

# THE HINDU

Online edition of India's National Newspaper

Thursday, February 17, 2011

**Date:**17/02/2011 **URL:**

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/02/17/stories/2011021751541600.htm>

---

FARM QUERY

## **Bio waste gasifier**

Is there any person who has developed a bio waste gasifier?

**Mridula Chaterjee, Kolkata**

Mr. Rai Singh Dahiya in Rajasthan has developed a unique biomass gasifier that can be used to operate pump sets in remote fields, pump up water in homes, operate basic machines such as saw mills, flour mills and generate electricity by charging an alternator. The fuel consumption is almost 30-40 per cent less than other available designs. Prices vary from Rs. 1,25,000 for 10 kW unit to Rs. 3,25,000 for 35 kW unit. For more details contact Mr. Rai Singh Dahiya, Thaldak village, Taluka Bohar, Hanumangarh, Rajasthan 335 524, 09414535665.

**Date:**17/02/2011 **URL:**

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/02/17/stories/2011021751521600.htm>

---

## **Tractor rotovator for weeding in tree crops**

Weeding is a major labour activity in the cultivation of tree crops. At present weeding in tree crops is done with the help of power tiller rotovators and tractor drawn cultivators.

## Extent of coverage

The power tiller rotovator covers only one hectare in eight hours at the maximum in a day and has to work for about 15 kilometre distance in the process.

When a tractor drawn cultivator (tiller) is used for weeding, collection of weeds under the cultivator frame hinders the continuous working of the implement.

Hence a technology has been developed for weeding and interculture in between tree crops by using power take off operated rotovator.

The tractor as such cannot be used for weeding in tree crops like eucalyptus due to higher width of the rear (back) pneumatic tyre wheels. Therefore, the two rear pneumatic tyres of a 45 hp tractor, are replaced with iron wheels having narrow width specially fabricated for the purpose.

The cost of replacing the rear pneumatic wheels of the tractor with iron wheels comes to Rs. 17,000. The cost of weeding by this technology comes to about Rs. 2,000 per hectare.

When the tree crops are planted in check row (square) planting method (rows are maintained in both the directions), the equipment can be worked cross wise covering the entire area, thus minimizing the labour required for weeding. The equipment is capable of weeding 0.2 hectare area in one hour.

## Residues

When the tractor operated rotovator is used for weeding, the weed residues are disintegrated and incorporated in the soil thus aiding the soil amelioration (amendment) process for the benefit of the tree crop. Besides, the lateral roots pruned (cut) by the rotovator blades boost the tree growth. The iron wheels improve traction (grip) of the tractor wheels by minimizing the tyre slip even in high moisture condition. This equipment is best suited for bio diesel and farm forestry plantations of pulp and paper industries.

**Drs. A. Tajuddin, P. Masilamani & C. Divakar Durairaj,** Agricultural Engineering College & Research Institute, TNAU, Kumulur Tiruchi

Date:17/02/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/02/17/stories/2011021751611600.htm>

---

## FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

### Video clippings educate on methods practised elsewhere

M.J. PRABU

All the video clippings are available to the public on [www.digitalgreen.org](http://www.digitalgreen.org)

Photo: Special Arrangement



**Giant Leap:Teaching a farmer to shoot with a video camera.**

Visual media leaves a profound impact on viewers.

“Especially for farmers, on seeing it on the screen, they can learn more about different methods, about concepts practised in other regions to improve yield. More so, if the video clippings are shot by farmers themselves, it becomes all the more interesting and farmers are able to instantly connect with it,” says 29-year-old Rikin Gandhi, CEO, Digital Green, an NGO in Delhi.

Mr. Rikin holds degrees from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Masters in Aeronautical and Astronomical Engineering) and Carnegie Mellon (Bachelors in Computer Science) and chose to work in rural India than in some space programme in the U.S.

Why poverty exists?

“Though immediately after my graduation I thought of joining some space programme, I happened to read about people travelling to space and seeing the earth from high up and wondering why poverty and war exist on this beautiful planet.

“Many of them after coming back took up work as teachers or farmers in a bid to connect with people. This inspired me to reconsider my desire to do something in this sector,” he says.

A chance visit to India during that time gave him his first exposure to rural India. The exposure as well as the realisation that 60 percent of his native country's population relied on agriculture for livelihood made Mr. Rikin rethink on his goals. He feels that technology can be used to improve the economic well being of farmers in India, and if used properly, can help put an end to poverty.

Mr. Rikin's name recently figured in the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Technology Review list of 35 global innovators called TR 35.

Explaining about Digital Green he says:

“The organisation produces and distributes community-centric, locally relevant videos about good agricultural practices.

Different channels

The videos are then shown to small groups of villagers on laptops, DVDs, village cable networks, and screens.

“These are simple videos starring local farmers that strike a chord with other villagers.

“We are receiving good feedback about this project that shows nearly 70-80 per cent farmers are adopting new ideas as opposed to 10-15 per cent earlier by traditional extension approach.”

Till date hundreds of such videos are uploaded on the (website: [www.digitalgreen.org](http://www.digitalgreen.org)). All videos produced are available to the public. The videos are by farmers, of farmers, and for farmers.

#### Resource persons

A number of NGOs' help the organisation in identifying "resource persons" from the community for producing them and to provide subject-matter expertise for ensuring good quality of the videos.

All the videos are produced by the community. "They identify interesting topics and make short video clips of local farmers and distribute them.

Some members after going back to their farms use pico projectors which are the size of mobile phones to show the clippings to their people," adds Mr. Rikin.

The community members come together on a regular basis for discussing matters such as sowing, nursery raising or weeding based on the season.

"Initially we started working with one NGO outside Bangalore and presently we are now working in four States. We received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and we are planning to reach out to a number of villages over a period of three years.

"We want to expand in India and reach out to as many farmers as possible. A technology platform is also being created for farmers to interact with others and ask questions to the experts and we want to scale up this platform. You can access the current platform by calling 1800 103 9111," he adds.

#### Technology review 35

Selected as an Ashoka fellow and included in the 2010 list of world's young innovators in Technology Review 35, Mr Rikin made Digital Green an independent organisation in 2009, now supported by the Bill Gates Foundation.

Does he still consider going to work in a space programme as a more remunerative option?

He says, “working in a space programme is like getting fifteen minutes of fame, while working for small and marginal farmers and helping transform their lives can always be more meaningful.”

For more details readers can contact Mr. Rikin Gandhi at Digital Green Trust, K-2, Second Floor, Green Park Main, New Delhi – 110016, India, email: rikin@digitalgreen.org, Phone: 011-41881037 and 41881038.

**Date:17/02/2011 URL:**

**<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/02/17/stories/2011021751801700.htm>**

---

### **Arctic climate changes during late Cretaceous**

Tiny organisms preserved in marine sediments hold clues about Arctic climate variation during an ancient episode of greenhouse warming (late Cretaceous), reconstructions of Arctic climate variability reveal.

**Date:17/02/2011 URL:**

**<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/02/17/stories/2011021751781700.htm>**

---

### **Gene from celery inside rose fights petal blight**

In a bid to extend the ‘vase life’ of roses, a gene from celery called mannitol dehydrogenase was inserted inside rose plants to help fight off botrytis, or petal blight, one of the rose's major post-harvest diseases.

**Date:17/02/2011 URL:**

**<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/02/17/stories/2011021751791700.htm>**

---

### **Invasive plants can be beneficial to ecology**

G.N. Rao



In a study in the U.S., it was found that certain well-established, invasive fruiting species have mutualism (beneficial to both) with fruit eating bird communities which also helps seed dispersal of other species of fruiting plants.

Date:17/02/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021750610300.htm>

---

## 2.45 lakh tonnes of paddy procured

Special Correspondent

*379 direct purchase centres opened*

TIRUVARUR: A total of 2.45 lakh tonnes of paddy have been procured this Kharif season in Tiruvarur district.

Three hundred and seventy nine direct purchase centres (DPCs) and eight mobile procurement units are functioning.

Thrust is given to movement of paddy from DPCs to cap storages and modern rice mills.

On complaints received from farmers, checks were carried out in some DPCs and those found indulged in malpractices have been relieved from duty.

Punishment for malpractice

Those who were relieved from duty included V.Soundarapandiyan (Tiruvarur), Murugesan (Achuthamangalam), G.Kumar (Vadaseri), R.Lenin (Olimathi), T.Baskaran (Munnavaikottai), and T.Sakthivel (Velukudi), a release issued by the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation, said here on Wednesday.

**Date:**17/02/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021750720600.htm>

---

### **'Rights Act protects farmers' interests'**

Special Correspondent

TIRUCHI: Farmers should be sensitised to the provisions of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Act 2001 as it deals primarily with protection of plant breeders' rights over the new varieties development and the entitlement of farmers to register new varieties, said S.Kannaiyan, former chairman, National Bio Diversity Authority, here recently.

Speaking at a training-cum-awareness programme on the Act, organised by the National Research Centre for Banana, Dr.Kannaiyan said farmers also had the right to save, breed, use, exchange, share or sell the plant varieties, which have been developed, improved and maintained over many generations. The Act protects the rights of formal innovations of a plant breeder and the informal knowledge system and traditional plant varieties of farmers as well. It also has important provisions for protection of farmers' rights and mechanisms for compensation or benefit sharing to the local communities.

Section 40 of the Act requires that the breeder or any applicant for registration of a new plant variety should disclose information regarding the use of the genetic material conserved by any tribal or rural families in the breeding or development of such variety. Wilful non-disclosure of such information would lead to rejection of the application for registration. The Act ensures compensation for the contribution of any village or local communities for the development of a variety registered under it.

**Date:**17/02/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021763891500.htm>

---



## World Bank warns of soaring food prices

Larry Elliott

*The spike is pushing millions more into poverty.*

The World Bank has given a stark warning of the impact of the rising cost of food, saying an estimated 44 million people had been pushed into poverty since the middle of last year by soaring commodity prices.

