in early kharif supplies. For now, permission has been given for export of the 'rose' variety grown in Karnataka and which is not consumed much domestically. It is exported normally to Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

These decisions were taken in the meeting of the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) on Food chaired by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee here on Wednesday. Bowing to overwhelming demand from rice-growers in southern States, the EGoM allowed export of three varieties of non-basmati rice grown but after imposing quantitative restriction and setting a minimum export price.

So far, only 1.50 lakh tonnes of the Sona Masuri, Rosematta and Ponni Samba variety of rice grown in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have been allowed for export.

"Ban on export of onion will continue," Commerce Minister Anand Sharma told journalists after the meeting. "Ban will continue. Only the Rose variety, grown in Karnataka and not consumed domestically, has been allowed to be exported," Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said as he emerged from the meeting.

Earlier, addressing a press conference to announce the bumper production of wheat, pulses and cotton, Mr. Pawar has said that he favoured opening up exports of non-basmati rice, onion, sugar and cotton to protect the interest of farmers.

Cap on quantity

"Farmers are raising concern that prices of some commodities are going down. Generally it is felt that export should be allowed with cap on quantity. Let the Commerce Ministry and others assess the situation," he said.

Mr. Pawar pointed out that onion output was likely to be lower at 12.2 million tonnes this year against 13.6 million tonnes last year but still the output would be sufficient to meet

domestic requirement.

With expectations of higher sugar output this year exceeding internal demand, he said there were concerns that sugarcane arrears might rise. The international market was favourable for sugar exports, but one will have to think of how to protect the interests of the consumers first before allowing sugar exports, he added.

A decision of the Food Ministry to allow export of five lakh tonnes of sugar from this year's production has been put on hold and was to have been considered in the EGoM. But the issue did not come up for discussion.

On the rising milk prices, Mr. Pawar said the government had decided to import 25,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder to augment availability during the upcoming lean season.

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Crop loss: Central team visits affected mandals

Staff Reporter

KAKINADA: The five-member inter-ministerial Central team visited Pithapuram and Gollaprolu mandals on Wednesday to assess the loss incurred to farmers due to the heavy rain that lashed the district in December last. After visiting a photo exhibition and power-point presentation on the impact of the rain and cyclone, members of the team left for Pithapuram.

Accompanied by the revenue officials, the team members visited Eleru canal ring bund, Tatiparthi, Chebrolu, Pithapuram and Uppada before leaving for Visakhapatnam. Joint Director of the Directorate of Jute Development N.M. Kolatkar, deputy advisor to the Planning Commission Rajpal Singh, Executive Engineer of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways A. Krishna Prasad, Director of the NGNY Jagadeesh Singh and Managing Director of the State Beverages Corporation M. Subrahmanyam formed part of the team.

Job mela

To recruit technical support officers, Genpact Company is conducting a job mela at Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Management and Science near Sarpavaram junction on February 12. Final year students of graduation are eligible to appear for the interview. Further details can be had on phone number 99512-20577, a press release said.

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Rose onion farmers submit memorandum

Special Correspondent

CHICKBALLAPUR: Union Minister for Law and Justice M. Veerappa Moily on Wednesday said that the Union Government would consider revoking the ban on export of rose onions.

The Minister held out an assurance to rose onion growers who staged a demonstration here and urged the Union Government to lift the ban on export of rose onions.

Mr. Moily said that he would take up the matter with Union Commerce Minister and Union Finance Minister and bring to their notice the plight of rose onion farmers.

The farmers, in a memorandum submitted to the Minister, said that this particular variety of onion was grown in several hectares in Chickballapur district. Most of the rose onions grown here are exported.

Scheme to boost paddy cultivation

Staff Reporter

District panchayat to spend 30% fund in primary sector

Panchayat-level farming clusters to be set up Agro-labour bank to be formed in panchayats

Kozhikode: The district panchayat will launch a farm project titled Noorumeni in the new financial year for the promotion of paddy cultivation.

The project, to be taken up with the support of block and grama panchayats, will be announced formally during the presentation of 2011-2012 budget of the district panchayat. The plan is to introduce farming in 2,000 hectares of land, anticipating a production of 6,500 tonnes of paddy. Nearly 500 hectares of barren land will be converted to cultivable land.

Addressing a development seminar here on Wednesday, district panchayat president K. Jameela said nearly 30 per cent of the total development fund would be spent on the primary sector. In the 2011-12 financial year, the district panchayat expected a total revenue earning of Rs.27.98 crore, including the development fund and maintenance grant from the State fund, she said.

“Under the Noorumeni scheme, the district panchayat plans to encourage paddy farming in at least 10 acres of land in every grama panchayat. Formation of panchayat-level farming clusters are also envisaged for the procurement and profitable marketing of agricultural produce,” she said.

An agro-labour bank, comprising 50 labourers, would be formed in every grama panchayat to address the labour shortage.

The district panchayat will take up a Rs.30- lakh scheme, Samraksha, for differently abled students. A monthly scholarship ranging between Rs.300 to Rs.1,000 will be extended to the students up to the postgraduate level.

Public education

For public education, the district panchayat will spend Rs.4 crore. The fund will be utilised mainly for strengthening the activities of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme, Vijayotsavam comprehensive education programme, counselling facilities and the existing infrastructure of selected schools. New mini-industrial units are also planned by the district

panchayat with an estimated investment of Rs.75 lakh. The proposal includes the setting up of new footwear manufacturing units, fashion designing centres, small-scale weaving units and pottery-making units.

Rural roads

For the empowerment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the district panchayat will earmark Rs.7.72 crore in the 2011-12 budget. It will also set apart Rs.9 crore for the development of 52 selected rural roads.

Mayor A.K. Premajam inaugurated the development seminar, which was attended by heads of various panchayats. Standing committee chairperson T.K. Thankamani presented the development plan.

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Seminar on commercial cultivation of amla in South India

Special Correspondent

SALEM: Anola Growers Association of India will organise a seminar 'Silver Jubilee of Commercial Cultivation of Amla in South India', here at the Yercaud foothills on February 13.

A press release from its president S.S. Mehta said the objective of the seminar was to review what had happened in the past 25 years of Anola growing and focus on the future needs of cultivation, harvest, marketing, processing etc. Bureaucrats, growers, traders and processors from all over South India would sit and discuss the issues, he added. Further details can be had through phone number 0427 2448130. The e-mail id is amlagrowers@gmail.com

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Arctic fisheries catch grossly understated

H. Vibhu



Fisheries catches in the Arctic during 1950-2006 (950,000 tonnes) is almost 75 times the amount reported to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization during this period.

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FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Project that brought many farmers out of debts

M.J. PRABU

In 2-3 years after implementation, money generation was seen

- Photo: Special Arrangement



Different approach:David Raja Beula (right) along with a dryland farmer in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.

Melaneelithanallur village in Tirunelveli district is bone dry most of the year. Lack of water for crops over the years turned the soil into dry wastelands, considered unfit for use.

“Until a few years ago, almost all the farmers in the region wallowed in debt and poverty. Many households lacked even proper metal utensils for cooking as the inhabitants used to pawn them for money.

“If it rained, the men used to work for 2-3 months; for the rest of the year they remained idle. But all this changed after Nellai David's micro economic model was implemented to generate some income for them,” says Mr. David Raja Beula, Assistant Director of Horticulture, Kadayam, Tirunelveli, who took on the responsibility to interact with and bring all the farmers under this project.

