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“Women need to be involved in agriculture”

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: Women have been major drivers of agriculture since time immemorial. But their skill in economic activities related to agriculture has to be developed. This becomes imperative because agriculture is going to assume a near central role in the economic growth of the country, P. Rama Mohana Rao, Agricultural Production Commissioner and Principal Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu, said here on Tuesday. Inaugurating a seminar on “Women in Agricultural Development: Challenges and Opportunities” at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), he said marketing opportunities were aplenty in agriculture and hence marketing information should reach women involved in agriculture.

“Women will continue to be involved in agriculture. So it is important to ensure that new initiatives and technologies in agriculture reach them. Use of information technology in agriculture is fast catching up. Women should not be left behind without this knowledge,” the Secretary said.

P. Murugesu Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor of TNAU, spoke.

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Tamarind prices up R. Arivanantham

There has been a fall in production

KRISHNAGIRI: Dip in production, poor arrivals in the market and high processing charge have pushed up the price of processed tamarind this year.

Farmers

Tamarind cultivation was the mainstay of farmers in and around Royakottai, Palacode, Marandahalli, Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri and Urigam near Denkanikottai in Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts.

Though there was a drop in production in the past two years, the price of the most important ingredient in the south Indian cuisine has become dearer this year mainly due to high processing costs, according to traders here.

Tedious job

Most traders in and around Royakottai in Krishnagiri told The Hindu that production involved the tedious job of removing the shell, fibre and kernels and selling it as 'chapatti' (called so in local parlance since some of the processed tamarind was offered in the shape of the north Indian bread) or as 'flowers' (tamarind sold loose) to the market through wholesale sellers in Salem, Puducherry, Bangalore, Mysore and some other places.

Around 30 to 40 processors here said that they sold around 100 to 150 tonnes of tamarind per month during the peak season (January to May) and half of this quantity during the lean season.

R.K. Jagadeesan, a wholesale merchant, said that the processing charge of raw tamarind in Royakottai had increased to Rs. 20-30 per kg over last year's rates.

He said he was forced to procure raw tamarind at Rs. 35-40 per kg from the open market (last year it was Rs. 20 per kg) and sold it at Rs. 70 per kg after processing.

Market price

The market price averaged at around Rs. 78 per kg. The shell and fibre removed from the raw tamarind was supplied to the brick kilns and hotels to be used as fuel at the rate of Rs. 2,500 per tonne.

Besides procuring locally, the processors also bought unprocessed tamarind from Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar through brokers and sold the processed product in the market.

The price of tamarind this season at the wholesale market hovered between Rs. 45 and Rs. 70 depending on the quality, Mr. Jagadeesan added.

To ensure price stability and rural employment, Mr Jagadeesan said there was a need for organised processing supported by cold storage facilities.

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Palmyra fruits set to make summer juicy

Syed Muthahar Saqaf

This has nutritional and medicinal value

Photo:R. Ashok



brisk business:Customers taking palmyra juice at a roadside shop in Tiruchi.

TIRUCHI: With summer season at its peak, tasty and delicious palmyra fruits (nongu) are in good demand in the city along with tender coconuts, water melon, kamban koozh, jigar thanda and fresh fruit juice.

In addition to quenching thirst, 'nongu' has nutritional and medicinal value too. It is packed with minerals and is well known for its cooling effect, many say.

While water melon and other thirst quenching drinks are available across the city throughout the day, 'nongu' sells like hot cakes and is available only till 11 a.m.

A large number of men and women are seen in the busy junctions and street corners selling 'nongu.' Gandhi Market; Uzhar Santhais, Palakkarai, Subramaniapuram, Tennur and K. K. Nagar are some of the areas where the nongu traders could be sighted regularly in the morning hours.

The 'nongu' season extends to two months and the business provides good source of revenue to the farmers and farm workers. Many farm workers during these two months, opt out of their job and involve in the trade, as it fetches more revenue.

As dawn breaks scores of farmers and farm workers could be seen heading towards the city from villages like Samayapuram; Eachampatti; Devimangalam; Konalai; Uthamaputhur on bicycles with stock of nongu. "We fetch the nongu from Eachampatti. We pluck the palmyra fruits from the trees in the early hours of the day and will be in the city by break of dawn. Our business will be over by 11 a.m. itself and we fetch good revenue", says Murugesan selling nongu in Palakkarai.

The demand for this delicious fruit could be gauged from the fact that over Rs. 25,000 worth business is done every day in the city alone. A majority of the people prefer taking the nongu instantly as the fruit will become hard by the time it is taken home.

The fruit is also mixed with water, sugar, ice etc to get a tasty nongu ice cream and nongu fruit shakes.

Temporary shops selling water melons could also been seen in the nook and corner. Many villagers could be seen moving with traditional pots in the bicycles selling kamban koozh, another much sought after summer drink. Oflate, mobile fruit juice stalls could be seen on the city roads selling fresh orange and mosambi juice. Jigar thanda stalls have also sprang up not only on the business centres, but also in the residential localities.

"The mercury is soaring for the past few days much to the discomfort of the Tiruchiites. The summer fruits and drinks really provide us the needed relief", observes Mahalakshmi, a housewife or Kallukuzhi.

Date:20/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/20/stories/2011042062480500.htm>

Farmers yet to receive grants

Correspondent

Kolhapur: Farmers in Sangli district are perturbed by the State government's inordinate delay in providing the grants sanctioned for irrigation schemes, pest control , and loss due to off-season rains.

The total amount of grants is said to be Rs.46 crore. The lacuna was discussed in Sangli Zilla Parishad on Monday. According to the system after the grant is sanctioned by the government, the amount is paid to concerned farmers after submission of bills specifying money spent for the relevant projects.

Because of the delay farmers who has invested with a hope that the grants would be available after submission of the bills are left in the lurch..

Date:20/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/20/stories/2011042064410600.htm>

Financial aid for marginal farmers

Special Correspondent

Bangalore: The State Government has invited applications from small and marginal farmers to avail financial aid of Rs. 10,000 under the Suvarna Bhoomi Yojana. The last date for submitting applications is April 25.

Addressing presspersons here on Tuesday, Minister for Agriculture Umesh Katti said under the scheme, every family with holdings up to five acres would be given financial aid of Rs. 10,000 a year in two instalments. There are 76 lakh farmer families in the State and of them 75 per cent are small and marginal farmers.

The Minister said 5,000 farmers in each taluk would be given financial aid in the first year of the scheme. In the case of more farmers submitting applications, beneficiaries would be selected through a lottery system. The farmers have to submit filled applications to Raitha Samparka Kendras, gram panchayat offices, and departmental offices at the hobli level, he said.

