

Horticulture Department to focus on banana

Karthik Madhavan

To grant approval after new government takes charge

Photo: Special Arrangement



For rich yield:Horticulture Department is planning to increase its support for banana cultivation.

COIMBATORE: The Horticulture Department, in all likelihood, is planning to extend support for banana cultivation for the current financial year in the district.

The regional office here has sent a proposal in this regard to the Department headquarters in Chennai seeking increase in cultivation area under the programme to support banana.

Sources say they have asked the area to be increased to 1,750 ha for the 2011-12 financial year. Last year, the department supported the crop on 1,000 ha.

They say that as and when the Coimbatore office gets the approval, the Department will provide inputs worth nearly Rs. 17,000 for every hectare of banana for a maximum of 1,750 hectares cultivated in the district.

The inputs will be in the form of fertilizers like azospirillum, phospo-bacteria, NPK 19, pseudomonas, trichoderma viride, etc. The department gives this at no cost to the farmers.

In providing the inputs free of cost, the department will incur an expenditure of Rs. 2.95 crore.

Though farmers across the district cultivate banana, the crop is concentrated in Karamadai, Annur and Pollachi. Poovan, nenthran , moris, kathali, G9 (tissue culture plant) and almost all local varieties are cultivated.

October-November is the planting season. The harvest starts a year later. As many as 2,250 trees can be cultivated on a hectare. If it is high-density cultivation, the number of trees goes up.

Under the National Agriculture Development Plan scheme, the Coimbatore office has brought 52 hectares banana under drip irrigation, providing a subsidy of Rs. 46,000 a hectare. Of the 52 hectares, 15 hectares have been clubbed into cluster in a village near Karamadai.

Apart from banana, the Coimbatore office has also asked for increased allotment to extend support to farmers cultivating grape, pineapple, guava, mango, cut flowers, and spices.

The sources say the Department will grant approval by the end of May or June after the new government takes charge.

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Focus on timely harvesting of mangoes, Minister tells farmers

Staff Reporter

Ryots advised to make use of scientific methods for exploring export market

Minister unveils statue of YSR Stone laid for road at Mallaram

PHOTO: G.N.RAO



Stock-taking:Government Chief Whip Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka having a look at the mangoes at an orchard during an interaction with mango growers at Mallannapalem village in Khammam district on Sunday. —

KHAMMAM: Government Chief Whip Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka has urged the mango growers to be wary of hailstorm threat and focus on timely harvesting of the mangoes for avoiding losses and reaping rich dividends.

Mr. Vikramarka had a brief interaction with the mango growers at Mallannapalem village in Mudigonda mandal on Sunday.

Speaking to the farmers, he called upon them to take the advice of the scientists and the officials of the Horticulture Department for scientific harvesting of the mangoes and securing good returns.

“Timely harvesting of the fruits holds the key to reap rich harvest,” he said advising them to utilise scientific methods at every stage of mango cultivation for exploring the export market.

Earlier, Mr. Vikramarka laid foundation stone for the proposed road at Mallannapalem. He also unveiled the statue of former Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy in the village.

Addressing a meeting held in this connection, he said that the proposed BT road would be laid with an estimated cost of Rs. 1.03 crore. “It would realise the decades old aspirations of the

villagers for road access,” he remarked and reiterated that the Congress government accorded paramount significance to improve the infrastructure facilities in the rural areas.

“Our government is striving to usher in Indiramma Rajyam, one of the goals envisaged by YSR ,” he said calling upon the party cadres to make relentless efforts for strengthening the party as envisioned by the former Chief Minister.

Later, he laid foundation stone for a new road to be taken up at an estimated cost of Rs. 80 lakhs at Mallaram village in the same mandal.

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Popular mangoes trickle into market

Staff Reporter

Ulavapadu variety most sought-after in Ongole

'Raw mango being sold between Rs. 30 and Rs. 40 depending on size'

Mangoes help replenish salts, vitamins and energy lost during summer: IMA treasurer

PHOTO: Kommuri Srinivas



The 'king' arrives: A woman in Ongole buys raw mangoes which are a great way to battle the summer heat as they are rich in vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants.—

ONGOLE: As the mercury soars, raw mangoes have started coming into the market here from Ulavapadu and other areas in Prakasam district.

The mangoes, particularly the raw 'copra mamidikai' variety, which tastes sweet like coconut have been the sought-after by Ongolites, despite the high costs this season.

"We get each raw mango on an average at about Rs. 30 and sell them between Rs. 30 and Rs. 40 depending on the size," a 40-year-old trader says while displaying the popular Ulavapadu variety in his shop. "Those who are got used to tasting it, will at least buy cut mango pieces," the trader, Prakash, says. The variety turns into bright yellow coinciding with heat wave conditions witnessed in May and mostly exported to Dubai and other West Asian countries, the trader added.