Robert Zoellick, the Bank's president, said food prices had risen by almost 30 per cent in the past year and were within striking distance of the record levels reached during 2008.

“Global food prices are rising to dangerous levels and threaten tens of millions of poor people around the world,” Zoellick said. “The price hike is already pushing millions of people into poverty, and putting stress on the most vulnerable, who spend more than half of their income on food.” According to the latest edition of Food Price Watch, the World Bank's food price index was up by 15 per cent between October 2010 and January 2011, is 29 per cent above its level a year earlier, and only three per cent below its 2008 peak. Wheat prices have seen the most pronounced increases, doubling between June last year and January 2011, while maize prices were up 73 per cent.

The bank said fewer people had fallen into poverty than in 2008 because of two factors — good harvests in many African countries had kept prices stable, and the increases in rice prices — a key part of the diet for many of the world's poor — had been moderate.

It added: “Measures to address the recent round of food price spikes include expanding nutritional and safety net programmes in countries where food prices are rising fastest, avoiding food export restrictions, and finding better information on food stocks. More investments in agriculture, the development of less food—intensive biofuels and climate change adaptation are also needed.” Announcing the latest findings, the bank said its Global Food Crisis Response Programme was helping some 40 million people in need by providing \$1.5bn of support. “To date, over 40 low-income countries are receiving or will receive assistance through new and improved seeds, irrigation, and other farm support and food assistance for the most vulnerable people. For example, in Benin, fertiliser provided through these resources led to the production

of an extra 100,000 tonnes of cereal.” In the longer term, the bank said it was boosting its spending on agriculture to \$6bn—8bn a year from \$4.1bn in 2008.

‘An aggravating factor’

Zoellick also said rising global food prices were an “aggravating factor” but not the main reason for violent protests that toppled leaders in Egypt and Tunisia. He said Egypt's financing situation “is one that should be able to be managed”, suggesting the country may not need additional World Bank loans. A team from the bank is currently in Tunisia assessing its transition and possible financing needs. ( Larry Elliott is economics editor of the Guardian.) — © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2011

Date:17/02/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021757670400.htm>

---

## **Give a push to irrigation projects in Tarikere, Minister urged**

Special Correspondent

---

*‘Krishna government sanctioned Rs. 100 crore for Amruthapura and Ubrani lift irrigation projects’‘Upper Bhadra project detrimental to farmers of Tarikere taluk’*

---

BANGALORE: The former Congress MLA B.R. Neelakantappa and National Kisan Sabha State convener M. Anitha Machaiah on Wednesday urged Water Resources Minister Basavaraj Bommai to release funds immediately for irrigation projects in Tarikere taluk of Chikmagalur district.

Speaking to presspersons here on Wednesday, Mr. Neelakantappa urged the Minister to take steps for filling the Jambadahalla reservoir to supply water for five tanks in Tarikere town for drinking purposes. He alleged that the Government had failed to implement the project, even though the estimates and plans were approved in 1986.

He said the Amruthapura and Ubrani lift irrigation projects were sanctioned Rs.100 crore in 2002 by the S.M. Krishna government, but there was no progress on them.

The work to allow water into the Koranahalli, Makanahalli and Dodda Bokikere tanks had not been taken up by the BJP government, as the voters in the region had supported the Congress. Funds sanctioned for the Bukkambudi tank development work had not been released for political reasons, he charged.

He said that farmers in the taluk had been requesting the Government to utilise the water flowing from the Hebbe Falls for irrigation and drinking purposes for over five decades and the previous government had issued orders to take up construction work. But the BJP Government had kept the project in abeyance, he said. He also demanded scrapping of the Upper Bhadra project, which was "detrimental" to the farmers of the taluk.

Mr. Neelakantappa said they would hold a dharna outside the residence of Mr. Bommai in February 24 demanding immediate implementation of all the irrigation works and projects in Tarikere taluk.

Date:17/02/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021757770400.htm>

---

## Fluctuation in prices of coconut forecast

B.S. Satish Kumar

*They may rise till the month-end and decline from March*

---

*A price-forecast analysis was undertaken by the Market Intelligence Centre of UAS, Bangalore*

*Coconut mainly grown in Tumkur, Hassan, Dakshina Kannada, Chikmagalur and Chitradurga*

---

BANGALORE: The State is set to witness variations in coconut prices over the next couple of months.

According to a price-forecast analysis for coconut crop undertaken by the Market Intelligence Centre of University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, the coconut prices which are already ruling high in the State are set to increase further till the end of this month due to the lack of fresh arrivals as against the growing demand.

However, they are expected to show a declining trend from March due to the arrival of fresh crops, before picking up again in May.

C.P. Gracy, Principal Investigator of the UAS-B's Market Intelligence Centre, told The Hindu that the Centre had undertaken an analysis of coconut prices in Tumkur market — which is the State's prominent coconut market, besides conducting an econometric analysis of the last 10 year's data on coconut prices. Such an exercise had been undertaken to help the farmers to decide on whether to sell the nuts immediately upon harvest or to store them in anticipation of good prices.

#### Wholesale prices

The analysis had shown that the coconut wholesale prices, which were presently ruling at Rs. 6,500 to Rs. 8,700 per 1,000 nuts may increase to Rs. 7,500 to Rs. 9,000 (for medium to big-sized ones) in the Tumkur market by the end of this month or early March.

This is due to the increase in demand for coconuts for various purposes, including festivities and ceremonies, at a time when there was shortage as the fresh crop was yet to arrive in the Tumkur market, she explained. This would apply to the entire State, as normally the Tumkur coconut market set the trend for the entire State.

Prof. Gracy pointed out that a similar analysis by their Kerala counterparts had indicated that wholesale prices of this crop was set to increase in that State also before showing a declining trend from March.

In the wake of fluctuating prices, the Market Intelligence Centre has advised the farmers to sell the crop upon harvesting as storage may not fetch good prices. But it has made it clear to

farmers to ensure that the harvesting time matches the festival occasions to ensure that they get a better deal.

India is the largest consumer of coconut products in the world and it imports coconut products from other countries such as Sri Lanka, Seychelles and Malaysia to make up for the shortage.

Karnataka stands third in the country in terms of coconut production after Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The State produces 2,176 million coconuts a year accounting for 13.83 per cent of the country's production.

Major coconut growing districts in Karnataka are Tumkur, Hassan, Dakshina Kannada, Chikmagalur and Chitradurga, which together account for more than 85 per cent of coconut-growing area in the State. Tumkur district has the largest area under coconut followed by Hassan.

**Date:**17/02/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021760182000.htm>

---

## **VFPCCK, Nokia join hands to help farmers**

K.A. Martin

*Weather, prices information and advisory service as SMS*

KOCHI: The Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK) and Nokia India Limited will launch a weather and prices information and advisory service for farmers on the SMS format using Nokia's Life Tools services.

The service will be launched at Bharanikkavu in Kollam district on Thursday, said chief executive officer of VFPCCK N. Vijayan here.

He told The Hindu that the services would initially be on a pilot basis for a period of one year and that 300 handsets with BSNL subscriber identification module cards were being distributed to farmers' self-help groups under the council.

Mr. Vijayan said this was the first time such a service was being made available to the farmers in Kerala. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) was footing the bill for the project, costing nearly Rs.10 lakh.

Farmers in Kollam district, for example, would get daily information on the wholesale price of 36 varieties of vegetables and six to seven fruits in markets in their neighbouring areas. Farmers in Kannur would get the price information most useful to them, the area-specificity being achieved through the use of postal index numbers, Mr. Vijayan said.

According to information from Nokia India, the service is particularly geared to meet the needs of farmers in rural areas. Thus, the advisories or information bulletins on weather and prices will be available wherever there is cell phone range and will work even on the economy model handsets. Cost-effectiveness and language option make the service attractive to the framers.

Weather data from the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD); agriculture news; price inputs from VFPCCK and tips and pieces of advice to farmers will be put out in SMS format after these information are pooled and edited by the Nokia team, based in Bangalore.

The VFPCCK has around 1.5 lakh farmers under its programme, organised under 248 farmers' markets run by self-help groups. There are also 14 district-level nodal market consortiums. The farmers sell their produces through their own market resulting in significant increase in farm gate prices.

The total turnover of these farmers' markets in the State is expected to touch Rs.160 crore this financial year, substantially up from last year's level of Rs.120 crore.

A spokesman for VFPCCK said the sale of vegetables and fruits through the VFPCCK markets this financial had so far touched Rs.136 crore.

A total of 44,000 hectares (23,000 hectares under banana and 21,000 hectares under vegetables) are cultivated by the VFPCCK farmers across the State.

The average annual production during the most recent years has been 4.60 lakh tonnes of bananas and 3.15 lakh tonnes of vegetables.

**Date:**17/02/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021762210300.htm>

---

## Vegetable prices stabilising

K. Lakshmi

---

*Rates have dropped by nearly half when compared to prices in January*

---

CHENNAI: Vegetable prices, which rattled households for several months, have started stabilising. The decline in the cost of many vegetables is nearly half when compared to the prices in January.

Many visitors to the Koyambedu market said large portions of mint and coriander leaves were also being given free of cost when they purchased vegetables. Curry leaves continue to be expensive with a bunch priced Rs.10 owing to shortfall in supply.

G. Chandra, a resident of Koyambedu, said, "When I visited the market last month, I paid Rs.7 for the same quantity of coriander leaves, which was given free of cost on Wednesday. As the prices of the vegetables are less, I bought twice the quantity as you never know when the prices will go up."

Vendors said many customers filled their bags with vegetables, whose prices have dropped sharply in the recent weeks.

S. Marimuthu, a wholesale vendor, said a 50-kg bag of brinjals, is sold at Rs.100-Rs.150 at the market. A sack containing 12 cauliflowers is sold at Rs.80-Rs.100.