A sum of Rs. 1,000 crore has been set aside for development of farms of 10 lakh families under the scheme in 2011-12. The first instalment would be given before the start of monsoon. It would be applicable mainly to dry land farmers and would not cover command and irrigation areas, he said.

The department has set a target of foodgrain production at 140 lakh tonnes for 2011-12, both for kharif and rabi crops.

Date:20/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/20/stories/2011042063310500.htm>

Clear pending arrears, demand sugarcane farmers

Special Correspondent

MYSORE: Members of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) and Hasiru Sene met Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa here on Tuesday to apprise him of the major issues confronting farmers and the general public of the region.

The Chief Minister's attention was drawn in particular to the crisis of sugarcane cultivators, who are yet to receive arrears due to them from sugar mills in the region.

In a memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister, the farmers alleged that Bannari Sugar Factory and Ambika Sugars had only paid them an advance of Rs. 1,800 per tonne and were yet to settle the final amount for last year.

The raitha sangha urged Mr. Yeddyurappa to ensure that the arrears due to the farmers were paid at the earliest.

The KRRS and Hasiru Sene flayed the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB), the Karnataka Housing Board and the Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) for acquiring prime agricultural land and converting them into industrial sites.

Referring to the land acquired for the expansion of Mysore airport, the farmers said though the authorities had fixed the land acquisition rate and compensation at Rs. 50 lakh an acre, only 15 farmers had been sanctioned the amount.

The rate was fixed more than two years ago and scores of farmers were yet to receive the compensation, the KRRS said.

Irrigation projects

The KRRS also drew attention to the Taraka lift irrigation project at H.D. Kote and Karadilakkanakere project at Periyapatna that were languishing in neglect, and sought immediate release of funds for their completion.

The KRRS cautioned against quarrying around Krishnaraja Sagar in Mandya district and said this posed danger to the reservoir.

They also sought better road connectivity from Mysore to the rural hinterland in the region.

Date:20/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/20/stories/2011042054581000.htm>

Looking forward to good rains

The south-west monsoon, which provides about 80 per cent of the rainfall that India receives annually, sets the pace for the country's economy. Shortfalls in the monsoon not merely affect agriculture but set off reverberations in other sectors too. There will, therefore, be relief all round that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has, in its seasonal forecast issued on Tuesday, predicted that this year's monsoon is "most likely to be normal." The IMD has used a statistical model to predict the probabilities for the monsoon falling in one of five categories: deficient (where the total nationwide rainfall is less than 90 per cent of the long-period average); below normal (from 90 per cent to 96 per cent); normal (96 per cent to 104 per cent); above normal (104 per cent to 110 per cent); and excess (above 110 per cent). The 'normal' as defined in the

IMD's probabilistic forecast is very different from the normal in the vocabulary of atmospheric scientists. In the latter case, it refers to a monsoon when the rainfall is between 90 per cent and 110 per cent of the long-period average. However, when the probabilities for the middle three categories are added, the chances of a 'normal' monsoon (in the sense used by scientists) will work out to 93 per cent. The rainfall data for over a century show that such a 'normal' monsoon occurs in seven out of ten years. In other words, there is a greatly heightened probability of the monsoon turning out to be normal this year. By the same token, the prospect of a deficient monsoon, which always arouses the most concern, is put at just six per cent this year. That too is good news since such deficient monsoons have occurred in about 18 per cent of the years and, what is more worrying, on three occasions in the last 10 years. The chances of this year's monsoon turning excess are put at just one per cent.

The outlook for the monsoon can change in the coming months and this year's outcome is particularly difficult to forecast. Last year's monsoon was helped by a La Nina that began to develop in June, with the waters of the equatorial eastern and central Pacific Ocean turning cooler than usual. That La Nina has weakened. This transition phase is difficult to predict and the models are currently displaying a range of possibilities. A majority of the models suggest the present La Nina conditions could continue till June and then weaken further, according to the IMD. The question is whether this could set the stage for an El Nino to develop, with the equatorial Pacific becoming warmer than usual. An El Nino often adversely affects the monsoon and has been associated with 65 per cent of the drought years. Changes in the Indian Ocean too can have an impact. Let us hope that the IMD's prediction for a normal monsoon holds.

Date:20/04/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/20/stories/2011042056321500.htm>

Good farm output will help ease inflation to 6 %: Rangarajan

Special Correspondent

Domestic consumers have largely remained insulated from the impact of the global oil price hike

NEW DELHI: Even as high inflation continues to remain a major concern, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council Chairman C. Rangarajan on Monday expressed optimism over a moderation in prices following a good farm output.

Interacting with the media on the sidelines of a conference here, Dr. Rangarajan said: "I think the inflation will come down in April. What happened in March was quite unexpected... but the food inflation is coming down. Wheat production is very good.

"Therefore, I expect food prices to come down further in April and that should help in the overall headline inflation coming down ... I think it [inflation] will be around 6 per cent ... probably that is where it will settle down".

Headline inflation, as per the wholesale price index (WPI) surged to 8.98 per cent in March this year to not only be way above the RBI's (Reserve Bank of India) "comfort zone" of five-to-six per cent but also breach its scaled up projection of 8 per cent for the fiscal year ending March 31.

While rising cost of inputs is already feeding into manufactured products to add fuel to headline inflation, the hardening of global commodity prices, particularly crude oil, is putting further pressure on prices. Dr. Rangarajan pointed out that domestic consumers have largely remained insulated from the impact of the global oil price hike thus far.

"For some more time, probably we might be able to shield the diesel prices from external influences. About 3-4 months from now, when inflation rate falls to a much lower level, perhaps we will have to take a decision on what to do with the diesel prices," he said.

On the likely impact that the sovereign debt crisis in the Euro zone may have on capital flows in to India, Dr. Rangarajan said: "Total quantum of fund flowing into the emerging market may come down a little bit, but as far as India is concerned, what will decide it [capital inflows] will be the perspective on India's growth and India's strength and I do not think it will be seriously affected.

Natural rubber export up 13%

Staff Reporter

KOTTAYAM: Export of natural rubber (NR) has registered a healthy increase of over 13 per cent during 2010-11 compared to the previous year, according to Rubber Board chairperson Sheila Thomas.

Addressing the 165th meeting of the Board here on Monday, Ms. Thomas said the export of NR which stood at 25,090 tonnes in 2009-10 had increased to 28,424 tonnes the year ended March 31, denoting an increase of 13.28 per cent.

During 2010-11, 1,77,482 tonnes of NR landed in the Indian market from the international market, 73 per cent of through duty free channels, she said.

Ms. Thomas said that during the period, indigenous NR plantation industry could increase production by 3.7 per cent. The domestic production in 2009-10 was 8,31,400 tonnes against the 8,61,950 tonnes registered for 2010-11.