The mangoes are fully loaded with vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants, Indian Medical Association treasurer Polavarapu Panikar says.

"Mangoes help replenish salts, vitamins and energy lost during summer," he says.

However, those suffering from diabetes have to be careful while consuming ripe Mangoes as they increase sugar level in blood.

An elderly person picking up a few mangoes from a street vendor feels "it is the right fruit to be consumed during summer." A health conscious woman while buying a raw mango, said "it is good for health as it helps regain the energy lost after doing daily chores."

Highlighting the benefits of the much-sought after fruit by young and old alike for generations, another old man said "mangoes help in digestion. Even children will be able to easily digest them".

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Watermelon trumps the king of fruits

Staff Reporter

— File Photo



Summer treat:With the delay in the arrival of mangoes in the market, watermelons are the

BANGALORE: As the arrival of mangoes this summer is likely to be delayed for nearly a fortnight, watermelons are likely to be in demand with fruit lovers. The fruit — a definite sign of the arrival of summer — will be seen stacked in mounds along the street and lined up on the supermarket shelves here for a while longer.

Traditionally, the arrival of mangoes results in a decline in the demand for watermelon. However, this year, their arrival will be delayed owing to the late flowering of mango trees across the State.

“When mangoes arrive, all other fruits get sidelined. That is the reason why it is called the ‘king of fruits’. However, this delay means that watermelons will be in demand for more time than usual,” Additional Director (Fruits), Horticulture S.V. Hittalmani told The Hindu.

“The watermelon crop was also not affected by any major diseases. While the mango crop was slightly damaged in the heat, ” he added.

Bangalore Rural, Chitradurga, Davangere, Uttara Kannada, Belgaum, Bellary and Raichur districts are major melon growing areas in the State, with a combined acreage of around 10,000 hectares.

While the State produces about 3 lakh tonnes of regular melons, it also produces about 2 lakh tonnes of the ‘Kiran’ variety, which is smaller but considered tasty.

High price

According to officials, the retail rate for Kiran melons has touched Rs. 30 a kg.

Explaining the rather high prices of watermelons, K.S. Venkatacheri, a retailer at Rajajinagar here said: "Huge demand from consumers such as juice makers has led to a spike in the prices of watermelons."

Irrespective of the price, Bangaloreans are not ready to miss out on the flavour of the season. "In spite of the price rise, I buy it regularly as it is the only appealing item to eat during summer. My kids demand it too, so I buy it," says Prashanth Balaji, who works in a public sector bank at Rajajinagar.

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Encroachment charge against Forest Department

G. Prabhakaran

Attappady tribes accuse department of helping windmill companies

PALAKKAD: Tribal people have alleged that the Forest Department has been encroaching upon their land at Kottathara in Attappady, where some windmill companies had earlier allegedly tried to usurp their property.

As in the local body elections last September, during the latest Assembly elections, they say, the department had been busy installing 'Jhandas' (boundary stones) to demarcate portions of their land as forests. They have 'Pattayam' (title deeds) for their land in the village, which falls in the Sholayur grama panchayat limits in Mannarkkad taluk.

They allege that the department had put up 33 stones, covering an area of more than 1,000 acres (1 acre = 0.4 hectare) of land under survey no. 762 during the local body elections. When the owners of the land, Palan, Shelvan and Balan, at Bodyshala, objected to the encroachment, cases were registered against them.

They say that at Kadappara in the same survey number, the windmill companies are learned to have bought 200 acres of land, for which the Forest Department had given no-objection certificate. Already, they have put up four windmill units on the land. By converting tribal land into forest land, the department was trying to help the windmill companies who had bought the land illegally.

M. Sukumaran, president of the Attappady Samrakshana Samithi, says the department had registered cases under non-bailable sections for organising a protest against the encroachment at Bodyshala.

He says that during the local body elections, the department had installed the stones on tribal land at Kallakkara, Karayur, Mannamthara, Bodyshala and Sambarcode, all in the Sholayur grama panchayat limits. The tribes had got land in these areas under the Kerala Land Reforms Act, the Kerala Private Forest (Vesting and Assignment) Act and the latest forest rights Act. So converting these land into forest land violates important Central and State legislation.

The tribal organisations of Attappady have said that the Forest Department is snatching away whatever little land the tribal people now hold.

They say that the State government has not taken steps to return their alienated 10,796 acres of land in Attappady despite the Supreme Court ordering its restoration. The court had directed the government to find a lasting solution to the vexed tribal land issue, but successive governments had failed to do so. The Girijan Seva Samithi, fighting to get back the lost land of tribal people, demanded that the Forest Department stop the encroachment.