With more arrivals from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in the past week, a sack of mint and coriander leaves is sold at Rs.20.

Two bunches of coriander leaves come for Rs.1 to Rs.2, he said. But, the price of curry leaves is likely to rule high for another month with a 5-kg bag of curry leaves costing Rs.200.

According to V.R. Soundararajan, adviser to the Koyambedu Wholesale Onion Traders' Association, the price of onions, which soared to Rs.100 a kg two months ago, is now Rs.15 in the wholesale market and Rs.20 in retail shops.

Tomatoes are sold at Rs.15 a kg. Even carrots, drumsticks and broad beans, which are relatively expensive, are priced between Rs.10 to Rs.12 a kg in the wholesale market. The number of lorries transporting produce to the market has increased to 350 now from 200 last month, he added.

However, consumers complained that the retail prices of some vegetables, including beans, potato and carrot, remain high. There is at least a difference of Rs.10 a kg. While the wholesale rate of one kg of potato is Rs.13, the retail shops sell them at Rs.26, said R.Kavitha, a resident of Perambur.

Date:17/02/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021753880600.htm>

---

## CSRTI technology has helped reduce crop losses

Shankar Bennur

*Bivoltine silk productivity has gone up in the last six years in the country*

---

*CSR2 x CSR4, CSR46 x CSR47 hybrids released*

*New races, disease management among positive factors*

---

— PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM





## **GIANT STRIDES: New technologies developed by the Central Sericultural Research and Training Institute**

MYSORE: The country's bivoltine cocoon production crossed 1,300 tonnes for the first time during last year since bivoltine sericulture was introduced several years ago. Importantly, the crop losses faced by farmers had been reduced drastically over the last six years, thereby increasing bivoltine silk productivity to a new high.

The technologies developed at the Mysore-based Central Sericultural Research Training Institute (CSRTI), which is celebrating its golden jubilee, have come as a boon for silk farmers in boosting cocoon yield, rearing quality mulberry plants, and facilitating the Indian silk industry emerge as a major player in the world silk market.

Thanks to the tropical sericulture technologies developed by the scientists at the CSRTI, bivoltine sericulture is gaining ground in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. The farmers in these States are successfully adopting technologies to enhance the country's overall silk production.

The CSRTI has released bivoltine hybrids such as CSR2 x CSR4, CSR46 x CSR47, double hybrid, GEN3 x GEN4 for tropical climate which have a potential to yield 60 kg to 80 kg cocoons per dfls (disease free egg layings) with 2 A and 3 A grade silk quality.

“New mulberry races, disinfection and disease management technologies, crop management, rearing methods are among the factors that have given a boost to bivoltine cocoon productivity,” according to S.M.H. Qadri, Director, CSRTI, Mysore.

### Tamil Nadu's progress

Speaking to The Hindu, Dr. Qadri said that Tamil Nadu had made noticeable progress in bivoltine sericulture, followed by Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Tamil Nadu records 30 per cent of bivoltine cocoon production, while Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh registered 5 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively. Production could go up further as more farmers in Karnataka are showing interest in adopting bivoltine sericulture, he said.

“That time has gone when farmers used to be sceptical about taking up bivoltine sericulture for various reasons. Today, they are adopting it successfully and reaping benefits mainly because of the efficient disease management packages developed by the CSRTI scientists,” he said.

Due to good quality mulberry, and also rearing management practices, farmers are obtaining 30 kg of cocoon per hectare more, which is significant for the growth of the silk industry, Dr. Qadri said. Attributing the success in bivoltine sericulture in India to the research and development taken up by the scientists at CSRTI in the last 50 years and the recent research and development activities being taken up with Japanese scientists under the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) project, he said that the scientists had been engaged in research and development under JICA for nearly 15 years and the technologies developed during the period were taken to the fields so that farmers adopted them with the assistance of the Department of Sericulture in the respective States.

According to Dr. Qadri, the country saw a quantum jump in bivoltine silk production due to the technologies adopted under the JICA project.

Bivoltine adoption has gone up in the three southern States in the last six years, he said and added that the regional research stations of CSRTI at Kodalli near Bangalore; Salem in Tamil Nadu and Ananthpur in Andhra Pradesh also played an important role in promoting technologies among farmers.

Paired row techniques, V1 mulberry varieties (with yield of 60 tonnes per hectare), rearing packages, new hybrid silkworms were among the innovations under the JICA project developed at CSRTI here that were instrumental in promoting bivoltine silk production, he said.

Similarly, production of raw silk has gone up from 14 kg per hectare per year during the 1960s to 87 kg per hectare per year this year.

**Date:**17/02/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021750720600.htm>

---

**'Rights Act protects farmers' interests'**

Special Correspondent

TIRUCHI: Farmers should be sensitised to the provisions of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Act 2001 as it deals primarily with protection of plant breeders' rights over the new varieties development and the entitlement of farmers to register new varieties, said S.Kannaiyan, former chairman, National Bio Diversity Authority, here recently.

Speaking at a training-cum-awareness programme on the Act, organised by the National Research Centre for Banana, Dr.Kannaiyan said farmers also had the right to save, breed, use, exchange, share or sell the plant varieties, which have been developed, improved and maintained over many generations. The Act protects the rights of formal innovations of a plant breeder and the informal knowledge system and traditional plant varieties of farmers as well. It also has important provisions for protection of farmers' rights and mechanisms for compensation or benefit sharing to the local communities.

Section 40 of the Act requires that the breeder or any applicant for registration of a new plant variety should disclose information regarding the use of the genetic material conserved by any tribal or rural families in the breeding or development of such variety. Wilful non-disclosure of such information would lead to rejection of the application for registration. The Act ensures compensation for the contribution of any village or local communities for the development of a variety registered under it.

Date:17/02/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/02/17/stories/2011021762510300.htm>

---

## **32 agro-service centres to rent out farm implements, machines**

Special Correspondent

*K.N.Nehru hands over machines to primary agricultural cooperative societies*



**Propelling growth: Transport Minister K.N. Nehru distributing farm implements at a function in Tiruchi on Wednesday. K.Petchiammal, right, Collector( in-charge) is in the picture.**

TIRUCHI: Farmers could henceforth hire farm implements and machines from 32 agro service centres operated by primary agricultural cooperative societies (PACBs) across the district.

Thirty-six machines such as power tillers, power weeders, rotovators and rotary tillers were provided to the 32 PACBs in the first phase. The machines were handed over to the PACBs by Transport Minister K.N.Nehru, here on Wednesday in the presence of Collector (in-charge) K.Petchiammal and other officials.

As many as 80 agro service centres are to be opened in the PACBs in the district and on Wednesday 32 of them were given the farm implements and machines under a subsidised scheme implemented through the departments of Cooperation and Agricultural Engineering, Rama Jayampandian, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Tiruchi, told The Hindu. The farm equipment, totally worth Rs.42.05 lakh was given to the PACBs. Of this, Rs.26 lakhs were given as interest-free loans to the PACBs running the agro service centres and Rs.14 lakhs were given as subsidy.

Mr.Jayampandian said the agro service centres would rent out the equipment to society members and farmers at standard rentals. All the 80 agro service centres would start functioning soon, and remaining centres would also be supplied the farm equipments soon. Some have already been provided with tractors. Harvesters, which are in great demand in the district, would also be provided to some of the agro service centres, he added.

Speaking at a function to hand over the machines, Mr.Nehru said the State government was implementing various schemes for the benefit of farmers. Steps were also being taken to help farmers in farm mechanisation through the supply of machines and implements at subsidised costs through the Agricultural Engineering Department.

Over the past four years, farm implements and machines worth Rs.396.84 lakh have been given to 1055 farmers in the district. For the current year, 316 farmers have been provided farm implements worth Rs.188.69 lakh.

Mr.Nehru also distributed appointment orders to three newly recruited wardens and 13 cooks in the hostels run by the Department of Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare.

He distributed welfare assistance under various schemes including cheques to the tune of Rs.71 lakh towards the monthly maintenance grant of Rs.500 each to 1,500 mentally retarded persons and Rs.75,000 as marriage assistance to three differently abled persons. About 12 farmers were also given assistance to the tune of Rs.1.50 lakh under the social security scheme for agricultural labourers and farmers.

T.T.Balsamy, Commissioner, Tiruchi Corporation, V.Sangeetha, chairperson, District Panchayat, were present.

© Copyright 2000 - 2009 The Hindu

**hindustantimes**



[rachit.vats@hindustantimes.com](mailto:rachit.vats@hindustantimes.com), Indo-Asian News Service

New Delhi, February 16, 2011

First Published: 11:36 IST(16/2/2011)

Last Updated: 11:37 IST(16/2/2011)

**Inflation should be down to 7%: PM**

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday conceded that inflation has been a problem for India in recent weeks, but should come down to around 7% by year-end.

"Inflation and food inflation in particular has been a problem," Manmohan Singh said at an interaction with editors of the electronic media.

But by year-end, "inflation rate should come down to no more than 7%," he said.

He said the government wanted to ensure that the growth process is "not disturbed". It is trying to deal with inflation at a time "when we don't have all the instruments at our command".

"We have to deal with inflation despite an adverse international environment," he said.

New Delhi, February 16, 2011

First Published: 12:32 IST(16/2/2011)

Last Updated: 12:35 IST(16/2/2011)

### **Economy to grow by 8.5%, inflation to drop: PM**

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday said the economy will grow by at least 8.5% this fiscal and inflation will drop to 7% by year-end.

The prime minister said with India becoming an increasingly integrated and open economy, international developments have a bearing on matters like inflation and all possible steps were being taken to mitigate their impact.

"Our economy is in good shape. We will have a growth rate of 8.5% in this fiscal year," Manmohan Singh said at an interaction with editors of news channels.

"If we were concerned about only curbing inflation, we could have done it, I think, by pursuing tighter monetary policies...we could have brought about a situation where price rise could be moderated," he said.