The anticipated production for 2011-12 is 9,02,000 tonnes. Meanwhile, domestic NR consumption too registered a healthy increase of two per cent during 2010 11. The rate of growth registered by the tyre sector in the automotive industry during the 11 months from April 2010 was 23 per cent.

The export of tyre increased by 20 per cent during this period, but the truck and bus tyre exports declined by five per cent. NR consumption during the current financial year is expected to touch an all time high of 9,77,000 tonnes, she said, denoting a deficit of 75,000 tonnes.

However, there would not be any shortage of NR in the indigenous market as the new financial year commenced with an opening stock of 2,77,095 tonnes which is in a comparatively higher range.

The opening stock for the year 2010-11 was only 2,72,000 tonnes, she pointed out. An area for apprehension was that the fact that out of the total opening stock, the share of sheet rubber available for sale was only 1,20,000 tonnes. In spite of the buoyant internal market situation, the average price of RSS4 variant in the domestic market in 2010 was lower than the comparable RSS3 price in the international market by Rs.5.52 a kg .

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Date:20/04/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/20/stories/2011042061540300.htm>

Haryana cuts market fee for fruits, vegetables

Special Correspondent

CHANDIGARH: Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Tuesday announced plans to reduce the market fee for fruits and vegetables from two per cent to one per cent.

The decision was taken at a meeting here to discuss the reforms in the Punjab Agriculture Produce Markets Act (Haryana), 1961.

There is no market fee for fruits and vegetables processed in the State, Mr. Hooda said.

Various provisions of the Punjab Agriculture Produce Markets Act (Haryana), 1961, and the scope of further reforms for the benefit of the farming community were also discussed.

Agriculture Minister Paramvir Singh, Chief Parliamentary Secretary Dharambir Singh, Chief Minister's Principal Secretary Chhatar Singh, Additional Principal Secretary K. K. Khandelwal, Deputy Principal Secretary R. S. Doon and other senior officers attended the meeting.

At a separate meeting, Mr. Hooda also reviewed the availability of Bt cotton seeds and directed the officers to ensure that the farmers got quality seeds.

Mr. Hooda also directed the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police to ensure effective implementation of the provisions of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

He also asked them to depute an officer of the level of Deputy Superintendent of Police where cases of violation of the Act were found so that justice could be ensured to the people belonging to vulnerable groups.

Meanwhile, a special 'Girdawari' (survey) has been ordered in hailstorm-affected areas of Karnal, Kaithal, Hisar and Jhajjar districts. There are reports of crops having been damaged in these areas, an official spokesman said here on Tuesday.

Date:20/04/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/20/stories/2011042061310300.htm>

Summer showers posing severe threat to paddy crop

Staff Reporter

Harvesting badly affected in Upper Kuttanad

Photo: Leju Kamal



In peril: Farm workers harvesting the paddy fallen in summer showers at the Vengal Irukara fields in Upper Kuttanad on Tuesday. –

PATHANAMTHITTA: The unabated spell of summer showers in the evenings have badly damaged paddy crops in Upper Kuttanad, putting the peasants in this part of the State to much difficulties.

Paddy harvesting has been badly hit owing to shortage of farm workers and non-availability of sufficient combined harvesters.

Paddy crop in many parts of Upper Kuttanad has been damaged in the heavy rain and wind. Sprouting of the paddy fallen in the rain drenched fields coupled with the difficulty in using combined harvesters in the waterlogged fields are the main problems facing the peasants of Upper Kuttanad.

Crop loss

An official statement issued by the Information and Public Relations Department has estimated the paddy crop loss worth Rs.1.25 crore in an extent of 250 hectares of land.

However, the Kuttanad Nelkarshaka Samithi (KNS) has put the extent of crop loss much higher. Talking to The Hindu, KNS president Sam Eapen said the crop in as much as 800 hectares of land had been damaged owing to the rain. According to him, the loss was estimated at Rs.37,000 for an acre. Mr. Eapen called upon the government to take steps to provide adequate compensation to farmers in Upper Kuttanad who had lost their crop. Though the Kuttanad Package had provision to purchase combined harvesters, the authorities concerned had taken little effort to address the problems being faced by paddy cultivators in Upper Kuttanad, he alleged. Interestingly, the three harvesters purchased by the district panchayat were found not suitable for the Upper Kuttanad region, he said.

Date:20/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/20/stories/2011042051360300.htm>

Warning against artificial ripening of mangoes

PUDUCHERRY: Action will be initiated against those who indulge in artificial ripening of mangoes with calcium carbide and other chemicals, Health Department officials said here on Tuesday.

With the beginning of the mango season from April, the officials of the food cell at the Health Department have started collecting samples from markets and wholesalers to check the use of chemicals in ripening the fruit.

According to the food inspectors, fruits that are ripened prematurely could be identified from the lack of natural smell and the colour of the skin.

Though no case has been identified so far, they said that all mangoes that are found to be artificially ripened would be seized and destroyed immediately and action initiated against sellers.

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Gaurav Choudhury, Hindustan Times

Email Author

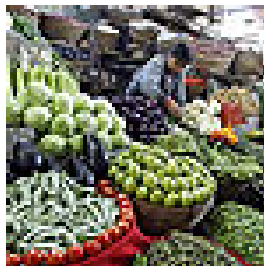
New Delhi, April 20, 2011

First Published: 01:09 IST(20/4/2011)

Last Updated: 02:01 IST(20/4/2011)