Its president, U.C. Kunchan, has said that a survey by the Integrated Tribal Development Project in 1982 showed that 10,160.19 acres of tribal land had been alienated between 1960 and 1977. Between 1977 and 1982, another 536 acres got alienated. But after 1986, there were only 30 cases of alienation involving 100 acres.

He says the government promises to provide alternative land to tribal people as the alienated land cannot be taken back. But till now, no-one in Attappady has got cultivable and habitable alternative land, though some of them got three title deeds from successive governments without getting possession of any land, Mr. Kunchan adds.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/18/stories/2011041854040500.htm>

Call to liberalise agriculture to usher in second green revolution

Staff Reporter

Export of foodgrains and cotton should be allowed: JP

Tobacco growers press for allowing foreign direct investment in the sector

The country is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables

— Photo: Kommuri Srinivas



Clarion call:Lok Satta Party president Jayaprakash Narayan interacting with farmers at the N.G. Ranga Bhavan in Ongole on Sunday.

ONGOLE: Lok Satta Party President Dr Jayaprakash Narayan, on Sunday advocated liberalisation of agriculture to take advantage of the competitive advantage the country had in production of foodgrains and cotton.

Addressing a seminar on agrarian crisis and solution organised by the Acharya Ranga Kisan Samastha at the N. G. Ranga Bhavan here, he said "the country had benefitted from industrial liberalisation in 1991. The same way agriculture has to be liberalised to usher in a second green revolution. Without the agriculture sector being unshackled, the farmer cannot be rescued." We have to allow export of foodgrains and cotton subject to needs of

food security, to take advantage of large tracts of land getting diverted for production of bio-fuels abroad", he opined. On the other hand, the country was in a disadvantageous position in production of edible oil. "If only 10 to 15 per cent import duty is levied on edible oil and the amount accrued passed on to indigenous producers of oil seeds, the country will be able to achieve self sufficiency in edible oil in about three years", he said.

Though the country stood in second position in global production of fruits and vegetables, every year Rs. 50,000 worth of these produce perished. "The need of the hour is compression of the market chain and setting up of cold storage chains and agro-processing units on a massive scale to stabilise prices and guarantee good income for farmers", he underlined.

He wanted the state government to allot at least 20 per cent of over Rs 2,500 crore collected by way of market cess and other taxes from farmers for market intervention to ensure remunerative price for their produce.

Kanaparti plant

Dr Narayan assured the farmers of Kanaparti, where the state-owned Generation Corporation proposed a thermal plant, to join their fight for relocating the power plant to another suitable location in Prakasam district. "I am sure the plant will not be located in Kanaparti displacing farmers from their wetlands". He also interacted with people from Marlapadu, where magnetite iron ore plant has been proposed and assured his party's support to their fight. When the country had 25 per cent of the world's high quality iron ore deposits, there was no meaning in going for low quality magnetite-based iron ore polluting unit displacing the local people. The bureaucrat-turned-politician stressed the need for setting up an independent organisation to make judicious allocation of land to industries after assessing the requirement and stop earmarking more than the required land for industries. The tobacco growers from the region pressed for allowing foreign direct investment in the sector to end domestic players forming themselves into syndicate denying a fair price for their produce.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Monday, Apr 18

Max Min

34.9° | 26.3°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 84%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 5:55

Sunset: 18:22

Barometer: 1008.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Apr 19

Max Min

36° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Apr 20



34° | 25°

Cloudy

Thursday

Apr 21



34° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Friday

Apr 22



33° | 26°

Cloudy

Saturday

Apr 23



34° | 25°

Cloudy

Sunday

Apr 24



33° | 26°

Cloudy

Business Standard

Monday, Apr 18, 2011

Castor prices dip 12% as arrivals double

Vimukt Dave / Mumbai/ Rajkot April 18, 2011, 0:25 IST

Castor prices tumbled by over 12 per cent as the arrivals of the commodity has doubled in past ten days amid bleak demand.

Traders expect prices to fall further due to rising supplies and poor demand. The arrivals has increased from 60,000 bags ten days ago to 1.30 lakh bags currently. The prices have fallen from Rs 1,025-1,050 to Rs 920-930 per 20 kg recently.

Biren Vakil, an Ahmedabad-based commodity analyst said, "The farmers have started selling their products in the market as they believe that price would not increase any further."

About one and a half months back castor traded as high as Rs 1,300-1,320 per 20 kg mainly due to short supply.

At the time of high prices, farmers held the castor crop in anticipation of a further rise in the prices. But the prices started coming down from its peak levels due to a fall in demand. The weakness in prices is pushing farmers to clear their castor stocks.

Market participants informed that the arrivals may continue to remain high for about a month in the range of 1.30 lakh to 1.40 lakh bags. It is only in may that the arrivals may start decreasing.