"But in the process if growth gets hurt I think that would not do our country any good," he added.

"We have to deal with inflation despite an adverse international environment. I give you my assurance that we will succeed and inflation rate should come down to no more than seven%."

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had last month hiked key interest rates to combat high inflation and hinted at further tightening in the future.

India's annual food inflation dropped by nearly four percentage points to 13.07% for the week ended Jan 29, having been in the high double digits in previous months. Annual inflation based on wholesale prices eased marginally to 8.23% in January as against 8.43% in the previous month.

"We are trying to deal with inflation at a time when we do not have all the instruments at our command in the sense that we do not have control over international events," the prime minister said.

"We are an increasingly open economy and the oil prices are rising, food prices are rising, commodity prices are rising," he added.

The oil marketing companies had hiked prices of petrol for a fifth time in 2010 in December by Rs 2.95 per litre. The hike was necessitated by the rise in global crude prices to \$90 per barrel.

Washington, February 17, 2011

First Published: 01:08 IST(17/2/2011)

Last Updated: 01:11 IST(17/2/2011)

### **Food prices at dangerous highs: World Bank**

World Bank President Robert Zoellick has warned that food prices had reached "dangerous levels" and could hamper political transitions in Egypt, Tunisia, the wider Middle East and Central Asia.

"The area that obviously bears watching is where you have a combination of political upheaval and food price stress."

The World Bank said that global food prices on average were 29% higher in January than a year earlier and just 3% below a peak reached in 2008, when the rising cost of food sparked deadly riots in many parts of the developing world.

The rising costs had pushed 44 million people back into extreme poverty, and Zoellick urged leaders of the Group of 20 (G20) block of leading global economies to make the food crisis their top priority. G20 finance ministers are meeting Friday and Saturday in France.

“Global food prices are now at dangerous levels. It is already clear recent price rises for food are causing pain and suffering to poor people around the globe.”

“Given the poverty levels (in central Asia) ... there’s a stress point that could have social and political implications,” he said.

## Weather

Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Clear

**Thursday, Feb 17**

Max Min  
31.5° | 22°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 84%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:31

Sunset: 18:15

Barometer: 1010.0

### Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

**Friday, Feb 18**

Max Min  
31° | 18°

### Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Feb 19



Sunday

Feb 20



Monday

Feb 21



Tuesday

Feb 22



Wednesday

Feb 23





29° | 24°

Rainy

29° | 24°

Rainy

30° | 24°

Cloudy

29° | 21°

Cloudy

29° | 20°

Cloudy

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/663349.aspx>

© Copyright 2010 Hindustan Times

## DECCAN Chronicle *On The Web*

Published on Deccan Chronicle (<http://www.deccanchronicle.com>)

### **Inflation to fall by March**

Feb 17 2011

Feb. 16: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday expressed confidence that inflation would fall to seven percent by March and that the country would grow by 8.5 per cent in the current fiscal.

The PM said the government is pushing its economic reform agenda. "I sincerely hope that in this current Budget you will see a clearer picture of the reform agendas that our government has. We have not given up, we will persist," said Dr Singh.

"We have to deal with inflation despite an adverse international environment and you have my assurance that we will succeed. And, at the end of the fiscal year, the inflation rate should come down to no more than 7 percent," said PM. He said the government didn't want to take steps to hurt growth momentum.

---

**Source URL:**

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/chennai/inflation-fall-march-465>

**PM exudes hope on inflation**

Feb 17 2011

Feb. 16: The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, on Wednesday showed confidence that inflation will come down to 7 per cent by March and the country will be able to grow by 8.5 per cent in the current fiscal.

The Prime Minister said that the government is pushing the economic reform agenda, which will be reflected in the forthcoming budget. "I sincerely hope that in the upcoming Budget, you will see a clearer picture of the reform agendas that our government has chalked out." Dr Singh said the government didn't want to take steps which would hurt the growth while curbing inflation. "If we were concerned with only curbing inflation, I think we could have done it by pursuing tighter monetary policies. But if in the process, the growth process gets hurt I think that wouldn't do our country any good as we are trying to deal with inflation at a time when we don't have all instruments at our command in the sense that we do not have control over international events," he said. India is now increasingly an open economy and with the international oil prices are rising, the food prices are rising, commodity prices are rising, he added.

"We have to deal with inflation despite an adverse international environment and you have my assurance that we will succeed. And at the end of the fiscal year, the inflation rate should come down to no more than seven per cent," said Dr Singh.

He added that to help the poor the government has introduced schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme . He said that in order to meet the long term funding needs of the infrastructure there is a need to create a viable corporate debt market.

"The other is to mobilise funds from outside. I think, there has been a discussion about the creation about infrastructure development fund. Some discussions are going on and most probably the finance minister will outline something in that direction," the Prime Minister added.

---

**Source URL:**

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/business/pm-exudes-hope-inflation-423>

### **World Bank finds food prices at alarming levels**

Feb 17 2011

Feb. 16: Now it is the World Bank that is worried about the rising food prices. The development institution says that the rising food prices of the past year have pushed 44 million people around the world back into poverty.

The bank says that food prices today are 29 per cent higher than last year and close to an all time high. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations says that prices are already at an all-time high. The FAO had said earlier that the high food prices are likely to persist for several months. In India too, consumers are facing the heat as food price inflation — which measures rising prices — has been in double digits for several weeks now.

“Global food prices are rising to dangerous levels and threaten tens of millions of poor people around the world,” said the World Bank group president, Mr Robert B. Zoellick in a statement.

“The price hike is already pushing millions of people into poverty, and putting stress on the most vulnerable, who spend more than half of their income on food,” the World Bank president said. The key driver behind the upward spiral in the food price index has been sharp rises in the prices of wheat, maize, sugar and oils, the World Bank says.

---

**Source URL:**

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/business/world-bank-finds-food-prices-alarming-levels-422>

17 Feb, 2011, 01.10AM IST, Bloomberg

## **Latin America may see food riots as commodities soar**

LONDON: Countries in Latin America and Africa, including Bolivia and Mozambique, are most at risk of food riots as prices advance, the United Nations said. The past month's protests in North Africa and the Middle East were partly linked to agriculture costs. World food prices climbed to a record in January, the UN said on February 3. Food prices are rising to "dangerous levels and threaten tens of millions of poor people" globally, World Bank president Robert Zoellick said on Tuesday.

"The low-income food deficit countries are on the front line of the current surge in world prices," said Abdolreza Abbassian, a senior economist at the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome, on February 14. Other countries where expensive food imports may become a "major burden" include Uganda, Mali, Niger and Somalia in Africa, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Asia and Honduras, Guatemala, and Haiti in Latin America, he said.

Wheat traded at a record in Zhengzhou, China on February 14 and the grain, corn and soybeans rallied to the highest levels in 2 1/2 years in Chicago the past week. Governments from Beijing to Belgrade are raising imports, limiting exports or releasing supply from stockpiles to curb inflation.

Higher prices of wheat, rice, sugar and dairy products helped push the FAO's Food Price Index to a record last month. Protests in North Africa have driven Tunisia's president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali into exile after 23 years in power and forced Hosni Mubarak to resign as Egypt's president.

Higher food costs helped provoke deadly riots this year in countries including Algeria, and at least 13 people died in Mozambique last year.

17 Feb, 2011, 01.09AM IST, Jayashree Bhosale, Rituraj Tiwari & Man Mohan Rai,ET Bureau

### **Rains to boost wheat yield in North India**

PUNE | JAIPUR | LUCKNOW: Rains in north India are expected to boost the yield of wheat crop helping the country achieve record grain production. "The current rainfall will prove positive for the standing wheat crop," said Dr SS Singh, project director, Directorate of Wheat Research, Karnal.

A senior scientist with the directorate said, "The temperatures have come down due to the recent rainfall which are essential for the wheat crop. This will help farmers avoid extra irrigation and will take up the yields considerably."According to the second advance estimate of food grain production released recently, India is likely to produce 81.47 million tonne of wheat in 2010-11.

The combined output of Punjab and Haryana is expected to be 269 lakh tonne in the current rabi season as against 256.69 lakh tonne in the previous year. Uttar Pradesh is set for a production of 309 lakh tonne this year as against 275.18 lakh tonne on 93 lakh hectares. The state has targetted a production of 300 lakh tonne in 2011 on 95.50 lakh hectare.

Uttar Pradesh director (agriculture) Mukesh Gautam said, "Temperatures had risen suddenly during the first week of February. Though there was no reason for panic, the crops could have been affected slightly as wheat is a heat-sensitive crop." The state has since reported moderate rainfall.

The wheat acreage in Rajasthan is likely to be over 25 lakh hectare as against 23.94 lakh hectare last year. As per the earlier projections, the output is likely to cross 85 lakh tonne. "Crop

loss is feared only in hailstorm-hit areas of Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu. In fact, the light to moderate rains are reported to be beneficial for standing crops in places like Bharatpur and Dholpur and Karauli,” said state agriculture department deputy director D S Yadav.

The crop size in Rajasthan has come under pressure. The sub-zero cold spell during January has shrunk the crop by 10-15%. The grain size too is likely to be affected. “The size of the grain is likely to be dwarf with less protein content in several areas,” said an agriculture department official.

17 Feb, 2011, 01.07AM IST, PK Krishnakumar,ET Bureau

### **Eggs, chicken to turn costlier on demand surge**

KOCHI: After a brief respite in January, eggs and chicken are again becoming expensive as demand resumes for animal protein in the summer and it outpaces supply in a traditionally lean season. While egg prices have remained flat year on year up to January, chicken prices are up 10%. Prices of animal protein, which includes meat, have gone up 15%.

Eggs are being sold for Rs2.10 each at Namakkal, the benchmark wholesale market. “Prices will move up by 5 to 10 paise per week and stabilise around Rs2.30 per egg in the coming days,” said P Selvaraj, chairman of Namakkal National Egg Co-ordination Committee. The Namakkal region produces 3 crore eggs a day.