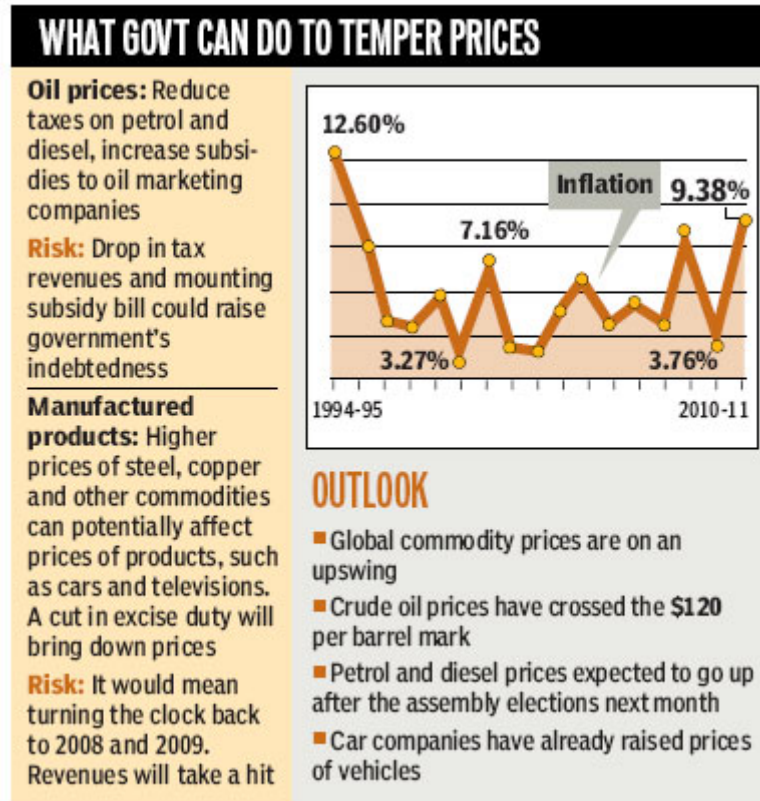
Another round of price rise coming

Brace yourself for a prolonged spell of high inflation, as there is no sign of a let-up on the price front after the 9.4% inflation rate — the highest in 16 years — clocked in 2010-11. Despite weathering the worst economic downturn in eight decades, the government faces yet another challenge of spiralling prices, as cheap money and surging demand make fighting the price monster more difficult.



The RBI is expected to raise interest rates in its monetary policy review on May 3 — the ninth time in 13 months. So, expect EMIs on home loans to go up.

“We expect a one percentage point hike in RBI policy rate till September to rein in inflation,” Samiran Chakraborty of Standard Chartered Bank said. Crude prices are above \$120 a barrel, with indications they will rise further. Oil companies plan to raise petrol and diesel prices next month when assembly elections conclude. “The second-round effects of such increases on transport costs would create further upward pressure,” Chakraborty said. “Kerosene and cooking gas price increases are also overdue and could coincide with diesel price hike.”



As a last resort, all eyes will be on the monsoon – crucial for the kharif (summer) crop that accounts for two-thirds of food grain production. “The monsoon is most likely to be normal,” Met department chief Ajit Tyagi said.

Meanwhile, the government has been trying to talk inflation down for the past year. “I would expect inflation to be less than 8% in April,” chief economic advisor Kaushik Basu said. It stood at 8.98% in March.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/687358.aspx>

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Wednesday, Apr 20

Max Min

36.7° | 26.6°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 56%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 5:54

Sunset: 18:22

Barometer: 1004.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Thursday, Apr 21

Max Min

34° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday

Apr 22



34° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday

Apr 23



32° | 26°

Rainy

Sunday

Apr 24



33° | 26°

Rainy

Monday

Apr 25



31° | 25°

Rainy

Tuesday

Apr 26



30° | 26°

Rainy

Amarinder seeks relief for rain-hit Punjab farmers

April 20, 2011 11:04:22 AM

PNS | CHANDIGARH

Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee President Captain Amarinder Singh on Tuesday demanded adequate relief for the farmers whose standing wheat crop was damaged by the unseasonal rains and the hailstorm across the State. He asked the Government to conduct special girdawari in a time bound manner for assessing the loss and providing relief to the farmers.

In a statement issued here, Captain Amarinder said, it was quite unfortunate that the farmers had to suffer huge losses due to unseasonal rains and hailstorm. He said he was pained to see the standing wheat crop had been flattened with the rains and hailstorm.

Expressing sympathies with the farmers, the PCC President hoped that the Akali-BJP Government in the State ordered an early girdawari to assess the losses in a time bound manner. He demanded that the farmers must be adequately compensated depending as how much loss they have suffered.

Capt. Amarinder said, it was a strange coincidence that whenever Mr Parkash Singh Badal becomes the Chief Minister, the farmers have to suffer untold miseries including the natural calamities.

He said, even during the current regime, all the nine crops have suffered damage due to the

natural calamities like rains, winds and hailstorm. "Even during monsoons we have suffered worst floods under his regime" "Mr Badal seems to be quite a bad omen for Punjab" he added.

Punjab mulls new plan for agricultural growth

April 20, 2011 11:04:36 AM

Alok Singh | Chandigarh

Punjab Government is set to draw the plan to sustain the agricultural development in the State for the coming decades. Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal is going to take the meeting with the officers of Planning Commission of India and university professors seeking their opinion in order to uplift the production of wheat, rice and its revenue returns.

Sources said that the quantity of share which is being given to the Centre after Rabi and Kharif season is declining hence the State Government is planning to lay out a good conclusive output of the total resources used for the agriculture and its productions.

"Meeting will be headed by the Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, where Agriculture Minister Sucha Singh Langha and Food and Supply Minister Adesh Pratap Singh Kairon will also present. Punjab and Agriculture Universities professors will participate in meeting with the planning commission of India," sources said.

The Chief Minister himself would take the meeting, some fruitful results may be expected that would be conveyed to the Centre through the members of the Planning Commission, he added.

Agriculture occupies the most prominent place in Punjab's economy. About 70 per cent of the people are engaged in agriculture therefore its importance increases. Time to time such meetings have been scheduled with the members of PC but it is the first time that the Chief

Minister himself decided to call out the plan.

“The fertiliser consumption in Punjab is the highest in India. The efforts of the State Government to provide irrigation facilities, cheap power and agriculture inputs at subsidised rates have acted as a catalyst for agricultural production. Total production of foodgrains increased from 170.92 lakh tonne in 1987-88 to 207 lakh tonne in 1992-93. Agricultural production is now nearing the saturation point,” an Agriculture Department officer said.

To reduce dependence on wheat, paddy rotation, the State Government is encouraging gradual shift in the cropping pattern to oil seeds such as Sun-flower and Soya beans with positive results. The State is on its threshold of a second spurt in productivity levels.

State’s agricultural contribution to the Centre has been declining every year which is a major cause of concern for the people of the State. Where the State was contributing 60.9 per cent wheat and 41 per cent rice in 1990, it has now come down to 42.2 per cent wheat and 29.5 per cent rice in the year 2009.

Experts say the main reason of decline was improper storage of paddy and food grains. The other cause was unscheduled rains and unhealthy climate for the crops. Indecent and massive use of pesticides with harmful chemicals perhaps would be the other reason. The area of the cultivation has also been saturated.

“There is no more scope to increase area under agriculture in the State as it has already reached at saturation level where almost 99 per cent of cultivable land was under plough. It has been observed that diversification in the farm sector is the need of the hour, which is envisaged so as to achieve some long-term benefits as optimum utilisation of natural resources especially soil and water, maintaining sustainability in ecological and environmental field and stability in productivity and income,” said an expert.

In the last four decade only one lakh hectare for cultivation has been increased. In 1970 area under the cultivation was 40.3 lakh hectares which increased to 41.61 lakh hectares in 2009, showing an increase of 2.7 per cent in the production. Cropping intensity which reveals percentage of gross area sown to net area sown enhanced from 140 in 1970 to 190 in 2009-10.