"As long as the Chinese demand does not come up, the castor market would continue to run down side. For about a month there is no hope for upside. After that, market depends on the demand," Vakil informed.

Rajkot-based trader Haribhai Patel maintained, "The demand in spot market is very low. There are no exporters in the market to buy the commodity and on the other hand the supply is high. This is causing prices to fall. For now, there is no reason for price rise in castor."

Rajubhai Pobaru, president, Rajkot Commodity Exchange (RCX) said, “The export demand is expected to start after mid-May, till then prices will continue to fall.”

As per a survey conducted by the Solvent Extractors’ Association (SEA), total area under castor crop in India for the year 2010-11 has increased by 14 per cent to 8.59 lakh hectares.

The total production of castor seeds for the year 2010-11 is estimated at 11.90 lakh tonnes, which is up by 22 per cent as compared to 9.78 lakh tonnes in previous year. Gujarat’s castor production is expected to rise by 17 per cent to 8.60 lakh tonnes against 7.36 lakh tonnes recorded last year.

DGFT lists stringent norms for cotton yarn export registration

Anindita Dey / Mumbai April 16, 2011, 0:59 IST

To ensure genuine export of cotton yarn, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has come out with penal measures for breach of rules on registration of contracts for the new financial year.

Export shall be completed within 30 days from the date of issuance of registration certificate. An exporter failing to do so will be barred from further registration. In addition, a penalty could be imposed upon the exporter, ranging from a Rs 10,000 up to a maximum of five times the value of goods, whichever is more.



“These stringent measures have been suggested to ward off unscrupulous exporters who did register but never exported. Numerous instances were found last year, in case of cotton and cotton yarn, where exporters booked contracts but never exported. Cotton and cotton yarn being under quantitative restriction (amount of export is capped), creates irregularities in the entire system. It was observed that while more registrations could not be granted, those who took registration traded it with the ones who have already committed exports at exorbitant

prices. Now that the cotton yarn registration is free, such checks and balances are necessary to remove anomaly,” said official sources.

Another reason for such penal measures is to discourage exports, since domestic demand is quite high. Therefore, genuine exporter, should export only after meeting domestic consumption demand.

Officials added that after the group of ministers (GoM) decided to allow 5.5 million bales of cotton exports in 2010-11 and exporters were given 45 days, the actual exports under such registered contracts were far less than the quantity approved by the GoM.

Therefore, the jurisdiction for registration for cotton and cotton yarn was shifted from the textile ministry to the commerce ministry.

Cotton is among the very few commodities facing stringent measures over and above the norms laid out in general trade policy.

Besides these measures, there are others specified to check the authenticity of exports. It has been stated as a condition that the registration of contract for yarn exports will be allowed only if the exporter furnishes a copy of irrevocable letter of credit authenticated by an Indian bank and a copy of a Foreign Inward Remittance Certificate (FIRC).

FIRC shows receipt of remittance from the foreign buyer as proof of having received full advance payment or a minimum of 25 per cent of advance payment and the balance as cash against delivery. An irrevocable letter of credit is one which cannot be cancelled and this guarantees a buyer's payment to a seller will be received on time and for the correct amount.

These documents, along with a copy of export contract and import export code are to be submitted.

Paradigm shift in food security - from deficit to surplus nation



Traders drying paddy

April 17, 2011:

The Hindu Business Line – YES Bank 'Food and Agribusiness Conclave' discussed the opportunities and bottlenecks faced by the agriculture sector.

Amongst many key issues that were discussed by leaders in the Food and Agribusiness domain, the deliberations on the role of private sector in enhancing food security and the need for building an efficient agri-supply chain provided considerable food-for-thought for all stakeholders.

India has witnessed a paradigm shift in food security, moving from a food deficit to a food surplus nation. The country has seen foodgrain production growth from 51 million tonnes (mt) on 97 million hectares (1947-48) to 232 mt on 120 mha (2010-11), a growth of 355 per cent in production with 24 per cent increase in area.

As of March 1, 2011, Food Corporation of India (FCI) was holding 45.8 million tonnes of rice and wheat — more than twice the prescribed buffer stock norm, which includes a food security reserve of five million tonnes. Still nutritional “food” is out of reach for many Indians, and is getting unaffordable largely due to the ineffective handling. With restrictions on food grain exports and large stocks being pooled with FCI, Government is left with huge stocks of food grains without adequate infrastructure facilities. Instances of rotting food grains in FCI

warehouses have even prompted the Supreme Court to instruct the Government to distribute it free-of-cost if they cannot maintain its quality. This is further aggravated by a weak public distribution system (PDS). While we have been focusing on strengthening the procurement side of the agri-food value chain, there is little progress towards efficient release of produce at affordable prices. On the other side, a lot of PDS stock is sold in the open market aided by an inefficient system. In the coming years, managing the impact of climate change will also determine our preparedness to handle food security.