Primary aim

“We developed the model based on a study of the flora and fauna of the area, water source, ecological balance, environmental soundness, and the market situation. The project primarily aims to relieve the rural poor from the clutches of poverty.” says Mr. David.

Under the project one hundred bore wells and hand pumps were sunk, several hundred cashew trees planted and farmers encouraged to grow crops such as blackgram, greengram and cowpea (that do not require much water) in addition to rearing some farm animals. In 2-3 years after the implementation almost all the farmers started seeing the benefits in terms of money generation.

Says Mr. Sendhil, a 10 acre farmer:

“I used to get about Rs. 30,000 a year previously, but today I earn Rs. 35,000 from my 100 cashew trees, Rs.32,000 from blackgram, greengram and cowpea in nine acres. The fodder from the crops is used as feed for my three cows which generate Rs.30, 000 as net return annually.”

Net profit

The farmer also maintains ten thousand broiler chicks. The chicks develop into marketable

size in two months thereby repeating the process for six times in a year, enabling a net profit of Rs 2,40,000.

The farm yard and poultry manure are applied to the fields. The farmer earned a overall profit of Rs. 3,37,000 in a year and also formed a milk producers' cooperative society. "Initially we found it a little hard to convince the farmers that this project will benefit them. Many laughed it off. I realized that to convince farmers, more than all the talk, proof is necessary. Farmers in general tend to believe what they see and experience firsthand rather than rely on some body talking.

Convincing others

"And Mr. Sendhil fitted the requirement perfectly. I tried to implement everything in his 10 acre land and also prepared him to interact and convince others. And today several farmers are seeing the benefit themselves," says a smiling Mr. David.

He further adds, "Income generation alone can sustain our country's agriculture. Unless farmers are assured of getting some good income from crops their interest cannot be sustained in their profession. In terms of production, our farmers can do a good job, but what is required now is getting a good price and an assured market."

"The recent price rise on several food items, apart from affecting the consumers, also leaves a debilitating impact on the already fragile farming economy. A farmer is just not bothered what the government plans are or what it intends to do for them.

Affordability

"For him it is affordability in terms of raising the crops. A farmer's life is an endless struggle for survival. A farmer finds the financial tides drowning him in debts. Several past and present governments introduced numerous development and financial schemes saying farmers will be benefited but the problems for a small farmer still remain the same. Why? " he asks angrily.

Interested readers can contact Mr. David over mobile 9486285704 or through email: microeconomicsdavid@yahoo.co.in for visiting the village and getting a first hand

information about the project.

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Management of coffee berry borer

Coffee berry borer attack in Arabica and Robusta plantations starts from the field on developing berries and the infestation is carried over to storage with drying beans. Black coloured female beetles bore into the berries and lay about 15 eggs each.

The larvae feed on the beans making small tunnels. A typical pin hole at the tip of the berries (navel region) indicates the presence of the pest.

Young as well as ripe berries are attacked by this insect. Infested tender berries may fall due to injury or secondary infection by fungi.

In case of severe infestations, 30-80 per cent of berries may be affected resulting in heavy yield loss. Under storage infestations, the beetles eat away the bean content and make the produce a powdery mass.

Life history

Adult beetles are dark brown in colour. About 10-15 eggs are laid in the chambers made inside a coffee bean. Each female can lay around 50 eggs over a period of 3-7 weeks.

Larval period ranges from 15-18 days and pupal for about a week. The males are incapable of flight as they are wingless.

Females leave the berries and after mating continue to infest on healthy berries. The infestation is carried over between peak of fruiting by breeding in overripe berries left on the tree or fallen on the ground.

Management practices

— Harvest the crop on time. Collect and destroy the left over berries. Spread gunny cloth

or polythene sheets as picking mats on the ground to minimize gleanings.

— Soak the infested beans in boiling water for 1-2 minutes to kill insect stages. Heavily infested and fallen berries should be collected and destroyed.

— Regulate optimum shade by lopping the shade trees.

— Use bio control agents such as white muscardine fungus, under high humid conditions.

— Spray endosulfan at 340ml/200 ml of water or quinalphos 0.02 per cent along with 200 ml of wetting agent when most of the beetles are still in the pulp before entering into the beans.

— Use only fumigated gunny bags to avoid cross infestation. Red coloured multi-funnel traps with red berry effluvia as attractant have been found to attract adults of coffee berry borer.

J. JAYARAJ & S. Manisegaran ,*Agricultural College and Research Institute Madurai*

Date:10/02/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/02/10/stories/2011021050221700.htm>

FARM QUERY

Making own bio inputs

Is there any place in Bangalore that provides training for women Self Help groups in making their own bio inputs?

P. Rajeevan, Bangalore

You can contact Dr. M. Shivamurthy, Principal Investigator & Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Gandhi Krishi Vigyan Kendra (GKVK), campus, Bangalore-560 065, email: murudaiah.shivamurthy@ gmail.com and mobile: 09449044975 for details regarding the same.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Thursday, Feb 10

Max Min
31.3° | 19.5°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 65%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:33

Sunset: 18:12

Barometer: 1008.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Feb 11

Max Min
31° | 20°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Feb 12	Sunday Feb 13	Monday Feb 14	Tuesday Feb 15	Wednesday Feb 16
28° 18° Cloudy	27° 20° Cloudy	27° 19° Cloudy	27° 20° Cloudy	27° 21° Rainy

10 Feb, 2011, 07.26AM IST, Jayashree Bhosale,ET Bureau

Wholesale onion prices now crash below Rs 5/kg

PUNE: Growers pelted onions at the Lasalgaon market on Wednesday, bringing to halt transactions at the local agriculture produce marketing committee (APMC), the largest onion market in Asia, because the wholesale prices crashed below Rs 5/kg.

Farmers have been protesting in various onion-growing regions of Maharashtra since last week demanding the restart of exports.

The Union government banned outward shipment of the vegetable in the third week of December when retail prices shot up close to Rs 80/kg. The prices had risen due to unseasonal rains in Nashik and other onion-growing regions. Prices were up 112% by January end from a year ago, contributing substantially to food inflation.

With a ban on exports and fresh supplies following the recent harvest, prices have crashed over the past few weeks. The average wholesale prices were in the range of Rs 8/kg and Rs 10/kg in major onion-growing markets in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka last week. Retail prices are, however, still in the range of Rs 20/kg for quality tubers.

“Onion prices were falling by Rs 1/kg to Rs 2/kg every day with the ever-growing arrivals. But today, they crashed to below Rs 5/kg,” said Lasalgaon APMC chairman Jaydutta Holkar. “Farmers are simmering with anger. The reverse trend in onion prices can’t stop unless the government allows exports,” he added.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) vice president CB Holkar said the Union government had not called for any meeting to review the exports. “The production cost of onion has gone up to `1,000/quintal this year. If farmers get `500/quintal, then their unrest is obvious,” he said.

Though the current prices are generally following the usual trend, farmers are agitated mainly due to two reasons.

“First, they had to spend heavily to save the plants from pest attacks on the early-sown rabi crop caused by the unseasonal rainfall,” said Chetan Desle, a farmer from Pimpalgaon in Nashik district. “Second, onion growers were used to the high price of Rs 20/kg to Rs 30/kg, which have now suddenly dropped to Rs 11/kg to Rs 12/kg for the best quality crop,” he added.

However, trade veterans say that it will take at least another week for the supplies to reach good volumes.

A leading onion exporter from Maharashtra said on condition of anonymity, “If a decision to export is taken at this moment, then the prices will go up by at least Rs 5/kg.”