The present agriculture cropping pattern in the State is dominated by the wheat paddy rotation causing degradation in soil fertility and fall in the underground water table.

Business Standard

Wednesday, Apr 20, 2011

Gujarat to hike BT cotton seed price

BS Reporter / Mumbai/ Hyderabad April 20, 2011, 0:22 IST

Gujarat, the country's largest cotton producer, is all set to increase the price of Bt cotton seed even as Andhra Pradesh is hesitant to raise the price in view of the byelections in the state.

"The Gujarat government has decided to increase the price by Rs 200 for a packet of 450 gm of BG 1 and BG 2 hybrid cotton seed and the same may be announced tomorrow," a seed company official told Business Standard.



With Bt cotton seed requirement in Gujarat in the ensuing kharif season estimated to be at around 6.5 million packets, the expected price increase will yield an additional income of Rs 130 crore to the seed companies.

The companies have been demanding all the major cotton growing states to increase the MRP of Bt cotton seed at the earliest so that they could package the seed with new price tags and stock it in different locations before the commencement of the kharif season from June.

The Gujarat government held a meeting with all the seed companies on Wednesday to take their views on pricing besides eliciting a firm commitment for supply in the wake of reported short supply of Bt cotton seed across the country. The move is seen as a bargain tactic for agreeing to their request for price revision.

On the other hand, the AP government had forced the companies to reduce the price of Bt cotton seed first in 2006 and then in 2008 by enacting the Seed Control Act. The price was reduced from Rs 1,800 to Rs 650 per packet for BG 1 and from Rs 925 to Rs 750 for BG 2. Other states followed suit.

Of late, the seed industry has not been able to keep pace with the growing demand and the companies attributed this to the erosion of profitability due to rising cost of production of Bt cotton seed. Punjab and Haryana have already increased the price of BG 1 to Rs 825 and for BG 2 to Rs 1,000 per packet. Though the states looked at Andhra whenever companies approached them for a price hike, they had to take a call this time as the Andhra government was hesitant in announcing the price revision even after assuring the companies of the same.

Maharashtra, the second major cotton producing state, is also expected to announce an increase in price soon, according to seed companies.

The major cause for concern for the states, though, is short supply of Bt cotton seed. The shortage is expected to be around 4.6 million packets during kharif-2011.

As the companies are expected to supply more to those regions where the price of seed is higher, the states are compelled to take an early view on this issue as almost all the acreage in states like Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh has now been replaced by Bt cotton.

Punjab farmers shift to manual harvesting

Sanjeeb Mukherjee / Bhatinda (punjab) April 20, 2011, 0:17 IST

Farming in Punjab is going back to the old days of manual harvesting. And that is not by compulsion, but as a matter of choice.

As fodder prices have almost doubled in the last few months, more and more farmers in the state are opting for the traditional manual method of harvesting the standing wheat crop as the fodder output through this method is almost 130-140 per cent more than the mechanized harvesters. This has also been one of the main causes for delay in arrival of wheat in major mandis (wholesale markets) of Punjab.

According to officials, wheat procurement in Punjab mandis till last week was estimated to be around 83,219 tonnes, down from 313,000 tonnes procured during the same time last year. With government agencies purchasing almost 97 per cent of the total arrivals, figures of procurement also show the extent of delayed arrivals.

Price of dry fodder, which was around Rs 150-200 a quintal six-seven months back, has jumped to almost Rs 400-500 a quintal. Harvesting through mechanized harvester produce around 8-10 quintals of dry fodder from an acre of land under wheat, while the same goes up to almost 20-23 quintals when harvesting is done manually.

“Demand for dry fodder has gone up significantly in the last one –year largely from Rajasthan, due to which farmers are opting to harvest wheat manually,” said Darchan Singh, a farmer from Bhatinda district of Punjab told Business Standard. He said though cost of manual harvesting is much more for farmers, but the benefits far outstrip the cost.

“A mechanized harvester usually charges around Rs 700 for an acre of land, which for manual harvesting goes up to almost Rs 2,000-Rs 2,500 per acre, but it is still affordable given the high rate of fodder,” he said.

Hartej Singh, another farmer from Mehta village said though labour charges have risen manifold in Punjab in the last few years, but still many farmers are favouring manual harvesting as it gives better returns and is environment friendly.

Wheat arrivals, buying lag due to unseasonal rain, hailstorm

Komal Amit Gera / Chandigarh April 20, 2011, 0:13 IST

Grain procurement agencies in Punjab and Haryana need to make an extra effort, as untimely rain and hailstorms have affected the wheat harvest.

Arrivals are sluggish this year in the two states, which are expected to contribute about 18 million tonnes to the Union government's total procurement target of 26.3 mt. The analysis of mandi arrivals reflects a substantial gap as compared to last year. Punjab recorded an arrival of 6.16 mt by April 18 last year in comparison to 0.91 mt this year on the same date. Haryana registered an arrival of 2.07 mt on April 18, much lower than the 4.83 mt of last year on the corresponding day.

The bulk of procurement operations are traditionally over by April 30 in these two states but it would stretch by 10 to 15 days this year due to the unfavourable weather. Farmers are waiting for clear weather to complete harvesting, as that may help to reduce humidity in the grain.

HARVEST TROUBLE

- High moisture content delays harvest, quality may be affected
- Yield may remain unaffected
- The bulk of procurement operations are traditionally over by April 30 in Punjab and Haryana but it would stretch by 10 to 15 days this year due to the unfavourable weather
- Arrivals are sluggish this year in the two states, which are expected to contribute about 18 mt to the total procurement

The permissible humidity in wheat is 12 per cent. Food Corporation of India officials said farmers with the patience dry the crop under sunshine at their farms and those who cannot wait use the drying facility offered by arhtiyas (commission agents) in the mandis.

According to the scientists at the Wheat Research Institute, Karnal, the yield will not be effected by weather conditions at this juncture but special attention would have to be paid for the quality of wheat. Late harvesting or drying of grains would be imperative in such conditions.

The procurement agencies have yet to get any official communication on the bonus of Rs 50 per quintal announced by the Union government, so the farmers are still getting the earlier set level of Rs 1,120 a quintal. "We will (also) get the delayed payment", said Kulwinder Singh, a farmer in Hoshiarpur.

Mango may turn dearer on low output

D Gopi / Chennai/ Vijayawada April 20, 2011, 0:00 IST

Mango is set to cost more this year as the untimely rains during November-December 2010 have affected the crop. The mango season, which is to take off in the next couple of weeks, will see the Banganapalli variety turning dearer due to low production.

Traders in Indoor, Agra, Delhi, Nagapur, Mumbai and Ahmedabad offered Rs 40,000 to Rs 60,000 a tonne for the fine quality. Even in Hyderabad, they offered the same price in the first week of April. However, the price has now come down to Rs 20,000-25,000 a tonne due to poor quality and untimely harvesting.