Changes in weather pattern

Changes in rainfall pattern/distribution, timing/duration of winter and summer seasons etc. have been observed. India needs to spend a lot on its R&D for better seeds and cultivation techniques to ensure successfully meeting the changing trends. India ranks 64th out of the 85 countries in the Global Hunger Index, and shelters approximately 210 million starving people. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that global food production needs to increase more than 40 per cent by 2030 and 70 per cent by 2050 compared to average 2005-07 levels.

Cultivable land

Clearly, a large part of the consumption will happen in India and China. This would require an additional 1.6 billion hectares of land to be brought into cultivation compared to the current 1.4 billion hectares being cultivated now. This increase in cultivable land looks improbable. In India, increasing population, land distribution and demographic changes are driving demand on the one hand, while low farm productivity, in-efficient pre and post-harvest infrastructure and climatic vagaries are resulting in a stagnant supply scenario on the other hand. Therefore, the nations' need to recognise this increasing demand and to proactively ensure adequate availability of food for its citizens. The larger solution theme is to reduce the demand-supply gap through increased productivity and reduced post-harvest wastage. A well developed pre-harvest and post-harvest infrastructure would be a key driver to plug this gap. The onus of providing food to the citizens is believed to vest with the Government, which through its policies, attempts to influence, and control the food supply scenario in the country. Given that agriculture is recognised as central to India's inclusive growth strategy, it is critical to review measures planned to boost agricultural development in the Union Budget, and look for game changers that

would allow us to set ourselves a target of 10 per cent agricultural growth in the future Budgets and planning.

Food and nutrition

The Government of India has undertaken multiple initiatives to help improve access to food and nutrition for a massive target group. These initiatives include public distribution system (PDS), mid-day meal (MDM) scheme, national food for work program (NFWP), antyodaya anna yojana (AAY), integrated child development scheme (ICDS), essential commodities act (ECA), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Targeted PDS and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). However, the private sector has also played a pivotal role in securing the nation's need for food.

These include:

- Development and marketing of high yielding seed varieties, thereby, increasing productivity.
- Development and marketing of pest, weed, disease and crop-specific pesticides, thereby, reducing crop loss.
- Development and marketing of soil and nutrient specific fertilisers and micro-nutrients, thereby, ensuring crop nutrition.
- Development of warehousing and collateral management services, thereby, ensuring crop security.
- Development of better farm equipments, thereby, reducing crop wastage.

Despite 60 plus years since independence, we find that the farming constituency today is grappling with numerous challenges.

Some of these include:

- Use of traditional and outdated methods of production hence resulting in low productivity.
- Inadequate research and outdated extension systems and methods.

- Inefficient agri-supply chain management and aggregation of produce.
- Inadequate post harvest infrastructural facilities
- Lack of adequate market information and access
- Insufficient and high rate of credit

Clearly, well co-coordinated action on multiple fronts by the Government as well as the private sector on development of the pre and post-harvest infrastructure is the key solution theme to increase productivity and reduce post harvest wastage. A well coordinated action will lead to adequately addressing the nation's need for food in years to come. Some of these actions should include: Developing linkages between research extension and training facilities to ensure a speedy delivery of yield enhancing and crop protecting products, concepts and actions.

Developing terrain and crop-specific farm equipments which are available at modest prices, so as to enhance the level of mechanisation.

Investment in providing well demonstrated, water conserving and yield enhancing drip irrigation facilities.

Early adaptation of well proven and ably demonstrated agricultural inputs, which have led to better economic returns in western geographies.

Encouraging entrepreneurs and businessmen to set up integrated dairy plants. Milk is considered as a perfect food in many aspects given its fair blend of nutritional components. A growing and more affluent population will have a growing demand for more nutrition.

Investment in infrastructure for storing, aggregating, cleaning, sorting, grading and packaging of crops.

Speeding up the APMC reform process to enable private companies to participate in the farm economy, will result in better returns to the farmers due to a better price discovery mechanism. It will also help in establishing farmer's direct linkage with retailers through development of terminal markets and direct access to wholesale markets, and bring in efficiencies in the agri-supply chain.

Development of large scale and modern logistics facilities and better quality of rural roads for timely movement of produce from point of production to markets and processors without value erosion and weight loss.

Development of innovative models such as agro food parks to directly link farmers to processors, reduce wastage and increase processing capacity.

Cane dues in UP at Rs 830 cr as sugar price dips below production cost



Business Line Mills are now realising only Rs 27.50 a kg from open market sale. It would be even lower if the losses from supplying 10 per cent of sugar as 'levy' is accounted for

New Delhi, April 17:

Sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh (UP) have piled up cane price arrears of nearly Rs 830 crore for the current 2010-11 season (October-September).