10 Feb, 2011, 05.11AM IST, Deepshikha Sikarwar,ET Bureau

Technology & action plan boosts pulses growth

NEW DELHI: The country is set to reap a bumper crop of pulses, with domestic production expected to cross 16.5 million tonne this year, thanks to an action plan to make India self-sufficient in the commodity.

“It’s a result of use of improved technology, better quality seeds and use of micronutrients,” said leading space scientist and Planning Commission member K Kasturirangan, the man behind the mission.

Higher incomes have increased the demand for pulses, but the domestic production has been unable to keep pace, making India susceptible to price pressures by countries that have a surplus. India produced 14.7 mt of pulses and imported 3.5 mt last year.

The production of pulses is caught in the 11-to-14mt zone since the mid-1990s depending

on the acreage, as the yield is stuck at about 600 kgs a hectare.

Over the last five years, the price of pulses, as measured by the wholesale price index, has risen at a compounded average rate of 11.5%, nearly double the general rise in prices. Prices of one of the most popular variety, arhar or tur, had shot up to over 100 a kg last year.

Working closely with pulses growing states-Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra-Kasturirangan and his colleague at the Planning Commission, Saumitra Chaudhury, have prepared short-term and medium-term plan. The plan for 2010-11 focused on availability of inputs and certified seeds, building farm ponds and other water harvesting structures and introducing sprinkler irrigation. It also sought to assure farmers of a support price. Although the government announces a minimum support price for pulses, but without effective procurement it remains a paper promise.

The strategy has yielded results, with area under pulses in the ongoing rabi season rising by more than a million hectares from a year ago. In the kharif season, the acreage was up 1.8 m ha. "Under improved conditions, the yield of pluses can rise from 600 kg per ha to 1500-2000 kg per ha," the paper on work-plan for pulses said.

The long-term strategy proposals include formation of pulses zones, increased mechanisation, and extension of pulses to newer areas. It has also called for scaling up use of bio-pesticides and bio-fertilisers, and an improvement in seed replacement rate. The action plan also suggested providing dal mills to village entrepreneurs through existing system of purchase and credit.

10 Feb, 2011, 02.49AM IST, Sutanuka Ghosal & Debasis Sarkar,ET Bureau

GJM cause violence in Darjeeling tea gardens

KOLKATA | SILIGURI: It's SOS time for Darjeeling tea. Some 4 million kg of the world's

best tea is in danger of getting irretrievably damaged. As chaos engulfs the serene hill tracts and platoons of men in fatigues battle frenzied supporters of the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) since Tuesday afternoon, everything on the hills has come to a complete standstill, including work at the famous Darjeeling tea gardens.

February is usually the time when planters are all up in the hills to ensure the soil in the gardens is treated properly and bushes correctly pruned as per the standard preparatory protocol at this time of the year. The world's most famous first-flush tea is just round the corner in March, and everything depends on the garden maintenance work done now. And what's the numbers you are talking about? Some Rs 12,000 a kg!

This February, the frenzy is more intense. Year 2010 was bad as a drought led to poor crop. Every penny was thrown into the hat this time. The weather was just perfect and planters were hoping to recover the losses they had suffered last year.

GJM played spoilsport

But the planters didn't waver for the swelling insensitive hordes of GJM, for whom neither tea nor coffee matters. Political agitations are economy-insensitive, and the West Bengal government or the centre haven't actually taken the bull by the horns all these years. As 'khukris' slash and bullets fly, Darjeeling planters are offering their most fervent prayers, hoping the situation gets resolved soon.

Home Minister P Chidambaram's assurance to West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee about provision of additional security forces to deal with the violence in the hills isn't actually a comfort for the planters because more security forces could also mean more trouble, more indefinite strikes and more unrest in general. Darjeeling produces about 10 million kg of tea. Of this, nearly 5 million kg comprises the first and second flush variety which fetch the maximum revenue to Darjeeling tea companies.

The rest 5 million kg is rains tea, which is generally not accepted in the world market. Over the past few years, the Darjeeling tea industry has been trying its best to market these teas domestically and gradually Darjeeling tea is being liked by tea drinkers. It has been an uphill task for the industry as Indians mostly like CTC teas which have a 'strong kick'.

“2010 was a bad year for Darjeeling tea, which got mauled by the drought, and production had gone down to 8 million kg, the lowest since Independence. If Darjeeling takes a hit for the second year running, it is likely to become uneconomical. If this time too we fail to produce premium first-flush tea then our exports will suffer,” said Sanjay Bansal, chairman of Ambootia Group, the second-largest Darjeeling tea producing company.

So what, said HB Chhetri, strategist and spokesperson of Bimal Gurung's GJM. In a one-on-one with ET, Chhetri said: “After Tuesday's incident, everything is fluid. We don't know yet how things will transpire. Personally, I feel we should block all revenue-earning avenues for the government from these hills. We have not yet decided which ones to target. Our central committee will take a final call.”

The utterance was enough to send shivers down the spines of Darjeeling planters on Wednesday. To what extent the Rs 200-crore odd revenue that the West Bengal government gets from tea would matter if the revenue stream really dried up due to the Gorkhaland agitation is not known, but garden owners would be in utter doldrums if activity in their gardens were to stop entirely.

Rajah Banerjee, owner of the world famous Makaibari Tea Estate, lamented that GJM has escalated the agitation at a time when Darjeeling tea industry was on the road to recovery. “If the standard agricultural practices required during this time are delayed, it will seriously impact production of first-flush tea. This is turning uneconomical for the industry. And if this

condition continues, then it will be difficult for the Darjeeling tea industry to produce quality teas for export markets.”

“Not only that, it will also impact local people, who largely depend on tea for their livelihood. Strangely enough, everybody is watching the situation and no concrete step has yet been taken to put an end to it on a permanent basis,” Banerjee rued. There are 87 tea estates in Darjeeling which provide employment to over one lakh people. But the likes of Chhetri cannot be bothered too much. “Normally we do not invite any trouble for the tea industry. But things are different now. This time, tea estates are also very much within the bandh. We know it is difficult for poor workers. But people are ready to sacrifice for a greater cause.” The question is, do they have a choice?

Samir Roy, national secretary of Hind Mazdoor Sabha and the convenor of the Defence Committee of Plantation Workers’ Rights, an apex body of tea trade unions, said: “First-flush produce is very important for both gardens and workers. It is unfortunate that ultimately tea workers will be victimised. We appeal to GJM leaders to spare tea gardens.”

10 Feb, 2011, 01.59AM IST, PK Krishnakumar & S Sanandakumar,ET Bureau

Spices sizzle on bad weather

KOCHI: This season, the prices of all major spices across the country have soared, encouraging more people to take up spice cultivation. “The high prices have benefited the growers of annual crops such as turmeric, ginger, chillies and cumin . This has already resulted in an increase in the acreage of several of these spice crops,” said Geemon Korah, chairman of All India Spices Exporters Forum.

The bullish trend visible in cardamom and pepper in the previous season has continued in the current season as well. A combination of factors such as irregular weather, low carry-

over stock, poor production and high demand has triggered the unprecedented increase in the prices.

Cardamom, which touched Rs 1,600 per kg in January — close to its peak price of Rs 1,700 achieved last year — has been seeing an addition in acreage in the last couple of years. “The total acreage in the main cardamom-growing district of Idukki is around 33,000 hectare. It should be nearer to 40,000 hectare now though there are no official estimates on this,” said KK Devassia, secretary of Cardamom Growers Association.