As the price was so high, local traders harvested the unripe fruit and dumped it in the market to make a fast buck.

"This year the crop has been damaged due to the unseasonal rains. However, 50-60 per cent of the crop is good. It will get good price in both the domestic and foreign market. Unfortunately, farmers and local traders are resorting to early harvesting. The unripe fruit is getting damaged and losing its price. They are more worried about the possible high speed gale that occurs in April and May," said horticulture deputy director D Suhasini.

Mango gardens of all varieties are spread over 65,650 hectares in Krishna district, followed by Chittoor with 61,407 ha, Khammam (45,435 ha) and Vizianagaram (40,985 ha). The fruit is also grown partially in Nellore, West Godavari, East Godavari, Mahabubnagar, Kadapa and Ananthapur districts. The average yield for mangoes is 8.6 tonne a hectare, if weather supports.

But, this year, due to the untimely rains at the time of flowering, the yield is expected to come down to 6-6.5 tonne a hectare.

As far as exports are concerned, this year the horticulture department is expecting to push 70-80 tonnes. "The export is mostly to Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong as the US has several restrictions. Even the freight cost to the US is on the higher side, which is why the traders opt for other countries," she added.

While 11.08 tonne was exported in 2007-08, it went up to 100.2 tonne in 2008-09. This, however, declined to 76 tonne in 2009-10 due to poor quality, Suhasini said.

THE HINDU Business Line

Volumes fall at Coonoor tea sale



Want of buyers: A view of tea estates in Coonoor.

Coonoor, April 19:

There will be no auction of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association on April 22 as the market will remain closed for Good Friday. Accordingly, the dust auctions held on Fridays will be advanced to Thursday this week. The leaf auctions held on Thursdays will be conducted tomorrow.

In all, 13.74 lakh kg are being offered for Sale No: 16, reveals an analysis of the listing by brokers. This is 1.37 lakh kg less than last week's offer and as much as 4.24 lakh kg less than the offer this time last year.

Last week, as high as 45 per cent of the offer remained unsold. In the two weeks before that, 48 per cent and 46 per cent remained unsold. In the 13.74 lakh kg now offered, as much as 2.42 lakh kg comprise teas remaining unsold in previous auctions while fresh tea accounts for 11.32 lakh kg.

Of the 13.74 lakh kg on offer, 9.34 lakh kg belong to the leaf grades and 4.40 lakh kg to the dust grades. As much as 12.95 lakh kg belong to CTC variety and only 0.79 lakh kg, orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 0.43 lakh kg belong to orthodox while 8.91 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.36 lakh kg belong to orthodox while 4.04 lakh kg, CTC.

Fall continues in spot rubber



Kottayam, April 19:

Spot rubber declined again on Tuesday. The market appeared to be moving into a corrective phase as prices continued to fall on buyer resistance amid scattered selling by dealers. Another weak closing in domestic futures and early losses on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange

(TOCOM) added pressure. The volumes were marginally higher compared with the previous sessions.

Sheet rubber fell to Rs 235.50 a kg (Rs 238.00), according to traders. The grade declined to Rs 236 a kg (Rs 239), as reported by the Rubber Board.

The May series weakened to Rs 237.55 (Rs 240.19), June to Rs 242 (Rs 244.27), July to Rs 242.41 (Rs 243.44), August to Rs 237.40 (Rs 238) and September to Rs 229.21 (Rs 232.70) a kg for RSS-4 on the National Multi-Commodity Exchange.

RSS-3 (spot) dropped to Rs 257.26 a kg (Rs 261.94) at Bangkok. The April futures for the grade declined to ₹435 (Rs 234.70) from ₹450 a kg during the day session, but recovered partially to ₹438 (Rs 236.30) in the night session on the TOCOM.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 235.50 (238); RSS-5: 233 (234); ungraded: 228 (231); ISNR 20: 231 (234) and latex 60 per cent: 146 (146).

Rubber output rises 3% on higher prices

RUBBER REPORT					
	Production*	Consumption*	Import*	Export*	Stock at the end*
March 2010	50,650	78,650	11,968	6,035	2,11,290
March 2011#	54,400	81,500	6,200	6,286	2,77,095
April 2009–March 2010	8,31,400	9,30,565	1,76,75	25,090	–
April 2010–March 2011#	8,61,950 (3.7)^	9,49,205 (2)^	1,77,482	28,424	–

Source: Rubber Board

*in tonnes

#provisional

^growth in %

Kottayam, April 19:

Rubber production increased 3.7 per cent during the 2010-11 fiscal, according to figures released by the Rubber Board. The major pick-up in production was noticed from December and it continued till March. Although unseasonal rain had hampered tapping operations initially, increased soil moisture ensured high productivity in later months, sources said. There was a

marked improvement in production in February and March. Production fell in just a couple of months this year.

While rubber production for 2010-11 increased to 8,61,950 tonnes (8,31,400 tonnes), the growth was rapid in March when it increased by 7.4 per cent to 54,400 tonnes (50,650 tonnes).

Increase in production has been mainly because of higher price, increase in area under rain-guarding and spurt in area under tapping. As prices have continued to reign high, farmers have been tapping harder. Better prices have also prompted farmers to extend the area under rain-guarding, which would enable them to tap the trees even during the rainy season.

As the trees which were planted seven years ago have matured and become available for production, the tapped area increased by 9,000 hectares last year. The Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries, which accounts for over 90 per cent of the global natural rubber output, has said more area will come under tapping from next year. As part of the cyclical spurt in rubber prices seven years ago, large areas were brought under cultivation, which will come under tapping from this year onwards.

flip side

On the negative side, the smart rally in rubber prices recently have resulted in farmers not cutting down old trees and re-planting them with new and high-yielding clones. This has resulted in India's rubber productivity falling in recent years. The consumption of natural rubber continues to be ahead of production at 9,49,205 tonnes during 2010-11. Consumption grew by two per cent over 2009-10 when it was 9,30,565 tonnes. Consumption in March 2011 registered a growth of 4.5 per cent to 81,500 tonnes. However, discounting any cause for concern, the Rubber Board figures say the stock of natural rubber available in the country has increased from 2,11,290 tonnes at the end of March 2010 to 2,77,095 tonnes at the end of March 2011.

Aravindan from Kottayam reports: Domestic natural rubber consumption also increased by 2.0 per cent during 2010-11. Growth in tyre production in the automotive sector increased 23 per cent during April 2010-February 2011. Export of tyres increased 20 per cent. However, truck and bus tyre exports declined 5 per cent. The projected natural rubber consumption for current fiscal is 9,77,000 tonnes.