Official data from the Cane Commissioner's Office in Lucknow show that as on March 15, private and cooperative mills in the State had bought Rs 13,001 crore worth of cane from farmers.

Of this, the factories were to pay Rs 12,934.05 crore within 14 days from the date of cane delivery, required under the official Sugarcane Control Order.

As against this, they had disbursed Rs 12,106.74 crore, resulting in unpaid arrears of Rs 827.31 crore. The latter included Rs 583.62 crore by private mills, who had discharged only Rs 11,196.88 crore out of the Rs 11,780.49 crore payable within the 14-day stipulated period.

“The arrears may look big in absolute terms, but in relation to total payable amount, it works out to hardly 6.4 per cent. Much of this will be paid off over a period”, a miller, who did not want to be identified, told *Business Line*.

That has, however, not stopped the UP Government from serving notice to some 46 mills owing money to growers. “They have been called for a meeting on Monday to settle the pending sums. This could be the prelude to issuing of recovery certificates (RCs)”, the miller added.

The Sugarcane Control Order obliges factories that do not pay within 14 days of procuring cane to cough up interest at the rate of 15 per cent per annum.

Once the RCs are issued, the cane dues and the interest thereon can be recovered as arrears of land revenue from the defaulting mills.

The factories to have run up significant arrears include Malakpur and Modinagar belonging to the U.K. Modi Group (together Rs 89 crore), Mawana and Titawi of Mawana Sugars (Rs 89 crore), Barkatpur, Shermau and Khaikheri of Uttam Sugar Mills (Rs 52 crore), Aira, Hargaon and Seohara of K.K. Birla (Rs 52 crore) Khatauli and Ramkola of Triveni Engineering (Rs 42 crore), and Moti Nagar of KM Sugar (Rs 23.78 crore).

Below-cost realisations

The miller blamed the arrears to below-cost sugar realisations.

“Today, we are paying growers Rs 210/quintal. Inclusive of transport, purchase tax and society commission charges, the effective cane cost is Rs 230. Taking a 9 per cent sugar recovery, the cane cost component alone would come to roughly Rs 25.5 a kg. On this, a conversion cost of Rs 3 (after factoring in by-product sales) takes the total cost to Rs 28.5 a kg or Rs 30-plus after adding interest and other financial charges”, he noted.

On the other hand, mills are now realising only Rs 27.50 a kg from open market sale of sugar. It would be even lower (by a rupee) if the losses from supplying 10 per cent of sugar as ‘levy’ is accounted for.

“On the whole, we are losing at least Rs 3 for every kg of sugar sold. On the 59 lakh tonnes production by UP mills this season, the total loss would be almost Rs 1,800 crore. Despite that, most of us have made cane payments in full or in substantial measure”, the miller claimed.

Yeddyurappa assures more financial aid for fisherfolk



Mr Yeddyurappa

Mangalore, April 17:

The Karnataka Government is ready to increase the amount of loan for fisherwomen from Rs 50,000 a person to Rs 75,000 a person, if the fishing community comes out with a proposal in this regard, according to the Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr B.S. Yeddyurappa. He was speaking at a function organised by the Federation of Dakshina Kannada District Fisherwomen in Mangalore on Saturday.

He said that nearly 2,400 fisherwomen from Dakshina Kannada have been extended a loan of Rs 50,000 a person at an interest rate of 3 per cent. The timely repayment of this loan would help further disbursement of such loans.

The Government is ready for extending more financial assistance to the fishing community in the State, he said, asking them to come out with a plan in this regard. "I am ready to give additional Rs 50 crore for the empowerment of fishing community in the State," he said.

Stressing the need for housing facility for all members of the fishing community, Mr Yeddyurappa said all of them should have good housing facility in the next two years. The Government is ready to give money required for that purpose, he said.

Referring to the development of fisheries infrastructure in coastal Karnataka, he said that the Karnataka Government has earmarked Rs 100 crore for the development of small ports in the State. This work will be taken up with private sector participation, he said. In addition to this, the third stage development of fisheries harbours at Old Mangalore and Malpe will be taken up at a cost of Rs 57 crore and Rs 37 crore, respectively, he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Ramachandar Baikampady, former Chairman of Karnataka Fisheries Development Corporation, urged the Karnataka Government to follow the Gujarat model of fishing. He said that the Gujarat Government takes the help of ISRO's (Indian Space Research Organisation) satellite facility for fishing along its coast. Same method should be followed in Karnataka. To do this, the State Government should enter into an agreement with ISRO, he added.

Achieving food security by building efficient agri supply chain



Achieving food security.