Chicken prices are around Rs60 per kg, slightly higher than the level in the same period previous year. They are expected to pick up towards the end of March. “Prices will go up in April-May period,” said B Soundararajan, managing director of Suguna Poultry Farm, one of India’s largest poultry companies.

After touching Rs3.02 per egg a month ago, the prices dropped over 40% to reach Rs2.10 at Namakkal. “Excess stock, buyer resistance and lower demand had led to a sudden fall in the

egg prices,” said Selvaraj. As a result, 10-12 crore eggs were left unsold in the market. “But now the situation is under control with the clearing of the stock,” he added.

However, the demand has not improved as much as industry expected because of warm weather in February. As a rule, prices rise during winter because of higher demand. It gradually eases when summer approaches.

But this time the price fall has happened early, upsetting the calculations of farmers. But what seems to be worrying the industry is the rising feed cost. The rise in egg prices has not been proportionate to increase in feed prices. “Two years ago when the egg price was Rs1.75, feed price was Rs400 per bag. Now egg is only at Rs2.10, but the feed has risen to Rs1,100 per bag. That’s a 275% jump,” said Sasikumar, director of Tamil Nadu-based Ravi Poultry Farms.



### **Hike in commission received on grain**

February 17, 2011 10:59:21 AM

### **PNS | DEHRADUN**

The Public Distribution System dealers’ commission on food grains has been increased from `6 to `18, said Uttarakhand Food and Civil Supply Secretary Dilbagh Singh while talking to The Pioneer on Wednesday.

Singh said that we had organised a meeting with the representatives of Uttarakhand Fair Price Ration Shopkeepers Association and discussed on their pending demands.

Most of the demands including increase in commission on foodgrains have been addressed and

members also expressed satisfaction on this agreement.

Uttarakhand Fair Price Ration Shopkeepers Association (FPRSA) General Secretary BD Sharma said that the association has decided to call off its strike as the Government has fulfilled their most of their pending demands. We welcomed the decision on increase in commission on food grains under Public Distribution System from `6 to `18 by the State Government.

Sharma said that all the Public Distribution System (PDS) dealers of the State would pick up their food grains from the RFC Godown from Thursday.

As per the agreement, the district magistrates will decide the fair charge of food grains from godown to the dealer's shops. During the meeting it was decided that whatsoever the problems arise, would be addressed step by step. The RFC godown officials will be directed to provide food grains to the dealers in the first week of each month.

We have also raised issues including charging more than actual weight of the food grains in sack by RFC Godown officials and two to three kg less food grains in each sack, which also been addressed during the meeting. It is pertinent to mention that the State Government has announced that cheap

### **Minister sanctions procurement policy for wheat**

February 17, 2011 10:57:11 AM

### **Staff Reporter | Bhopal**

Minister of State for Food Supply Paras Chandra Jain has accorded sanction to procurement policy for rabi crops for the year 2011-12. The wheat rate will be Rs 1,220 per quintal, including bonus. The time-limit for procurement has been fixed till May 31. The wheat procurement will begin on March 15. Committee members and MLA Raj Rajkumar Singh Yadav were present.



Besides, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has retained bonus of Rs 100 on wheat. The orders in this regard were issued on Monday evening. Last year, 35 lakh metric tonne wheat was procured and a total of Rs 364 crore was distributed among farmers as a token of bonus.

This year, same target (35 lakh metric tonne) for procurement has been fixed, but it can be extended in view of demand under the BPL and Antodaya schemes. The State Civil Supplies Corporation will procure 24 MT while 11 lakh MT wheat will be taken by the State Cooperative Marketing Federation.

As many as 1,250 procuring centres have been made for wheat procurement. The centres can be increased if needed.

Jain issued directives to execute fortified flour scheme from April. He reviewed the food coupon scheme and asked the officials to expedite it. Principal Secretary R Ramanujan and Deputy Secretary Lalit Dahima and concerned officials were present.

### **Balmy weather in Madhya Pradesh a welcome change**

February 17, 2011 10:57:19 AM

#### **Staff Reporter | Bhopal**

Mild showers during early hours in the State capital made the weather pleasant on Wednesday. The trace of rain was also recorded in other parts of the State.

Officials of the Meteorological Department, Bhopal circle underlined an upper air cycer over northeast and adjoining areas of the State, as the reason of the showers.

In the forecast for the next 48 hours as well, thundershowers were predicted in Gwalior,

Chambal, Rewa, Sagar and Shahdol divisions of the State.

Sudden shift in weather brought the maximum temperature down by few notches in four major cities, including Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and Jabalpur.

The maximum temperature in Bhopal on Wednesday was recorded at 26.6 (-2) degree Celsius against a minimum of 15.8 (+1). Similarly, the maximum around Indore remained at 25.3 (-4) degree Celsius while 13.4 (+2) stood there as the minimum.

By recording a maximum of 22.3 (-5) and a minimum of 13.6 (+4), weather conditions around Gwalior was also not much different from the abovementioned two cities.

Further, the maximum around Jabalpur on Wednesday was recorded at 25.9 (-3) degree Celsius whereas, the minimum stood there at 17.4 (+5) degree Celsius.

In the local weather forecast for Bhopal, the officials said by and large cloudy atmosphere would prevail in the city on Thursday. A possibility of further witnessing thundershowers or hailstorms was not termed as prominent by the forecasters.

Change in the weather relieved the people from sultry conditions prevailing for the past few days. The timely relief was welcomed by the denizens.

### **Haryana ignores Plan panel advice to merge forest, environment depts**

February 17, 2011 10:58:41 AM

**Rajeev Ranjan Roy | Chandigarh**

The advice of the Planning Commission to merge the forest and environment wings together to

have one well-knit unit to address ecological concerns seems to have gone for a toss in Haryana. The State Government has not been able to take the long pending corrective measure so far.

The undue delay in doing so has raised several eyebrows in the corridors of power at a time when the Government is struggling hard to deal with allegations of widespread corruption and scams in the forest wing brought by whistle-blower Sanjiv Chaturvedi, an Indian Forest Service officer.

At present, the Haryana Government has an independent department of forest, though forests are not a principal feature of the State's geography. It has a separate wing for environment, which is very important, given the fact that Haryana has a large number of industrial units and their functioning has to be monitored closely so that ecological norms are not compromised.

“We have not yet thought of merging forest and environment wings into a single entity, though there is no justification in having them separately. In fact, the Haryana Pollution Control Board should also be made part of the conglomerate,” admitted a senior Haryana Government functionary. “The Planning Commission has pointed this out several times and it needs to be looked into seriously.”

The matter is apparently extraordinary as there is no justification for trifurcating an identical area into three parts for which the State Government is paying a heavy price not only in terms of alleged corrupt practices but by compromising with the effectiveness of its performance. “There is no proper co-ordination among the three units - forest, environment and pollution control wing,” was how a senior functionary in the office of Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda commented when contacted by The Pioneer.

The State does not meet the national ambient air quality standards in respect of respirable suspended particulate matter (RSPM) at 180/60 micrograms. The State generates 541 million

litres daily (MLD) sewage of which 312 MLD is treated. Dissolved oxygen, biological demand, and fecal coliform. The total fecal coliform count does not meet the standards prescribed by for river water quality.

The collection efficiency of municipal waste in Haryana is 62 percent. The state is short of facilities to dispose of 36,800 tonnes per annum of hazardous waste generated. As much as 6110 kg bio-medical waste is generated per day, out of which 98.87 percent is treated. "The State has a separate department of forests and a separate department of environment and has constituted the State Disaster Management Authority. It does not fund the State Pollution Control Board," says the Plan panel.

The issues brought forth by Chaturvedi have exposed several loopholes in the functioning of the forest wing. He was transferred 12 times in five years for allegedly exposing myriad scams and irregularities taking place in the forest department. His acts have brought several Ministers and bureaucrats under scanner. These include former Haryana Forest Minister Kiran Chaudhary, some senior officers in the forest department and other bigwigs.

## Business Standard

Thursday, Feb 17, 2011

**Agri ministry proposes export of all onion varieties**

**Sanjeeb Mukherjee / New Delhi February 17, 2011, 0:52 IST**

To provide a mid-way between the domestic supply and lifting ban on exports of onions after their prices crashed, the agriculture ministry has proposed opening up exports of all varieties of the bulb with a minimum export price of \$600 per metric tonne.

The agriculture ministry has also sought permission to take all decisions on exports of onion, like fixing the export floor price through its nodal cooperative agency Nafed.

Officials said the proposals could be discussed at the next meeting of group of ministers on food.

Decision on onion exports was transferred to the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) after prices spiked around end of December.

Onion prices had jumped to around over Rs 60 per kilogram in most parts of the country from around Rs 30 in just couple of days over reports of damage to standing crop in Maharashtra, the country's largest onion-producing state.

Government first suspended all onion exports till January 15 before imposing an indefinite ban as prices kept rising. It also more than doubled the minimum export price to \$1,200 per tonne from \$525 for exporters who already had no objection certificates to cut down on exports. However, after onion prices crashed, particularly in wholesale markets, the government last week lifted ban on Rose and Krishnapuram varieties of onions, grown in Karnataka.

According to the agriculture ministry estimates, the total production of onions in 2010-11 was around 13 million tonnes, around 7.4% more than last year.

India has exported 11.5 lakh tonnes of onions in April to November period this year as compared to 18.73 lakh tonnes in the entire 2009-10 financial year. India exports onions mainly to West Asian countries, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, officials said allowing exports with a floor price would allow low-priced onions consumed by the common man to be retained in the country.

### **Mustardseed yield may rise 4%**

**BS Reporter / Mumbai February 17, 2011, 0:45 IST**

Intermittent rainfall during rabi sowing season is likely to help mustardseed growers to harvest four per cent higher yield this year.