Black pepper growers in the country have been enjoying the benefit of higher prices throughout the last year. A lower production and a steady demand in the domestic market are major reasons for the better price. With Vietnam shipping out most of its pepper crop early in the year, there was a renewed interest in Indian pepper in the importing countries.

The prices had increased to Rs 153 per kg by April 2010 and stood at Rs 225 per kg in the first week of February 2011.

Speaking to ET, Jojan Malayil, former vice president of the All India Spice Exporters Forum, said: “The production is likely to be lower than the earlier estimate of 48,000 tonne by at least 3,000-4,000 tonne.”

A delay in harvest and a shortfall in production are driving the chilli prices up to historic levels. The spot price is at Rs 97 per kg now. The futures contract for March delivery is ruling at Rs 109 per kg. “The supplies are slow and the carry-over stock is almost nil. In this circumstances, the prices may not cool down immediately,” said Shailesh Shah, director of exporting company, Jabs International.

Jeera prices are at Rs 147 per kg now. After touching Rs 159 per kg early in the season, the prices went into a correction mode. But with the inventory getting depleted, the prices

are going up again. Shah said the prices will continue to show a firm trend as the production is expected to be similar to the last year's level of 25 lakh bags (each bag of 55 kg). In jeera too, land under cultivation in Rajasthan and Gujarat has gone up.

Turmeric prices too had touched a new high of Rs 165 per kg in the current season, before slipping to the present level of below Rs 120 per kg. According to Erode-based merchant Vishwanathan, there has been an around 10% increase in area under turmeric cultivation in Erode.

Poor production has led to a higher price in the case of ginger too. Prices ruled at a high of Rs 225 per kg till January. During the same period last year, the prices were at around Rs 135 to Rs 140 per kg. The new crop season, which is slightly delayed this year, started in December. Supplies, especially from Karnataka, reached a peak three weeks ago and the prices have since then dropped to Rs 140 per kg. The Spices Board official pointed out that production has been declining for the past few years. Better prices would lead to a higher production.

Nutmeg growers have also enjoyed better prices in the recent period despite the fact that area and production have been increasing. The prices are at present ruling at around Rs 600 per kg and Rs 650 per kg for nutmeg, which is 30% higher than last year's, said a Spices Board official. "There is a slight drop in prices now due to the withdrawal of benefits under Vishesh Krishi Upaj Yojana by the government," said Anand Kishor of Kishor Spices.



Food security for State! Atal Khadyanna Yojna from Feb 11

February 10, 2011 11:03:16 AM

PNS | Dehradun

At a time the rising costs, especially of foodgrains, is causing hardships to the common people, the Uttarakhand Government is all set to launch the Atal Khadyanna Yojna from February 11 in order to ensure food security for the residents of the State.

As part of execution of this scheme initiated by Chief Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, those living below the fixed standard will be able to procure wheat at the rate of Rs 2 per kg and rice for Rs 3 per kg.

Uttarakhand Rural Health Advisory Council chairman Ajay Bhatt said that the Atal Khadyanna Yojna will not only prove to be a revolutionary programme aimed at ensuring food security in the State but also set an example for the Central Government and Governments of other States.

According to Bhatt, a provision has been made to provide relief to members of both the BPL and APL families in the form of cheap foodgrains under this scheme. The members of these families will be provided foodgrains at price substantially lower than the market price.

Under this facility, the members of APL families will be provided wheat and rice at the rate of Rs 4 and Rs 6 per kg respectively. Bhatt further informed that the execution of the Atal Khadyanna Yojna in Uttarakhand will be inaugurated on February 11 in Dehradun by BJP national president Nitin Gadkari and CM Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, whereas it will be inaugurated in all the district headquarters by the respective Ministers in-charge of the districts. According to Bhatt, an action plan has been drafted and the responsibility of officials has been affixed in order to ensure the successful execution of this scheme.

As per the provisions of the action plan, the Indian Food Corporation will facilitate the supply of the monthly foodgrain consignment to the divisional food controller one month in advance. The

divisional food controller and district supply officer will procure this food grains stock from the IFC and ensure its transportation to the base godown and other stores by the 20th day of the same month.

Farmers worst sufferers in power-deficit State

February 10, 2011 11:03:20 AM

Rajendra S Markuna | Haldwani

Increasing demand for electricity causing huge power shortage seems to have come as a major cause of concern for the State Government.

More so, unscheduled load-shedding has only affected the normal life. The farmers are the worst sufferers.

The interesting fact is that the demand for power which was around 25 million unit per day during the peak winter season previous year, now has gone about 30 million unit during the same period this year.

However, the only consolation for the State power department is that the indigenous power generation which used to remain even below five million unit during the peak winter season till last year when the water flow on the rivers remains minimum is stable around 9 million unit.

Yet, there is a huge power deficit in the State. Whereas the availability of electricity in the State is only around 20 million unit — 9.50 million unit from the indigenous sources and about 10.50 million unit from the Central pool — the demand for the same as mentioned above is hovering around 30 million unit.

To meet the gap between demand and supply, though the State electricity department is purchasing power from some other sources, these arrangements have not been suffice to meet

the shortage of the power.

Presently, we are purchasing about 4.6 million unit from a private power company and getting 1.05 million unit from neighbouring UP under the power banking agreement, informed the power department officials while talking to The Pioneer.

At the same time, the concerned sources further informed, to meet the rest of the shortfall, the department has to overdraw from the Central pool about 2.50 million unit. More so, if need be we have to conduct load-shedding, sources said.

However, there is a lot of disappointment among the locals over unscheduled load-shedding of electricity. This occasional power cuts have not only affected normal life but also functioning of small time entrepreneurs. The farmers are equally disturbed with shortage of power. As the cane sowing season has begun, there is urgent need of electricity. With low possibility of rain during this period, smooth electricity supply is a must for irrigation purposes.

Business Standard

Thursday, Feb 10, 2011

Natural rubber production rises marginally

George Joseph / Kochi February 10, 2011, 0:59 IST

Natural rubber (NR) production increased 2.8 per cent between April 2010 and January 2011. According to provisional estimates by the Rubber Board, the consumption of rubber grew 1.8 per cent, a marginal increase compared to 1.6 per cent in the April-December period.

Interestingly, the consumption of natural rubber took a U-turn in January, with a 1.3 per cent increase as compared to the negative growth of 1.3 per cent in December. In January, the consumption increased to 81,000 tonnes as against 77,500 tonnes in December 2010.

Production in January increased to 98,800 tonnes as against 97,500 tonnes in the same month of last year, registering a growth of 1.3 per cent. Cumulative production in April–January period increased to 7,49,950 tonnes as against 7,29,250 tonnes in the same period of last financial year.

During the same period, consumption increased to 7,89,230 tonnes as against 775,565 tones in the same period of last financial year.

Guar Gum prices rise on strong export demand

Sharleen D'Souza / Mumbai February 10, 2011, 0:56 IST

Guar gum prices have risen 70 per cent since October due to strong export demand. Prices jumped 70 per cent to Rs 8,200 a quintal from Rs 4,838.1 a quintal, which existed on October 1, 2010.

Prices of Guar seed also rose 35 per cent to Rs 2,762.7 a quintal from Rs 2,002.9 a quintal.

Demand for Guar gum has risen considerably due to the strong demand from the oil exploration industry, said Vineeta Advani, an analyst with Ventura Commodities.

Gum is used as an adhesive during oil exploration. It is also used by the food and textile industry.

Pakistan, Sudan and India are the only countries that produce Guar gum. Guar seed is the basic raw material that is required for producing it.