April 17, 2011:

The following were some the issues discussed at a high-level panel discussion on the role of private sector in enhancing food security in New Delhi, on April 4, as part of an YES Bank-The Hindu Business Line agribusiness knowledge initiative.

Issue: Given the demographic profile of India, we are faced with the acute problem of fragmented land holdings, which has led to fragmented consolidation and processing. This has another drawback as most of the processing plants, especially in the oil seeds sector, have low capacity utilisation. Lower land holding disrupts the benefits of economies of scale.

Solution: It was suggested that there needs to be some incentive to consolidate land holdings, and the Government should work on a road map for the same at the village level.

Issue: Inadequate storage at key locations.

Solution: While at a macro level, India has adequate storage, the challenge is to quickly proceed with speedy ramping up of storage capacities in identified locations at the micro level. This will help in preventing wastage as scale can bring in storage efficiencies. Similarly, large scale transporting facilities, built on the backbone of an excellent road network will help in reducing costs.

Issue: The nation recognises that it is imperative for good farming practices to be communicated to the farmer.

Solution: One of the best ways to assure that is to undertake contract farming activity for select crops by processing companies, so that they have direct access to good quality output. Empirical evidence points out to higher productivity, better value realisation and substantial knowledge transfer under such arrangements. We need to frame contract farming laws in every state and keep them simplistic to encourage such activities for specialised crops.

QUOTES

G. Chandrashekar – A tonne saved is a tonne produced. We need to incentivise consolidation.

B.B. Pattanaik – Private sector should join in the national mission of constructing additional storage.

Kevin Eikerman – Large processing facilities will help bring efficiencies

More needs to be done to bring about genuine farm resurgence



(From left) Mr Saurabh Bhat, President and Managing Director, Development Banking, YES Bank; Mr Ashok Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries; Prof Abhijit Sen, Member, Planning Commission, with the Hindu Business Line-YES Bank compendium of Knowledge initiative on Food and Agri-Business

April 17, 2011:

Indian agriculture is clearly at the crossroads. On the one side is a high road leading to prosperity and rural development that will result from pursuing progressive, growth-oriented policies and investments in the entire value chain; and on the other is a road that inexorably leads to deepening agrarian crisis, avoidable livelihood losses and blunted competitiveness.

India needs to take the high road to prosperity for which it ought to initiate several steps with the aim of lifting agriculture out of its present morass and bringing about genuine agricultural resurgence through higher productivity and production in a sustainable way.

Strategic action plan

There are many enablers for doing this; but it is critical that we have a clear vision for the future and a strategic action plan to follow a road map to realise the vision.

The private sector is in a position to actually play a greater role than hitherto in the farm sector advancement.

This was, in sum, the sense of what came out of high-level panel discussion on the role of private sector in enhancing food security in New Delhi, on April 4, as part of YES Bank - The Hindu Business Line agribusiness knowledge initiative. Renowned panellists representing diverse sections covering inputs, technology, logistics, banking and policy highlighted the daunting challenges farming in India faced and ways and means to meet them in a practical way.

Panel Discussion 1

Role of private sector in enhancing food security – key takeaways: Agriculture is actually the largest private sector enterprise in India with nearly 120 million farm families engaged in this economic activity.

The sector is characterised by fragmented landholding, weak input delivery system, rain-fed cultivation (inadequate irrigation facilities), antiquated agronomic practices, poor rural infrastructure and weak flow of information to growers.

These are some of the daunting challenges the sector faces.

Lack of capacity among growers to address these key risks makes it worse. Farm inputs and agronomy can play a key role in realising agricultural resurgence.

Seed, fertiliser, and pesticide are the Trimurthi (triumvirate) of agriculture, use of which needs to be managed efficiently.

Given the fragmented nature of farm landholding - nearly 80 per cent of growers own just about two acres of land - we have to think, not big but small and micro.

'Precision farming'

Although smallholder cultivation may not permit scale economies, it allows 'precision farming' which can help capture value in the marketplace. A combination of water availability through irrigation and drip systems and improved agronomic practices is sure to boost yields. Renewed farm extension services must become a key driver of farm output growth. For meeting the information needs of growers our strengths in information and communication technologies (ICT) can be gainfully exploited.

Awareness

Delivery of price and market information to growers can make them 'aware' of the market opportunities and turn them into savvy businessmen. An average Indian farmer may be illiterate, but he is nobody's fool.

He is capable if rising to the occasion if invested with capacity.

Post-harvest, the role of private sector can be critical in helping Government manage food procurement and storage. Currently, the Government agencies struggle to undertake procurement (especially of rice and wheat) and incur high carrying costs. Disposal of unconscionable levels of inventory is not only weak but also fraught with uncertainties. A ceiling on procurement is desirable. Banks should be in a position to finance warehousing infrastructure.