According to a survey conducted by the Mumbai-based trade body the Solvent Extractors' Association (SEA), mustardseed yield is estimated to increase to 945 per kg/hectare (ha) this season as against 907 per kg/ha during the rabi harvesting season last year. Barring Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, yield in all major mustardseed producing states is forecast to rise during the current season.

In Gujarat, however, per hectare mustardseed output is estimated to decline from 1,510 kg last year to 1,475 kg this year. The combined per hectare output in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is also estimated to decline to 700 kg this season from 800 kg previous season.

SEA said the area under mustardseed crop this season rose sharply to 7.25 million ha as against 6.53 million ha which is likely to fetch higher output this year. Total output this season is forecast to rise to 6.85 million tonnes as against 5.92 million tonnes in the rabi season last year.

This year due to late sowing, the maturity of the crop is delayed by two to three weeks. Also due to rain in November-December, fallow land of over 500,000 ha was covered under Taramira, a short crop of 60 days in Rajasthan, compared to less than 100,000 ha in the previous year.

Meanwhile, weather in the next three-four weeks will play a major role in deciding the yield. In the last few days weather has changed and the day temperature has increased and if this continues, it would reduce the overall yield of the crop. However, if rain falls during this period coupled with low temperature, it would be greatly beneficial to the standing crops. According to the weather forecast, mild showers are expected in northern India and also some parts of the Rajasthan in the next few days.

### **High wool prices trouble garment makers, margins dip**

**Komal Amit Gera / Chandigarh February 17, 2011, 0:44 IST**

The sharp rise in the price of greasy wool in the international market has hit Indian woollen yarn manufacturers hard. The major players are either retaining orders by squeezing margins or restricting orders to maintain margins.

The large players like Jayashree Textiles (Aditya Birla Nuvo), Vikram Woollen (Grasim) and Oswal Woollen Mills, are having a tough time due to supply bottlenecks and consequent increase in price.

The prices were pushed up in Australia, the largest supplier of greasy wool in the world, due to slaughtering of Merino sheep after pastures dried up due to scanty rainfall in Western Australia and cyclones in Victoria.

According to S K Patodia, head of the wool business at Aditya Birla Group, the prices are unprecedentedly high. The international prices of 18.5 micron and other finer wool have increased from \$11.96 to \$19.16 per kg in the past four months, he said. The miller cannot absorb a 60 per cent price rise in such a short span, he added.

The Aditya Birla Group has 34,000 spindles with a capacity of four million kg of wool yarn per annum. Of this, about three million kg is normally exported and a million is sold in the domestic market.

He said the impact of high input cost was more evident on finer quality. "The orders for 16.5 to 18.5 micron yarn have been reduced. Earlier, finer woollen yarn used to constitute 25 per cent of the export basket and this has now dropped to 15-18 per cent. The demand for coarse varieties has been increased during this phase."

Strengthening of the Australian dollar is also to some extent responsible for accentuating the troubles of wool importers.

The managing director of Oswal Woollen Mills, J L Oswal, said some manufacturers had resorted to blended woollen yarn by substituting acrylic and polyester to cut cost. But the manufacturers of high-end brands do not.

"The Monte Carlo and Canteberry brands are niche market woollen garments, so we have pressed our margins to retain our customers," he said.

The merino wool produced in Australia is the finest quality, used in suit lengths, shawls and premium garments. The substitutes such as angora rabbit wool, lamb wool, alpaca wool and mohair are not viable due to proportional increase in their price, he said.

Industry sources said there had been a decline of about seven in the volume of greasy wool import in the wake of the price rise.

**Unseasonal rains in Saurashtra likely to hit Kesar mango crop**

**Vimukt Dave / Mumbai/ Rajkot February 17, 2011, 0:31 IST**

The much anticipated Kesar mango is under a threat of a possible damage due to unexpected rains on Monday this week. Kesar mango crop in Saurashtra-Kutch region, a heartland for the fruit, has taken a hit following unseasonal rains, which coupled with foggy weather in past few days may also damage the quality of the mango this year, industry experts informed.

The current period is considered as an important period for flowering on the Mango trees. "There are fears of a possible 'powdery mildew' disease in mango plants due to the present weather conditions. Unseasonal rain will crumble the flowers of mango," said AV Barad, dean and principal of agriculture college, Junagadh Agriculture University (JAU).

He further added, "This is a very important period for the Kesar mango as it is a flowering time for the plant. The unseasonal rains will change the crop estimations."

Last year, in Kutch, the production stood at about 1 lakh tonnes. The production fluctuates every year due to seasonal changes.

"This year we have seen very good flowering in mango, but this untimely rain has damaged it. Moreover, unnecessary fog is also hurting the crop of Kesar mango. This time foggy weather is more than required for a normal Kesar crop," said Batuksinh Jadeja of Ashapura Farms and Nursery from Kutch.

Unseasonal rain was seen at Talala and Sasan gir area of Junagadh district, which is the largest Kesar mango growing region in Saurashtra.

Harsukhbhai Jarsaniya , secretary, Talala APMC said, "It is sure that unseasonal rains have damaged the mango crop this year but it is premature to estimate the extent of damage. The mango season will get delayed by about a month or more. Generally Kesar mango arrival starts in the first week of April but this year it is expected to come after mid-May." About 15 lakh boxes (each weighing 10 kg) of Kesar mango arrived in Talala APMC last year.

**Cotton prices head north**

**BS Reporter / Chennai/ Guntur February 17, 2011, 0:18 IST**



Global demand has pushed up cotton prices in the Andhra Pradesh market.

The average price of cotton in the markets across the state is above Rs 6,000 a quintal, while the lowest is Rs 5,160 a quintal, which was recorded at Adilabad market in the first week of February. Even the Guntur market saw a little less than Rs 6,000 when compared with Adoni, Jammikunta and Khammam markets, where the crop is with moisture.

On February 9, cotton ruled at Rs 6,829 a quintal at Adoni market in Kurnool district as against the minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 3,000 a quintal. The price, which was Rs 6,177 a quintal on February 4, had shot up in less than a week. At Jammikunta market in Karimnagar district too, cotton fetched Rs 6,020 a quintal in the first week of February.

According to the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), as much as 3.2 million bales of cotton had arrived in the AP market by February 6 as against 2.9 million bales during the same period in 2009-10. AP was expected to produce 5.5 million bales for the current season, but the yield has come down due to the rains. The CCI and the cotton market are now anticipating around 4.5 million bales from the state.

In the southern region, only Tamil Nadu has seen a marginal decline in the crop with only 216,000 bales arriving in the market this season as against 290,000 in 2009-10. Karnataka saw an increase in arrivals this year with a total of 572,000 bales reaching the market this season as against 545,000 bales in the last season.

With regard to cultivation, all the three southern states have increased the area this year when compared with the previous year. While AP cultivated cotton in 1.4 million hectare in 2009-10, it increased the extent to 1.7 million hectare this year. Similarly, Karnataka increased the extent from 455,000 hectare in 2009-10 to 525,000 hectare this year, while Tamil Nadu increased the crop size from 104,000 hectare to 130,000 hectare.

### **Byadgi chilli prices at all time high**

**BS Reporter / Chennai/ Dharwad February 17, 2011, 0:02 IST**

The prices of Grade A quality chilli in Asia's biggest chilli market at Byadgi has hit an all time high, thanks to a sharp decline in the inflow of chillis into the market due to the untimely rains and pest attacks.

Byadgi in Haveri district is famous for the Kaddi and Dabbi varieties of chillies which are in great demand as oleoresin oil is extracted from the chilli and exported. While the Kaddi variety is gnarled thin and long with not many seeds, Dabbi is small and plump with more seeds. The pulp is used by the lipstick industry.

The trade which began a month ago has not picked up as not many farmers are bringing their produce to the market. The market received 1,400 tonnes this year compared to 2,500 tonnes last year, 75,000 tonnes in 2006-2007 and 65,000 tonnes in 2007-2008.

The traders expect this year's inflow to reach a maximum of 4,000 tonnes. Cashing in on the situation, the farmers are selling the produce at Rs 14,000-15,000 per quintal. The Grade A chilli is being sold at Rs 15,000-20,000 which is Rs 5,000 more than the price last year. The buyers expect the prices to fall as they are awaiting the arrival of chilli from Bellary and Hoovinahadagali to enter the market.

Earlier Byadgi Chilli was grown mainly for the purpose of using it in food items as a spicy ingredient but recently, it has also been grown for the extraction of oleoresin, a red oil from the pods. Oleoresin is used in the preparation of nail polish and lipsticks. The extraction of oleoresin has also led to the creation of cold storage units in Byadgi since the chilli pods have to be maintained at a low temperature of 4 to 6 degree Celsius in order to maintain the colour and purity. Storing in cold storage units also increases the amount of oleoresin extracted from chilli by about 30-40%. About 50 litres of oleoresin can be extracted from about 1 tonne of Byadgi chillies.

Companies have been set up in and around Byadgi that are involved in the extraction of oleoresin. This oleoresin is then sent to Kerala where it is further refined before being exported to countries like USA, Japan and those in Europe.

Byadgi chillies are primarily sold at the Byadgi chilli market; annual sales are about Rs 300 crores (\$75 million). This market attracts traders from all over Karnataka and from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh because of favourable conditions for business like fair price, immediate payment and accurate measurement of the chillis.

## **Nabard brings Haryana bankers to study Karnataka's JLG models**

Dharwad, Feb. 16:

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) looking at successful and workable joint liability groups (JLGs) models developed in Karnataka has arranged exposure visit to Haryana bankers.

Nabard has brought 30 bankers from Haryana for a two-day trip to Dharwad. Bankers are to get first-hand direct exposure to the successful models developed by the State Bank of India (SBI) and Dharwad-based Karnataka Vikas Grameena Bank (KVGB).