Due to the floods in Pakistan, a large portion of the crop got damaged, and political tension in Sudan made it difficult for importers to import Guar gum from there; thus leaving India as the only dependable option.

The year's carry-over stock of 2.5 lakh tonnes, was the lowest in ten years, Biren Vakil said.

Also, the market is rediscovering the price of Guar gum, which is also pushing the prices of this commodity higher.

According to the market insiders, the Guar prices have surged due to factors like increased demand and reduced arrivals in mandis.

“Currently arrival is very thin at 5-10 bags (a bag = 100 kg). The demand is constantly rising and the supply is limited mainly due to untimely rains in November-December,” said an official at the agricultural product marketing committee at Himmatnagar.

The Guar prices are ruling at Rs 450 -500 per 20 kg, which is up by at least Rs 50 per 20 kg during the past 15 days. In Gujarat, Guar trading is seen mostly in APMCs located in Talod, Prantij and Himmatnagar in Sabar Kantha district of the state. Market insiders feel a further rise in prices as arrivals at the mandis continue to remain low and demand has been rising constantly.

(With inputs from Ahmadabad)

Pawar projects bumper grain harvest, bats for sugar exports

Reuters / New Delhi February 10, 2011, 0:54 IST

Government expects food prices to fall, easing inflation concerns.

India may harvest its second highest amount ever of food grains in 2010-11, including a record 81.47 million tonnes (mt) of wheat, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said today, which could help the government rein in food inflation.

The cost of food for families has soared 17 per cent over the past year, latest data showed, boosted most recently by gains in onions and other everyday vegetables as harvests are hit by unseasonal rains.

FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION					
		2009-	2010-	Growth in	
	2008-09	10	11	2009-	2010-11

				10	
Foodgrains	234.47	218.11	232.07	-6.98	6.40
Rice	99.18	89.13	94.01	-10.13	5.48
Wheat	80.68	80.71	81.47	0.04	0.94
Coarse cereals	40.03	33.77	40.08	-15.64	18.69
Maize	19.73	12.00	20.03	-39.18	66.92
Pulses	14.57	14.59	16.51	0.14	13.16
Tur	2.27	2.55	3.18	12.33	24.71
Urad	1.17	1.25	1.45	6.84	16.00
Moong	1.04	0.73	1.12	-29.81	53.42
Oilseeds	27.72	24.93	27.85	-10.06	11.71
Soyabean	9.91	10.05	10.47	1.41	4.18
Groundnut	7.17	5.51	6.81	-23.15	23.59
Cotton *	22.28	23.94	33.93	7.45	41.73
all figures in million tonnes					

The country is likely to harvest 232.07 mt grains in 2010-11, sharply higher than the 218.11 mt produced a year ago, Pawar said, when a severe drought hit India's crops. Output hit a record of 234.47 million tonnes in 2008/09.

"We succeeded in raising grain production because of higher support prices," Pawar said, highlighting a sharp rise in the level set by the government as a minimum for rice and wheat in the past few years.

India, the world's second-biggest producer of wheat, plants the grain from October and harvests from March.

The production of winter-sown oilseeds is likely to rise by 5.5 per cent on a year ago to 9.6 mt, while lentil output will rise by 12.6 per cent to a record high of 16.51 mt, a statement from the agriculture ministry said.

Output of rapeseed, the main winter oilseed crop, is expected to rise to 7.4 mt in 2011 against 6.6 mt in the previous year.

Pawar said the government should adopt a liberal approach in deciding on exports of food grains and vegetables. He stressed the need of exports of sugar to support local farmers and mills – a key concern in the farm portfolio.

“After protecting domestic consumers’ interest, one can think about sugar exports. Cane areas are rising and farmers are demanding exports to be allowed,” he said.

The country has flip-flopped on sugar exports. In December, Pawar said mills could export 500,000 tonnes of sugar under Open General Licence (OGL). But the government, bowing to public pressure over food prices, has referred the issue to a panel of ministers, which is yet to make a decision.

The government should allow exports of onions and adopt a more friendly policy in exports of premium grade rice like basmati that middle and lower-middle class consumers don't consume, Pawar said.

Rains help temperature stabilise for rabi

BS Reporter / New Delhi February 10, 2011, 0:23 IST

The rains which lashed parts of Punjab and Haryana on the evening of February 7 are considered to be good for rabi crops. The rains, besides helping in irrigating the fields, required for rabi crops also has resulted in stabilising the temperatures, both maximum and minimum.

According to the agriculture officials, temperature either too high or too low are considered critical for the rabi crop especially wheat as chances of pest attack brightens. According to the meteorological department, about 2.6 mm rainfall was registered in Chandigarh while Ambala received 13.9 mm rainfall, Karnal (12.4 mm), Amritsar (12.5 mm) and Ludhiana (7.5 mm). In addition to wheat the benefits of rains are likely to accrue on other rabi crops like mustard and gram.

Tea output at a five-year low, may drive prices

Bloomberg / Mumbai February 10, 2011, 0:01 IST

Tea production in India, the world's biggest grower after China, dropped to the lowest level in five years after pests damaged crops in the nation's main growing region, boosting speculation prices may gain.

Output dropped 1.3 per cent to 966,400 tonnes, the lowest since 2005, the state-owned Tea Board of India said on its website. Production in north India, which accounts for more than 70 per cent of the country's harvest, fell 1.6 per cent to 723,000 tonnes, it said.

Lower output may fuel food inflation in India, which is at the highest level in a month, and cut tea inventories, pushing up costs for companies including Hindustan Unilever Ltd. and Tata Global Beverages, owner of Tetley brands. Higher prices may boost profits at Indian producers including McLeod Russel India Ltd. and Jayshree Tea & Industries Ltd.

"The decline in production and rising consumption will deplete inventories and that's certain to push up prices," said Anup Ranadive, an analyst with Tower Capital & Securities Ltd.

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India set for record wheat, pulses & maize output



The challenges of the new era of differential subsidies will have to be met by skilful management of rice and wheat procurement and MSP systems.(file photo)

New Delhi, Feb. 9:

In what could perhaps have some softening impact on runaway food inflation, the country will produce record levels of wheat, pulses, cotton and maize this year.

According to the second advance estimates of crop output for 2010-11, released by the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, here on Wednesday, a record 81.47 million tonnes (mt) of wheat is expected to be harvested this time. That makes it the third successive year of over 80 mt of grain production, which will start arriving in the markets from next month.

New highs

Even more significant is the pulses output, which, for the first time, will cross the 15-mt mark and touch 16.51 mt. Likewise, production of maize (which, along with cotton, has been one of the success stories in the last decade) is estimated at 20.03 mt, thereby scaling the 20-mt barrier.

Cotton, too, will see an unprecedented output of 339.27 lakh bales, though this is partly a result of a change in estimation methods. The Agriculture Ministry's figures have traditionally been lower than that of the Cotton Advisory Board (CAB). The revised methodology has meant that Krishi Bhawan's estimate of 339.27 lakh bales for 2010-11 is higher than the CAB's 329 lakh bales.

Apart from these major crops, production of tur (arhar or pigeon-pea) and sesamum are also reckoned to touch new highs of 3.18 mt and 0.83 mt, respectively.

The other notable news is in sugarcane, where the Ministry has revised upwards the size of the 2010-11 crop to 336.698 mt, from the 324.912 mt in the first advance estimate. Whether this would translate into higher sugar production ? relative to the current official estimate of 245 lakh tonnes ? is to be seen.