The average price of RSS-4 in the domestic market in 2010-11 was lower than the price of RSS-3 in the international market by Rs 5.52 a kg. Tight supply, adverse weather, lower stocks, steady increase in demand, higher oil prices and speculative trade were the main reasons for high rubber prices in the international market.

According to the report of the International Rubber Study Group, the global natural rubber production-consumption balance in 2010 and 2011 shows deficit of 3,80,000 tonnes and 2,34,000 tonnes, said Ms Sheela Thomas, Chairman, Rubber Board, at the 165th meeting of the board.

Storage levels in reservoirs up

ENCOURAGING SIGNS*					
Basin	Live capacity at FRL	This year	Last year	Average of last 10 years	% Departure from last 10 years
Ganga	28.096	4.588	3.759	4.512	1.68
Indus	14.730	6.228	2.167	3.250	91.63
Narmada	14.869	4.043	3.496	2.173	86.06
Tapi	7.394	3.494	1.838	2.408	45.20
Mahi	4.012	0.748	0.819	1.203	-37.82
Sabarmati	0.735	0.114	0.035	0.118	-3.39
Kutch rivers	0.887	0.159	0.045	0.078	103.85
Godavari	14.526	6.575	1.531	2.557	157.14
Krishna	31.548	11.032	8.519	6.095	81.00
Mahanadi & tributaries	13.181	5.161	5.301	5.096	1.28
Cauvery & tributaries	8.190	5.049	2.853	2.162	133.53
West flowing rivers in South	13.600	5.290	4.735	4.160	27.16

*Storage level in billion cubic meters as on April 13

Source: Central Water Commission

Chennai, April 19:

There is good news on the water-storage level, too, along with the projection of a normal monsoon this year.

According to the Central Water Commission, the water level in the 81 major reservoirs in the country as on April 13 was 52.481 billion cubic metres (BCM). This is 35 per cent of the live capacity at full reservoir level of 151.768 BCM.

Last year, during the same time, the level was 23 per cent of the capacity. Compared with the last 10 year's average, it is higher by 13 percentage points.

South and central India seem to be comfortably placed in terms of the storage position.

Going by the storage level, the situation augurs well for crops such as rice, maize, cotton and oilseeds, provided the weather Gods keep their date with monsoon.

According to the commission, eight reservoirs have a storage level between 51 per cent and 80 per cent. Two reservoirs in the South — Mettur and Gerusoppa — have a level between 81 per cent and 90 per cent, while in three others it is between 71 per cent and 80 per cent. The other reservoir having over 70 per cent storage is Machkund in Orissa (78 per cent). This could be good news for paddy farmers of the Cauvery delta, especially in Tamil Nadu. This is because chances of release of water on June 12 from the Mettur dam for the kharif rice are good. Last year, during the same time the water level was 36 per cent of the capacity.

The level in 50 reservoirs is below 40 per cent. Of these, 16 are in the South, 10 in central parts, nine in the West, 10 in the East and five in the North.

State-wise, the water level is lower than normal in Rajasthan by 73 per cent. In fact, the storage is lower in all the three major reservoirs in the State. While the situation is better in Punjab, in Himachal Pradesh, too, the level is higher than last year.

In keeping with poor rainfall in the East last year, the storage is 70 per cent lower than normal in Tripura and in West Bengal and Jharkhand, it is 27 per cent and 33 per cent lower, respectively.

The level in five of the eight reservoirs in Gujarat is higher than last year, while it is lower in two and the same as last year in one.

In Maharashtra, the storage level in six of the 11 reservoirs is higher.

In Madhya Pradesh, the level is higher in three of the five reservoirs but the storage is almost nil in Gandhi Sagar. The two major reservoirs in Uttarakhand have a storage level that is better than last year.

Four of the five major reservoirs in Andhra Pradesh boast a healthy water level and in Karnataka nine of the 14 reservoirs report an improved storage. In Kerala, four of five reservoirs in a better shape, while in Tamil Nadu the story repeats in four of the six reservoirs. In Lower Bhawani reservoir in the State, the level is same as last year.

Groundnut supply outstrips demand



Rajkot, April 19:

On the back of lower demand groundnut and cotton oil was unchanged here in Rajkot, Gujarat. According to market sources demand of the edible oils are below normal level and supply is enough so that price will not go up.

At Rajkot groundnut oil was traded on Rs.1360-1365 per 15 kg new tin, price of 15 liter new tin was Rs.1255-1260 and loose groundnut oil for 10 kg price was Rs.795-800. About 100-150 tones traded in groundnut oil.

Similar trend was seen in cotton oil. Price of 15 kg tin of cotton oil was Rs.980-990 and 15 liter cotton oil tin was traded on Rs. 915-920. Cotton wash oil traded at Rs.562-565 per 10 kg. Around 350-400 tones traded in cotton oil.

Price of small groundnut was Rs.561-631 and bold groundnut was Rs.575-687 per 20 kg. in Saurashtra region approximately 25000 bags of 50 kg groundnut were arrived.

Rajkot based edible oil retailer said, "Retailer demand in groundnut oil and cotton oil is weak. People are waiting for more down fall in the price."

Millers said, "At present stockiest and brands are buying as per they require. So that for some days or for this month price will not increase. Price of edible oil may come down."

Sugar export notification issued



New Delhi, April 19:

The Government on Tuesday notified its decision to allow five lakh tonnes of sugar exports, nearly a month after its approval by the panel of Ministers. On March 22, the Empowered Group of Ministers on food had allowed export of five lakh tonnes of sugar under the open general licence as the country's sugar production is estimated to outstrip demand after a gap of two years. Out of the five lakh tonnes, the Food Ministry has reserved 51,500 tonnes for neighbouring countries and the remaining quantity would be allocated among the mills based on their last three year's average production, a senior official said. Mills would have to undertake exports within 60 days after they get release order from the Ministry, he said.

Seed industry hopes for better harvest this year



Hyderabad, April 19:

The near-normal forecast of monsoon has brought smiles back on the face of seed producers, particularly cottonseed. After facing the wrath of nature last year, the seed industry expects normal seed production.

“We are positive and optimistic. We generally plan a year ahead for seed production. This forecast augurs well for us,” Dr Usha Barwale Zehr, Chief Technology Officer of Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company, told *Business Line*.

Notwithstanding acute labour shortage and skyrocketing cost of production, the industry feels that good monsoon would mean increased recharge of groundwater that is required for the rabi season. It would help companies and seed-producing farmers go for larger acreage for seed production. Seed industry depends on kharif for production of cottonseed, groundnut and part-production of paddy seed.