“KVG Bank is a regional rural bank sponsored by Syndicate Bank, has created 1,907 JLGs and has many successful rural and urban centric models. While SBI has formed around 500 JLGs in the rural areas,” said Mr Y.N. Mahadevaiah, Assistant General Manager, Nabard-Dharwad, who is co-ordinating the exposure visit.

KVG Bank has formed JLGs in rural areas mainly centred on share croppers, lift-irrigation, sculpture (stone carving) and weaving. In urban areas (small and medium towns), has formed groups revolving around construction sector like bar-benders, plumbers and masons. Majority of JLGs formed are around Gadag, Belgaum and Dharwad districts.

### **Showcasing experience**

According to Mr P.L. Kudagi, Chief Manager, KVG Bank, “We will be showcasing our experience of how we popularised the JLG concept in north Karnataka districts, adopted it to suit the local needs and also how it was scaled up to form more groups in short time.”

Mr Mahadevaiah said, “Major objectives of this exposure visit is for sharing, reciprocating and replicating the successful model of JLG-bank linkages in Karnataka with commercial and rural banks of Haryana state. The team will also be visiting Gadag to study SBI funded JLGs KVK-Hulkoti.”

“Since Karnataka has pioneered many banking concepts like Self Help Groups, Micro Finance and now joint liability groups, there is not much banking innovation happening in north India, hence we are bringing them over to Dharwad for exposure,” he added.

In addition to JLG models, the Haryana bankers are to get lessons on different models adopted by banks in Karnataka revolving around finance, financing norms, benefits accrued to JLGs, formation of JLG networks. Bankers are also to get lesson in lending and recovery to agricultural sector, non-farm sector through group approach.

### **Spot rubber improves on covering purchases**



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

Kottayam, Feb. 16:

The domestic rubber prices firmed up further on Wednesday. In spot, the market gained mainly on covering purchases and the trend was partially mixed. Among other reports, the benchmark Tokyo rubber futures fell, retreating from record high levels as a broad drop in commodities' markets prompted investors to book profits.

Sheet rubber moved up creating yet another all time high at Rs 239 (238) a kg amidst scattered transactions. The grade closed flat at Rs 238.50 a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi as reported by the Rubber Board.

In futures, RSS 4 improved at its March series to Rs 244.60 (240.55), April to Rs 254 (249.49), May to Rs 258.60 (254.29) while the June series finished the debut trading session at Rs 262.25 a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

The volumes totalled 13504 lots and open interest 12548 lots. The turnover was Rs 332.89 crores.

RSS 3 declined at its February futures to ₹525 (Rs 285.74) from ₹532.1 a kg during the day session but then remained inactive in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM). The grade (spot) closed at Rs 290.21 (290.05) a kg at Bangkok.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 239 (238); RSS-5: 228.50 (228); ungraded: 225 (224); ISNR 20: 236 (235) and latex 60 per cent: 149 (149).

### **SABMiller plans 100% barley sourcing from farmers in five years**



Business Line Barley farmers waiting for customers at the wholesale Grain Mandi Najafgarh in New Delhi (file photo): Shiv Kumar Pushpakar

Alwar (Rajasthan), Feb. 16:

SABMiller India plans to procure malt barley requirements for its breweries directly from farmers in the next five years.

The Indian subsidiary of the \$26-billion London-based beer major – owner of brands such as Foster's, Haywards 5000 and Knock Out – consumed around 75,000 tonnes of barley last year. Of this, 18,000 tonnes were sourced from farmers and 3,000 tonnes from traders. The balance 54,000 tonnes were bought – in direct malt form – from domestic malters, including Barmalt India and The Malt Company India Pvt Ltd.

“With sale volumes growing by 14-15 per cent annually, our barley requirement will double to 150,000 tonnes in the next five years, which we intend meeting 100 per cent through direct farmer purchases. In the current year itself, we are targeting 30,000 tonnes from this route,” Mr

Sundeep Kumar, Director (Corporate Affairs) of SABMiller India, said at a company-organised media field visit [here](#).

SABMiller operates 15 'Saanjhi Unnati' barley purchase centres in Rajasthan alone. These procured 15,500 tonnes from over 5,600 farmers in a 22,500-acre catchment during 2010. Another 2,500 tonnes was bought from 650 farmers cultivating 2,500 acres in Punjab, Haryana and Uttarakhand.

"We are not engaging in any contract farming. Our centres basically provide certified seeds for farmers to plant and they are under no contract to sell back the barley to us. We undertake to buy all their grain though, provided it meets our minimum quality parameters. And since we pay slightly more than the mandi rate, they have an incentive to supply to us," claimed Mr Kumar.

The certified seeds being made available are largely public-bred varieties of the Rajasthan Agricultural University (RD-2503, RD-2508, RD-2552, RD-2715 and RD-2660) and Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture at Kanpur (K-551).

India produces 1.5-1.6 million tonnes (mt) of barley, of which hardly 0.35 mt is used by brewers. The bulk goes as feed and fodder for animals. The absence of an organised market means that not even 10 per cent of the seeds used by farmers are certified.

"You need to first induce them to sow pure seeds, which give grain of uniform size and character. We, therefore, procure these in bulk from the State Farms Corporation of India and distribute it at about Rs 15 a kg, as against the Government's own rate of Rs 20," said Mr Nawlendu Ranjan, who heads SABMiller India's Barley Development Programme.

Beer-makers use barley to first produce malt. The process involves soaking the grain in water and allowing it to germinate, so as to convert the barley starch into sugar (maltose). The germinated grain is further kiln-dried, with the resultant malt – 80 tonnes from every 100 tonnes of barley – being fermented into alcohol by adding yeast.

### **Malt versus Feed-grade**

Barley for brewing purposes should ideally contain more starch and less protein, unlike the typical 'six-row' feed-grade varieties grown in India. Six-row barleys – which have six grain rows

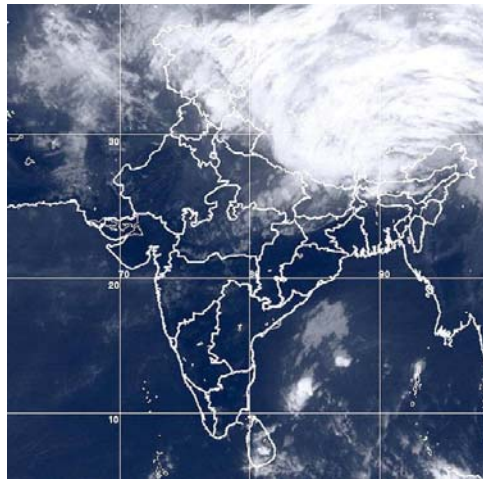
on each spike (ear-head) – yield less bold kernel. A thousand grains weigh only 38-43 grams, compared with 46-58 grams in 'two-row' varieties. Less starch also results in just 68-71 per cent beer extraction from six-row malted barleys, whereas it is 76-82 per cent for two-row malts.

“The Saanjhi Unnati programme has helped us increase our average extraction (as a percentage of malt) from 70 to 72. We hope to raise it further to 76 per cent-plus with expanded coverage of two-row barley varieties,” said Mr Ranjan.

The company last year promoted cultivation of RD-2668, a two-row variety, over 2,500 acres.

Interestingly, the first commercially successful indigenous two-row barley, DWRUB-52, was jointly developed by the UB Group with the Directorate of Wheat Research, Karnal. The terms of collaboration confer UB exclusive seed multiplication rights over a five-year period, which ends this year prior to the new planting season from November.

#### **Forecasts differ on spread of easterly showers**



India meteorological department satellite at 16-00 hrs

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb. 16:

International model forecasts continue to favour scattered rain along a northeast-southwest gradient along the east coast and immediate interior on Sunday and Monday.

Moisture incursion has been indicated both from equatorial Indian Ocean (south of the peninsula) as well as from the coastal waters of the Bay of Bengal. This is expected to fuel the precipitation along the coast.

## **NO CIRCULATION**

Contrary to forecasts, there is no forecast of any circulation spinning up in the Bay waters; it would just amount to a 'perturbation' of available moisture under the influence of easterly winds.

On the other hand, some models indicated the possibility of such a circulation doing the rounds over peninsular south and dropping some rain.

A feeble western disturbance is forecast to affect the western Himalayan region by the weekend.

Forecasts show the system getting accentuated presumably by residual moisture from a prevailing 'active' western disturbance fanned up further by warmer easterly winds from the Bay.

## **WESTERLY INFLUENCE**

This is what could likely trigger the rains along the coast and immediate interior, which India Meteorological Department (IMD) sees would be confined to Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

An IMD outlook on Wednesday afternoon said that the 'active' western disturbance would continue to affect western Himalayan region and the Indo-Gangetic plains on Thursday and the Northeastern States during the next three days.

An IMD heavy weather alert said that isolated heavy rainfall would occur over Uttar Pradesh, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim on Thursday.

Isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall would occur over Arunachal Pradesh and Assam during on Thursday and Friday.



Isolated thunder squalls and hailstorms have been forecast over Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim on Thursday and over Assam and Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday and Friday.

## **RAIN, SNOW**

Meanwhile, the last 24 hours ending Thursday morning saw widespread rain or snow being reported from Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and scattered over Jammu and Kashmir.

Fairly widespread rain or thundershowers has also occurred over Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and east Rajasthan; scattered over Punjab, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh; and isolated over Bihar and north Madhya Pradesh.

Minimum temperatures have fallen by 1-3 degree Celsius over Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh and north Madhya Pradesh as the influence of the away-moving 'active' westerly system wanes.

## **MERCURY FALL**

They are expected to fall by another 2-4 degree Celsius over northwest and adjoining central India during the next three days, the IMD outlook said.

The lowest minimum temperature of 9 degree Celsius overnight on Wednesday was recorded at Erinpura Road (Rajasthan) in the plains of the country.

Satellite pictures showed the presence of convective (rain-bearing) clouds over parts of western Himalayan region and Uttar Pradesh.