Total output

Speaking to newsmen, Mr Pawar said that the total foodgrain output of 232.07 mt for this year would be only marginally below the 234.47 mt achieved in 2008-09.

?Such a high level of production will be achieved despite significant crop damage due to widespread drought in Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal and the effects of cyclones, un-seasonal heavy rains and severe cold wave and frost conditions in several parts of the country,? the Minister noted.

He claimed that the Centre's ?focussed interventions? through schemes such as the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, National Food Security Mission and Accelerated Pulses Production Programme had led to an overall ?rejuvenation? of the country's agriculture sector.

Rubber output rises 1.3% in Jan



Clones on cards: Rubber being collected from a rubber tree.

Kochi, Feb. 9:

Rubber production has grown marginally by 1.3 per cent in January to 98,800 tonnes as against 97,500 tonnes last year.

The absence of rains and conducive weather were reportedly the reasons behind the growth in production. However, the small growth in production has not been able to stem price rise.

Consumption also grew marginally in January to 81,000 tonnes. Rubber imports recorded a nominal growth during the month.

There is an acute shortage of skilled labour in the rubber holdings of the country, Mr N. Radhakrishnan, Advisor to the Cochin Rubber Merchants Association, said. This shortage is already afflicting the medium rubber holdings and could affect potential production. While small grower can take recourse to his in-house tapping skills, large estates can depend on their captive labour.

It is the medium holding of 20-200 acres that are often finding acute labour shortage. And this is expected to translate into lower production. The sheer growth in the number of rubber trees planted and the growth in number of trees tapped need not necessarily reflect into a spurt in production unless the labour shortage is addressed, Mr Radhakrishnan added.

Production for the April-January period was up 2.8 per cent at 7,49,950 tonnes (7,29,250 tonnes). The growth in consumption was just a notch lower at 1.8 per cent to 7,89,230 tonnes (7,75,565 tonnes). With the international prices often breaching the domestic prices, growth in rubber imports was also muted during the first 10 months of the current fiscal. Exports witnessed a deceleration during the period.

The Rubber Board figures paint a rosy picture about the stock of rubber available in the country at the end of January 2011. As against 2,91,530 tonnes of natural rubber available during last year, rubber stocks have grown to 3,27,115 tonnes at the end of January this year.

Rice sees a firm trend



Karnal, Feb. 9:

The rice market witnessed a steady trend on Wednesday. Prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice managed to maintain their previous levels.

Price of Pusa-1121 steam ruled at Rs 5,300-5,500 a quintal, Pusa-1121 sela quoted at Rs 4,300-4,470 and Pusa-1121 around Rs 5,300.

Basmati sela quoted at Rs 6,200-6,430 and basmati raw at Rs 7,300-7,450. Duplicate basmati ruled around Rs 4,030 a quintal. Prices of brokens of 1121 variety were: Tibar was quoted at Rs 3,000-3,400, Dubar at Rs 2,200-2,500 and Mongra at Rs 1,800-2,000.

Sharbati sela sold at around Rs 2,750-2,770 and Sharbati steam around Rs 3,000-3,230 a quintal. Permal sela sold at Rs 1,900-2,200, while Permal steam sold at Rs 2,100-2,270 a quintal. For the brokens of Sharbati variety, Tibar quoted at Rs 2,500, Dubar at 2,050 and Mongra, Rs 1,450. Around 1,800 bags of PR sold at Rs 1,000-1,020 a quintal. Around 1,000 bags of Pusa (duplicate basmati) quoted at Rs 2,000-2,060, around 3,000 bags of Pusa-1121 at Rs 2,000-2,330 and about 1,200 bags of pure basmati at Rs 2,200-2,520 a quintal.

Basmati rice export contracts have dipped by 10 per cent this year against last year. According to the All India Rice Exporters Association, export contracts have fallen by Rs 2,500 crore. This year's contracts are of around Rs 8,500 crore, against Rs 11,000 crore of last year.

Genetic engineering panel objects to Mahyco's weed trials in non-Bt cotton



Business Line A boll in the 135-day old Bt Cotton Hybrid Brahma BG-II raised by South India Cotton Association and Monsanto in Coimbatore for demonstration. (file photo): K. Ananthan

Hyderabad, Feb. 9:

The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) which works under the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests and regulates biotechnology initiatives in the farm sector has said there is no need to have the RRF (Round up Ready Flex) trait in refuge crop as non-transgenic hybrids could be used as refuge.

It took objection to Mahyco's reported trials to test RRF in non-Bt cotton seed in refuge crop. The committee discussed the issue after an expert member informed it about Mahyco's trials in this regard.

Show-cause notice

Asserting that planting of refuge with unapproved events cannot be allowed, it has decided to issue a show-cause notice to the Maharashtra company seeking an explanation on why penal action under the Environmental (Protection) Act should not be initiated against it for violations of Rules 1989.

The rules govern management of hazardous wastes.

Contentious method

RRF, which triggered a discussion in the country, is a technology that gives plants protection when herbicide is used to kill weeds in the fields. While it can kill weeds, herbicide cannot harm the RRF-protected plant.

Environmentalists have been arguing that RRF would be detrimental to friendly weeds too and warned that it could create an imbalance in the plant population.

At a recent meeting, GEAC took serious objection to the use of the RRF trait in seeds that are meant for refugia. RRF is an add-on to Bollgard-II, the second-generation biotechnology cotton technology developed by Monsanto and being marketed by Mahyco-Monsanto in India.

Mahyco had sought permission from the Committee to produce non Bt RRF seeds for use as refugia while planting transgenic cotton hybrids containing Bollgard II RRF.

“We have not approved RRF cotton hybrids for environmental release and therefore planting of refuge with unapproved events cannot be allowed. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all approvals have been obtained prior to initiating the trials.”

Company response

When contacted for its response, Mahyco said it had not received any communication from the GEAC on the issue.

“We have not received any show-cause notice as yet and we will respond once we receive the communication. Mahyco, being a responsible, law-abiding company, always works within the regulatory framework and has fully complied with the orders of the Government authorities,” a company spokesperson said.

Heavy inflow takes colour off turmeric



Erode, Feb. 9:

The prices of spot turmeric have decreased heavily in Regulated Marketing Committee at Erode on Wednesday. The prices of finger variety shown steady, but the root variety decreased in all markets. The finger variety decreased Rs 700 a quintal and root variety Rs 1,200. This sudden decrease has shocked the growers.

“Because of the two-day holiday for the Nizamabad market, the prices of turmeric are stable in Erode, but the root variety rates have decreased in all the four markets in Erode”, said Mr R.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said, “Within a month's time the turmeric price has decreased by Rs 5,000 a quintal for want of demand”.

He said the crop sold at Rs 16,000 a quintal on January 7, is now selling at Rs 11,000 a quintal. This is due to non-receipt of demand for the crop. Added to this, the new crop has started arriving to the market, the buyers quoted low prices.

He said that heavy stocks of more than 6,000 bags arrived at the market, but the sales were very poor. Only the bulk buyers purchasing for their orders only and not willing to stock the product.

In Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales Yard, finger variety was sold at Rs 8,611-12,811 a quintal, root variety Rs 8,100-11,489 a quintal.

Salem crop-finger variety was sold at Rs 12,450-13,119 a quintal, root variety Rs 11,517-12,395. Out of 2,689 bags arrival, 1,459 were sold.

In Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, finger variety was sold at Rs 9,496 to Rs 12,360 a quintal, root variety Rs 8,090-12,140 a quintal. All the 70 bags arrived were sold.