Technology infusion

It is already proven that technology infusion in agriculture can elevate the sector in terms of production, productivity and incomes. Infusion of technology seeds in cotton cultivation eight years ago has transformed the moribund cotton sector into a vibrant globally competitive sector. Farmers readily embrace technology if they perceive commercial benefit. Together with information technology, agricultural biotechnology has the potential to transform the country's agriculture scenario.

The world has nearly one billion food insecure people, and India has a fifth of them. Price volatility and marketisation of agriculture are difficult issues to manage.

However, the private sector can step in effectively to handhold small and marginal growers at pre-harvest and post-harvest stages. Building capacity among growers to face market uncertainties and promote crop diversification is critical, especially to be able to face the emerging risks of global warming and climate change.

Risk identification

Commercial banks, particularly those focussed on agriculture and food sector, are in a position to not only identify risks but also provide services of risk management such as relating to insurance products.

Funding of bulk storage and commodity trade financing are opportunities for banks to step in vigorously. Promotion of food park concept can help improve utilisation of agricultural crops in a competitive manner.

Creating a viable market key to boost demand for sorghum



Business Line Sorghum crop.

Hubli, April 17:

To arrest declining production and demand for sorghum in the country, it is necessary to create a viable market for it, said Dr Swapan Kumar Datta, Deputy Director-General (crop science) Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi. He was speaking at the 41st Annual Sorghum Group Meetings at University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad.

Dr Datta said, "Looking at the nutritious value of sorghum, through alternate use like creating beer, potable alcohol from sorghum grain, and starch and cattle feed from it and also producing bio-ethanol." "These steps will help to bring in livelihood, livestock, feed, fodder, food and nutritional security through sorghum. The farmer can be profited only when the value is added to the basic crop commodity," he added.

A plan is afoot to re-orient research priorities during the 12th Five-Year Plan to achieve a turnaround to make sorghum as industrial crop from its present notion as a subsistence crop. "This can be achieved by linking the producer with the industry. It was assured that during the 12th Plan all out efforts will be made to encourage sorghum cultivation in the country to provide better profits to the sorghum grower," he said. Dr R.R. Hanchinal, Vice-Chancellor, University of

Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad thanked the sorghum researchers for delivering excellent hybrids, varieties and the technologies for the sorghum growing farmers in the dry land regions of the country.

Dr J.V. Patil, Director, Directorate of Sorghum Research, Hyderabad, while presenting the achievements in sorghum through the project, said the national sorghum programme is geared to meet the challenges and cater to the needs of farmers and sorghum-based industries. Much emphasis is given to basic and strategic research at the Directorate of Sorghum Research. Transgenics of sorghum are field-tested, and marker assisted selection is practised on a wide scale for dealing with complex traits.

He also said while the national sorghum programme is well geared to meet the challenges and cater to the needs of sorghum farmers and sorghum-based industries, much more needs to be done on the fodder front.

On the occasion veteran sorghum researchers Mr J.V. Goud, Mr G.M. Padagonur, Mr R.V. Hiremath, Mr V. P. Deshpande, Mr M.S. Joshi, Mr Kajri, Mr Nayakar, Mr Parameshwarappa, Mr K.H. Anahosur, Mr K.A. Kulkarni were honoured.

Firm trends at Kochi tea auction



Kochi, April 17:

Kochi tea market seems to be on the recovery mode after the fall of the last couple of weeks. The arrivals continued to be good with an estimated 11,35,000 kg coming for the dust auction, while 2,71,000 kg came for the leaf auction.

Good liquoring CTC dust prices were fully firm to dearer while medium and plain grades were steady following quality. AVT, Tata Global, Hindustan Unilever and Kerala Civil Supplies Corporation were active in the CTC dust market.

There was also good demand for high grown and medium orthodox dust grades and their prices remained firm to dearer.

Leaf Auction

There was good demand at the orthodox leaf auction and prices of whole leaf broken grades were steady with an upward bias following quality. Fannings were irregular. Medium bolder broken and whole leaf grades were firm to dearer.

Exporters to CIS countries were active along with Hindustan Unilever. Exporters to Tunisia confined themselves to medium grades. Good liquoring CTC leaf grades remained firm to dearer. Medium and plain grades were steady and sometimes moved up the value chain.

Top Prices

Pasuparai SFD fetched the top price at the dust auction at Rs 146 followed by Pasuparai FD at Rs 135, Chinnar SFD at Rs 123, Manjolai and Karimtharuvi SFD at Rs 114. At the leaf auction, Pascoe's green tea fetched the top price at Rs 291 followed by Chamraj OP at Rs 225, Chamraj FOP at Rs 217 and Havukal BOPF at Rs 204.