## **Sugar remains flat in thin trade**



THE HINDU Sugar being weighed in a shop File Photo - M. GOVARTHAN  
New Delhi, Feb 16:

The wholesale sugar market remained flat on Wednesday as the prices moved in a narrow range on restricted activity and settled around previous levels. Market analysts said adequate stocks position against the absence of buying mainly kept sugar prices quiet.

Following were today's quotation in Rs a quintal: Sugar ready M-30 2,940-3,065 and S-30 2,915-2,940. Mill delivery M-30 2,700-2,850 and S-30 2,685-2,825.

Sugar mill gate prices (excluding duty): Kinonni 2,900, Asmoli 2,880, Mawana 2,850, Titabi 2,820, Thanabhavan 2,790, Budhana 2,785 and Dorala 2,835.

**Farm output rebounds, but no price relief seen**



Business Line Farm output rebounds... Photo: Ashoke Chakrabarty

Given the latest farm output numbers and even assuming that they are not going to be revised downward substantially in the next round, there is nothing to suggest that food inflation is going fall anytime soon.

Mumbai, Feb. 16:

Despite the fact that farm output in 2010-11 has rebounded from the previous year as borne out by the second advance estimate of 2010-11 crop production released recently by the Ministry of Agriculture, there is nothing to feel euphoric or smug about.

If anything, global and domestic market signals point to need for continued caution on the food price front and no let up in control measures.

The star performer of the year is, of course, pulses, production of which for the first time in recent memory is set to achieve the annual target of 16.5 million tonnes (mt). Yet, concerns remain. For instance, rabi season pulses output, estimated at 10.1 mt, is short of the season's target of 10.8 mt.

Major rabi pulse, chana (gram) has fallen short of the target of 7.6 mt with output estimated at 7.4 mt. Urad, moong and others account for the rest (2.7 mt).

### **Weather effect unclear**

Actually, it was kharif output (6.4 mt versus target of 5.7 mt) that contributed to the improved performance. Also, it is unclear if the effect of recent weather disturbances in Madhya Pradesh has been taken into account.

Production of wheat, planted on a record 29.1 million hectares, has been estimated at 81.5 mt, close to the target of 82.0 mt. However, industry and trade representatives do not share the Government's optimism about the crop size. To be sure, the crop in the making is not without concerns in the next few weeks. Weather, especially temperature, is likely to influence yield. It should not be a surprise if the output estimate is pared down in the next round.

Like in kharif season, rabi rice too has fallen short of the target of 15 mt by a good 1.2 mt (13.8 mt) and, therefore, the annual target of 102 mt has remained elusive again with total output estimated at 94 mt.

This is sure to result in tightening stocks and firm prices. Permission to export specified varieties of non-basmati rice under a limited ceiling is also a bullish factor.

Oilseeds and coarse grains crops have also rebounded from last year, but have still fallen short of target. At 40.1 mt, coarse grains are a good 10 per cent below the year's target of 44 mt, while oilseeds have fared poorly with output (27.8 mt) trailing annual target (33.2 mt) by a good 20 per cent.

### **Nothing to rejoice about**

Overall, there is nothing to feel euphoric about 2010-11 farm output, except that cotton has done exceedingly well; but the fibre's trade policy has got mired in interdepartmental squabbles and pressure from user industries. The country has failed to draw the full benefit of record global prices.

The current year's farm performance raises serious doubts about the rationale and manner of fixing annual targets and strategies adopted for achieving them. Importantly, someone within the Government should be held accountable or responsible for the performance.

Given the latest farm output numbers and even assuming that they are not going to be revised downward substantially in the next round, there is nothing to suggest that food inflation is going fall anytime soon. There will surely be a respite when harvest pressure builds, but it would be temporary. Importantly, global cues are not consumer-friendly. Weather in some of the agriculturally important countries is far from benign.

### **Poor demand pulls rice prices down**



Business Line Basmati rice - Photo: P V Sivakumar

Karnal, Feb. 16:

Sluggish domestic demand pulled the prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice down by Rs 20-50 a quintal on Wednesday. An imbalance in the demand and supply equation was the prime reason behind the fall, said Mr Amit Chandna, a rice trader.

Rice millers are offloading their stocks in the absence of export demand. But there is not much demand in the domestic market at present. This situation is leading the market down, he added.

With not much trading in the market, the prices of aromatic rice dropped by Rs 20-50 a quintal, while the prices of non-basmati rice dropped by Rs 20-30 a quintal. The prices of broken varieties of both aromatic and non-basmati ruled firm.

The Pusa-1121 steam ruled at Rs 5,200-5,350 a quintal, Pusa-1121 at Rs 4,250-4,360, and Pusa-1121 at Rs 5,150-5,200.

Basmati sela quoted at Rs 6,200-6,250 and basmati raw at Rs 7,300-7,370. Duplicate basmati ruled at around Rs 3,960 a quintal.

The price of brokens of 1121 variety were: Tibar, Rs 3,000-3,400; Dubar, Rs 2,200-2,500; and Mongra, Rs 1,800-2,000.

Sharbati sela sold at around Rs 2,680, Sharbati steam Rs 3,000-3,070, Permal sela Rs 1,900-2,030 and Permal steam Rs 2,100-2,180 a quintal. For the brokens of Sharbati variety, Tibar quoted at Rs 2,500, Dubar at 2,050 and Mongra, Rs 1,450.

## **PADDY TRADING**

Arrivals of paddy have dropped on account of the uncertain weather conditions. Around 500 bags of PR sold at Rs 1,000 a quintal. Around 600 bags of Pusa (duplicate basmati) at Rs 2,000-2,020, around 1,000 bags of Pusa-1121 at Rs 2,000-2,350, and about 500 bags of pure basmati at Rs 2,200-2,600 a quintal.

### **Why farmers plump for barley**

Alwar (Rajasthan), Feb. 16:

Barley is a Rabi cereal, sown in November and harvested by end-March. That makes it similar to wheat, though the latter matures only about 15 days later.

But in terms of yields or prices, barley ranks much below wheat, making it an orphan crop or sorts.

Mr Ram Niwas Punia, a farmer from Girudi village in Bansur Tehsil of Alwar, says he gets 18-20 quintals of barley from an acre, as against 20-22 quintals from wheat.

Last year, Mr Punia received an average Rs 950 a quintal for the 'K-551' barley variety that he supplied to SABMiller's purchase centre at Bansur. This was more than the minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 750 fixed by the Centre. But it was lower than the official MSP of Rs 1,100 for wheat.

Why does he, then, still grow barley on 20 acres of his 100-acre holding, which includes 60 acres of leased-in land?

"Firstly, it is very hardy and performs well even in sandy, saline soils. On my more fertile land, I cultivate wheat on 20 acres," notes this progressive farmer, who also grows chana (gram) on 10, mooli (radish) on 30 and other vegetables (cauliflower, peas and tomatoes) on 20 acres.

But hardiness is only one factor. The other is costs. "For wheat, I have to apply 40 kg of di-ammonium phosphate and 80 kg of urea for every acre, whereas these are only 30 kg and 60 kg respectively in the case of wheat," Mr Punia adds.

In addition, there are savings on water and associated diesel consumption. "I need at least six irrigations in wheat, which is only four for barley," points out Mr Hazari Lal Jat, a 35-bigha (21-acre) farmer, who devotes 16 bigha to barley, 13 bigha to wheat and six bigha to mustard.

Water is obviously a major consideration in Rajasthan. Mr Jat now extracts water from around 125 feet below the ground. And as the water-table is dipping every year, he has made sufficient provision by sinking a submersible pump to 225 feet.

**Coonoor tea auction volume falls**



Business Line A view of new tender tea leaves in a tea garden in Assam.

Coonoor, Feb. 16:

A volume of 9.88 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No: 7 of the auctions of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) to be conducted tomorrow and Friday, reveals an analysis of the listing by brokers.

This is 17,000 kg lower than last week's offer and as much as 5.78 lakh kg lower than the offer this time last year.

Of the 9.88 lakh kg on offer, 6.81 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 3.07 lakh kg to the dust grades. As much as 9.25 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.63 lakh kg to orthodox variety.

The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 0.39 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 6.42 lakh kg to CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.24 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 2.83 lakh kg to CTC.

In the 9.88 lakh kg, fresh tea accounts for 8.98 lakh kg and 90,000 kgs comprises teas remaining unsold in previous auctions. Although the offer is lower than last year, demand has been inadequate.

Export purchases were weak in the last few weeks. Purchase has practically come to a standstill for Egypt and Tunisia, which are facing internal unrest. Last week, unsold stock was depleted only by reducing prices by Rs 3 a kg. Much dependence is on upcountry purchase.

**Kerala to become export capital of ornamental fishes**



Kottayam, Feb. 16:

Stating that Kerala would be made the export capital of ornamental fishes within five years, the Minister for Fisheries and Registration, Mr S. Sarma, has said the legislative Assembly had approved the proposal to set up a branch of Kerala Aqua Ventures International Ltd in the US for promoting export.

KVIL in Kadungalloor near Aluva, chaired by Chief Minister Mr V. S. Achutanandan, was set up with public-private participation and has been exporting ornamental fishes to Japan, Italy and France, Mr Sarma said after inaugurating the Rs 50 lakh Kottayam Public Aquarium here.

He said the country stood at the lowest level of below one per cent in the export of ornamental fishes in the international market, while Sri Lanka, though smaller in size compared with India, the export growth was eight per cent.

The State is regarded as the export hub of ornamental fishes in the country.

The Minister said the Centre and State Governments have launched a scheme by which a subsidy of Rs 80,000 would be given to Kudumbasree units having five members each, involved in ornamental fish farming. This will ensure a monthly family income of about Rs 7,000, he said.

The 200 sq.foot aquarium was built in a 20 cents land with financial assistance of Rs 37.5 lakh from the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana of Union Agriculture Department and Rs 12.5 lakh from Matsyafed.