In Erode Cooperative marketing Society, finger variety fetched Rs 9,567-13,527 a quintal, root variety Rs 9,320-11,921 a quintal. 134 bags out of 193 bags arrived were sold.

In Regulated Marketing Committee, finger variety was sold at Rs 9,669-12,107 a quintal, root variety Rs 8,319-10,367 a quintal. Out of arrival of 362 bags, only 118 were sold.

Demand lifts groundnut, cottonseed oil

Rajkot, Feb. 9:

On the back of increasing demand, groundnut oil increased Rs 10 and cotton seed oil increased Rs 20 a tin, as cotton touched a new high in Gujarat.

At Rajkot Saurashtra, groundnut oil loose gained Rs 5 to Rs 750 for 10 kg, groundnut oil 15 kg new tin increased Rs 10 to Rs 1,300-1,305 on Wednesday. It increased by Rs 30 in the last nine days. Similarly, cotton seed oil also jumped Rs 20 to Rs 1,040-1,050 for 15 kg new tin. Cotton wash gained Rs 8 to Rs 605 to 608 for 10 kg. Cotton seed oil increased Rs 40 a tin this Month.

New brands

According to retailers, some demand comes in the groundnut oil during past few days.

Moreover, brands are also entering in the market. "Price may go forward more in coming days but it will be in limited range," said retailers.

Demand perking up

A Rajkot-based miller said, "Demand in cotton oil is normal but the oil is increasing slowly as cotton price is reaching to new high."

Cotton price reached Rs 55,000-56,000 per candy of 356 kg and raw cotton was traded at Rs 1,300 for 20 kg in Gujarat. It supports cotton seed oil to lift up.

Spot rubber turns weak

Kottayam, Feb. 9:

The physical rubber prices turned weak on Wednesday. The market slipped on buyer resistance reducing the gap between the domestic rubber futures on the NMCE. According to sources, there was selling from dealers but the volumes were dull. The trend was partially mixed as ISNR 20 remained flat and rather inactive.

Sheet rubber declined to Rs 235 (237) a kg according to dealers. The grade finished weak at Rs 235.50 (237) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi as quoted by the Rubber Board.

As per reports, global demand for natural and synthetic rubber will enhance by about 40 per cent to 33.9 million tonnes in 2020 driven by consumption in India and China. The world consumption may be around 24.3 million tonnes in 2010, 15.3 per cent higher than 2009, and it is expected to gain another 6.3 per cent in 2011.

Futures recover

RSS 4 recovered at its February series to Rs 234.75 (231.35), March to Rs 240.15 (236.93), April to Rs 249.15 (245.39) and May to Rs 252.47 (248.95) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

The volumes totalled 17322 lots and open interest 13665 lots. The turnover was Rs 415.39 crores.

RSS 3 (spot) firmed up further to Rs 278.08 (275.61) a kg at Bangkok. The February futures for RSS 3 improved to ¥507.5 (Rs 279.49) from ¥503 a kg during the day session and then to ¥512 (Rs 281.97) in the night session on then Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM).

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 235 (237); RSS-5: 225 (227); ungraded: 220 (221); ISNR 20: 231 (231) and latex 60 per cent: 150 (152).

'Unstable farm production delivering serious shocks'

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb. 9:

Instability in farm production is delivering serious shocks to supplies and farm income in the State, according to the Economic review 2010.

There is growing concern about increased volatility in farm production, prices and farm income.

The close linkage between the prices of primary commodities and the financial markets will make these prices highly volatile leading to instability in commodity markets, the Review noted.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Another source of instability is climate change and its implications, including increasing intensity and frequency of droughts and floods, altered hydrological cycles and precipitation trends.

The provisional estimate of agricultural income of the State recorded a slight increase of 2.75 per cent during 2008-09. For 2009-10, however, it was 0.25 per cent over the previous year.

The State, which has traditionally had an abysmally low capacity in terms of food production, is now facing serious challenges in retaining even this small base.

The agricultural economy is undergoing a structural transformation from the mid-70s through switchover of large proportion of its traditional crop area of subsistence crops to more remunerative cash crops.

ADVERSE CHANGE

In this context, 'Harithasree,' the lease-land farming promoted by 'Kudumbashree,' the State Poverty Eradication Mission, has helped women farmers to stay on in agriculture for livelihood.

The major crop cultivated by the Kudumbashree group is paddy (27 per cent of the area) followed by plantain and vegetables during 2009-10.

The Centre had approved 15.54 lakh families in the State under the BPL category, but the State Government has identified 20.61 lakh families under this category.

Foodgrains are allotted by the Centre for distribution to the Anthyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cardholders at the rate of 35 kg and for BPL cardholders at 30 kg per month for each family.

During 2010, up to November, more than 49 lakh tonnes of rice and 8.36 lakh tonnes of wheat have been distributed through the State's public distribution system.

CHEAPER FOODGRAINS

Foodgrains at the rate of Rs 2 are being distributed to BPL/AAY sections of cardholders, as well as families belonging to SC/ST categories from mid-2009 onwards.

The amount spent for the implementation of the scheme during 2009-10 is Rs 195.95 crore. Out of the Rs 245 crore earmarked for this purpose during 2010-11, Rs 182.74 crore has been spent up to December, 2010, the Review said.

Of the power sector, it noted that Kerala is among the very few States where there was no load-shedding or power cut during 2009-10.

The Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) has set a target for providing affordable and reliable electricity to all households on demand by 2011. Water is the only commercially viable source for power generation within the State.

During 2009-10, transmission and distribution loss has come down to 19.41 per cent from 20.45 per cent in 2008-09. The KSEB has achieved a significant reduction in T&D losses.

INDUSTRIAL ENVIRONMENT

The State Government has succeeded in creating the right environment for the flow of private capital to industry in general, information technology, biotechnology and the commercial segment of the tertiary sector.

The average growth rate for industry for the period from 2004-05 to 2009-10 was 10.56 per cent and 16.15 per cent at constant and current prices respectively.

The public sector undertakings have registered excellent growth and commendable performance during 2009-10. The cumulative loss of Rs 69.64 crore in 2005-06 has been transformed into profits of Rs 239.75 crore in 2009-10.

The vibrant tourism industry in the State not only facilitates infrastructure development but also helps in the balanced and sustainable regional growth by generating income and creating employment opportunities.

'Ban on Bt brinjal hampers farm research'

Mumbai, Feb. 9:

With the Government battling to cool down the soaring inflation, scientist community has called for lifting the moratorium on genetically modified vegetables on the eve of the first anniversary of a moratorium on release of transgenic brinjal hybrid developed by Mahyco, a subsidiary of global seed giant Monsanto.

Prof. C. Kameswara Rao, Executive Secretary, Foundation for Biotechnology Awareness and Education (FBAE), said the government's decision of imposing a moratorium on Bt brinjal affected research and development activities in the country's agricultural biotechnology sector.

Moratorium

It has also created a regulatory uncertainty on the development of all genetically engineered crops in the country. In the last one year, there has been no palpable, effective and time-bound effort to lift the moratorium or to resolve the uncertainties caused by the moratorium, he added.

Formed by a group of scientists, the non-profit organisation FBAE, promotes public awareness on scientific issues of biotechnology and about the perceived or potential risks and benefits of this emerging technology.

The moratorium will last "till such time independent scientific studies establish, to the satisfaction of both the public and professionals, the safety of the product from the point of view of its long-term impact on human health and environment, including the rich genetic wealth existing in brinjal in our country," Mr Jairam Ramesh, Environment Minister, had said announcing the Government's decision on moratorium.

Dr T.M. Majunath, Consultant-Agricultural Biotechnology, said considering that the product efficacy, bio-safety and environmental safety of Bt Brinjal were evaluated for over seven years,

according to international standards, involving over 200 scientists and more than a dozen of public and private sector research institutions.

Benefits

The adoption of Bt brinjal would help millions of farmers by reducing the use of synthetic insecticide up to 77 per cent and losses from the brinjal shoot and fruit borer (SFB), resulting in an increase in marketable yield, reducing costs of production, said FBAE.

The annual gain at the country level from Bt brinjal cultivation would be about Rs 577 crore at an adoption level of 15 per cent and Rs 2,387 crore at 60 per cent adoption levels, it added.

Weak demand dissolves sugar



Mumbai, Feb. 9:

Spot sugar prices at the Vashi market on Wednesday declined further by Rs10 a quintal on weak demand. Mills continue to keep tender offer open to off load the current month's free sale quota. Since last Tuesday, sugar prices have been coming down continuously . Morale was weak, said traders.

Market sources on Wednesday said naka and mill tender rates eased further by Rs 10-15 a quintal. Due to the absence of demand and no sign improvement, mills are forced to sell at lower market rates. If dull demand position continues, prices will fall more in the coming days.

Since the start of the month, most of the days market witnessed higher arrivals than demand, resulted in building up higher inventory. Last month also, spot sugar prices declined by Rs 150 in the absence of demand. This month till now, sugar prices have already come down by Rs 50 and further decline is expected if fresh demand is not seen, he added.

Meanwhile, the Indian Sugar mills Association on Tuesday estimates the country's sugar production to 250 lakh tonnes in the season year 2010-2011. Maharashtra is expected to produce 94 lakh tonnes and Uttar Pradesh sugar output revised downward to 64 lakh tonnes.

On Tuesday evening, about 12-14 mills came with tender offer and sold about 20,000-25,000 bags of sugar in the range of Rs 2,660-2,690 for S grade, and Rs 2,690-2,730 for M grade . In the absence of demand support, most of the mills kept tender offer open.

Tender rates decline by Rs 20-25 compared to Tuesday. Arrivals in the markets were about 36-38 truck loads (each 100 bags) and local dispatches were about 32-33 truck loads.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association sugar rates: Spot rates: S grade Rs 2,801-2,845 (Rs 2,811-2,851) and M grade Rs 2,846-2,916 (Rs 2,853-2,921).

Naka delivery rates: S grade Rs 2,750-2,770 (Rs 2,760-2,800) and M grade was Rs 2,800-2,845 (Rs 2,800-2,860).

Chilli turns hot on tight supplies



Guntur, Feb. 9:

Chilli prices are touching a new high this season at the market yard here, the biggest in the country, with a special variety of chilli, known as 'Badiga', fetching Rs 10,300 a quintal on Wednesday.

It was a record price as quality chilli is in short supply this season. A farmer from Charla mandal in Khammam district, Mr Parchuri Premchand, brought 53 bags of the variety to the yard.

The prices of other special varieties such as 'Teja' and 'Wonderheart' touched Rs 9,500 a quintal, while the prices of common varieties remained steady, with the average prices varying from Rs 8,500 to Rs 9,000 a quintal on Wednesday.

The high prices are attracting farmers from neighbouring districts to bring the produce here. The arrivals surged to 26.55 lakh quintals so far this season, compared to 29.75 lakh quintals in 2009-2010 and 27.45 lakh quintals in 2008-2009 during the corresponding period.

Andhra Pradesh accounts for more than 65 per cent of chilli production in the country. Of the 11 lakh tonnes produced in the country, 6.7 lakh tonnes is produced here.

Arrivals likely to keep chana steady



Indore, Feb. 9:

On Wednesday, chana in the spot gained marginally with prices being quoted at Rs 2,550-2,560 a quintal, notwithstanding a rise in chana futures on the NCEDX whose February contract closed Rs 26 higher at Rs 2,670 a quintal. Chana prices for the past few days have been experiencing marginal gains and falls and its prices are mainly influenced by availability and demand for pulses in the physical market.

As demand for pulses in the *mandis* continue to remain sluggish with traders remaining busy in marriage celebrations, chana prices in the spot have been witnessing a marginal rise and fall for the past few days. According to market sources, speculators are trying their best to pull chana prices in the spot up to Rs 3,000 a quintal but it seems unlikely once arrival of new chana both in the NCEDX and on the spot will gather momentum in the second half of February. If the arrival of new chana will outpace the accommodation in the NCEDX, chana prices will decline, said a trader, Mr Sanjay Bansal.

Meanwhile, local mandis on Wednesday witnessed arrival of 50 bags of new chana from Neemuch and Mandasaur regions of Madhya Pradesh.

Bearish sentiments in chana also dragged chana dal prices in the spot by Rs 25 with prices of chana dal (bold) quoted at Rs 3,225 a quintal, chana dal (average) at Rs 3,125 a quintal and chana dal (average) quoted at Rs 3,050 a quintal.

Among other pulse seeds, urad declined by Rs 100 at Rs 4,300 a quintal, while other pulse seeds remained steady with moong quoted at Rs 4,800-Rs 5,000 a quintal, tur at Rs 4,175 a quintal, masoor quoted at Rs 3,250 a quintal and urad at Rs 4,200 a quintal.

On the other hand, dollar chana edged higher in the container with depleting arrival. In the container dollar chana 42-44 count quoted at Rs 5,600-Rs 5,650 a quintal, Rs 100 up, while in the mandis it ruled firm at Rs 5,100-Rs 5,200 a quintal. Local mandis witnessed arrival of about 700 bags of chickpea.

Govt pegs foodgrains output at record 232 mt



Business Line The Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, addressing a press conference on 2nd advance estimates of crop production in the Capital on Wednesday. - Ramesh Sharma

New Delhi, Feb 9:

India's wheat production is estimated to achieve an all-time high of 81.47 million tonnes while foodgrains output will rise to 232.07 million tonnes in the current year.

"The country will witness record production of wheat, pulses and cotton this crop year," the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, told reporters today while announcing the second advance estimate for 2010-11 crop year (July-June).

This extraordinary feat is possible because of the hard efforts put in by the farming community, Mr Pawar said lauding the cultivators.

Wheat output was also high at 80.8 mt in the 2009-10 crop year. Foodgrains production had stood at 218.11 mt in the last crop year (2009-10).

The production levels of pulses and cotton are also seen at an all-time high of 16.51 mt and 33.9 million bales, respectively. Rice output is also projected to surge to 94.01 mt from 89.09 mt during the previous crop year.

Last year, rice output had declined by over 10 mt due to drought, which had severely hit the country.

STC calls bids for yellow peas sale

New Delhi, Feb 9:

State-run STC has invited bids for the sale of an unspecified quantity of imported yellow peas in the domestic market.

Bids will close on February 16 and a decision on award of the tender will be taken by February 23, the company said on its website.

STC said the bidders should quote for a minimum of 1,000 tonnes, adding that the yellow peas offered for sale are from the 2010 crop year.

Currently, imported yellow peas are lying in the godowns of the Mumbai Port Trust and the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, it added.

STC and other state-run trading agencies like PEC and MMTC import different varieties of pulses on behalf of the Government to augment domestic supply.

The country imports pulses as the demand is about 3-4 million tonnes higher than the domestic production.

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