Mr P. Satish Kumar, President of Seedsmen Association, said good rains would help the cotton industry. "Three bouts of rains and floods have adversely impacted cottonseed production in the State. Every year, the industry starts off the season with a buffer of at least 30 per cent. This year, we are going to consume all that buffer because of a drop in production," he said.

The industry estimated a shortfall of 45-50 lakh packets this year. Against the demand for 3.8-4 crore packets, only 3.4 crore packets were supplied even after consuming the left-over stocks. Untimely rains had resulted in sharp decrease in germination capacities as well.

"With the demand growing for commercial cotton keeping in view high prices, we anticipate further increase in demand next year. Though normal monsoon could give us good seed output, we are not going to have any buffer next season," he said.

"The normal monsoon will be good for the seed industry. The shift in acreage to cotton from many field crops like maize and jowar is an issue of concern. The monsoon forecast supports the increase in acreage under cotton during the current year in regions like Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka due to remunerative returns," Mr Aurobinda Prasad, Head of Research at Karvy Comtrade, observed.

"The scenario is expected to be different in Andhra Pradesh where the farmers are more interested in chilli than cotton to avert the risks of crop damage due to increase in the rainfalls, as chilli is a transplanted crop. The sowing prospects in pulses are expected to remain slightly higher than the last year owing to the higher minimum support prices for the pulses," he said.

Pepper market continues to head south on bearish activities



Kochi, April 19:

Pepper futures witnessed high volatility on Tuesday with the prices moving up sharply in the opening session and then falling to the lowest level in the forenoon session itself and then started recovering and touching the highest level and then it dropped and then moved up in the afternoon session and slided in high volatility and closed below the previous day's closing.

The bear operators tried to hammer down the market pointing out easier Vietnam market and heavy liquidation and switching to June.

Buyers withdraw

There were no sellers on the spot as the market fell and similarly buyers also withdrew.

Domestic buyers stayed away from the declining market.

Availability was only on the exchange platform.

About 1,600 tonnes of pepper will have their validity expired on June 5th and apprehensions are being raised as to who will take delivery by those operators who wanted to push the market down, market sources told *Business Line*.

“In fact, small and medium players are moving out from this gambling den”, they alleged.

April contract on the NCDEX declined by 31 tonnes while that of May and June dropped by Rs 51 and Rs 128 respectively to close at Rs 26,260 and Rs 26,693 a quintal.

Turnover up

Total turn over increased by 3,272 tonnes to 14,938 tonnes.

Total open interest increased by 460 tonnes to 13,785 tonnes and yet the market fell.

April open interest dropped by 411 tonnes to 636 tonnes. May and June increased by 341 tonnes and 552 tonnes respectively to close at 10,513 tonnes and 2,197 tonnes.

Spot steady

Spot prices remained steady for want of sellers and buyers at previous levels of Rs 24,800 (ungarbled) and Rs 25,600 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$6,300 a tonne (c&f) and remained nearly competitive.

Vietnam was offering FAQ 500 GL at \$5,300 a tonne (f.o.b) and 550 GL at \$5,650 a tonne (f.o.b). Brazil was firmer as the material available there is reportedly limited, trade sources said.

Campco's chocolate plant runs on steam, wind power

Factory operates boilers on bio-briquette; saves Rs 1 cr a year

Mangalore, April 19:

If someone says that the process of chocolate manufacturing depends on bio-wastes and steam and wind energy, would you believe? But the Mangalore-based cooperative Campco (Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative) Ltd believes in them.

Most process of Campo's chocolate factory at Puttur in Dakshina Kannada district, ranging from boilers to air-conditioning system, are now running on these principles.

It all began four years ago when Campco decided to run its boiler on steam generated by bio-briquettes than on furnace oil. (Bio-briquette is a block of agro-wastes.)

Encouraged by its performance, the cooperative has now started operating a major portion of its air-conditioning units at the chocolate factory on steam energy.

Mr Suresh Bhandary, General Manager of Campco Ltd, told *Business Line* that the cooperative effected the switch to bring down its dependence on petroleum products and grid power for chocolate manufacturing.

BOILER

The cooperative needs boiler for chocolate manufacturing process, including roasting of cocoa beans and to cook chocolates. The transition from furnace oil to bio-briquettes began four years ago to bring down the cost of chocolate production at the factory.

“In boiler, steam is generated by boiling water. In the old system, furnace oil was used for this purpose. Four years ago we went in for bio-briquettes. That conversion helped us save around Rs 1 crore a year,” he said.

With furnace oil, the cost of 1 kg steam was at Rs 2.10. With bio-briquettes, the cooperative saves around Rs 1.20 a kg of steam.

The factory's boiler capacity was 4 tonnes an hour. However, its requirement for processing was only 2.5 tonnes. Following this, the cooperative decided to put the excess steam for running its air-conditioning system at the plant.

AC ON STEAM

Mr Bhandary said that the factory uses vapour absorption mechanism (VAM) to run its air-conditioning system. It is a system to give air-conditioning to the plant by using steam instead of electrical power, he said.

The total requirement for air-conditioning at the factory is around 300 tonnes an hour. For this, the factory was running three electrical motors of 125 hp each earlier.

Cost savings

After the switch over to VAM, the factory consumes about 500 kg of steam an hour for running its air-conditioning system. Asked about the cost advantage in this, he said the factory saves around Rs 7,000 a day. This is after deducting the cost of steam, he said.

“More than anything, it is a green energy. There is no electrical power consumption in this,” he said.

Stating that the cooperative switched over to VAM a fortnight ago, he said the figures were based on the performance during the fortnight.

“In most of the processes we have come out of petroleum products and moving towards bio wastes,” he said.

According to him, the change over from furnace oil to briquette helped the cooperative save around Rs 7 lakh a month, and with the current change over there will be around Rs 10 lakh saving a month.

WIND

Asked about the wind energy initiative of the cooperative, he said that it has helped the cooperative's dependence on grid power. It has generated around 21 lakh units last year, he said.

The cooperative's 1.25-MW wind mill at Halthimalapura in Hoovinahadagali taluk of Bellary district began functioning on March 31, 2009.

DEMIC suggests farmers sell sunflower after harvest

Coimbatore, Apr 19:

The Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has suggested that farmers sell sunflower seeds on harvest without going for storage as there is little chance for price increase.

DEMIC recommended this after analysing monthly prices at Vellakoil Regulated Market for the past 11 years and advised farmers to take a proper decision on sunflower cultivation in April—May.

Analysis results revealed that seed prices would be around Rs 27 to Rs 30 a kg, hovering around prevailing prices, up to May and maximum prices would be offered to high quality seeds, which will weigh about 40 to 42 gm for a volume of 100 seeds, DEMIC said.

Total area of sunflower and production in Tamil Nadu, as per the 2008—09 figures were 0.29 lakh hectares and 0.34 lakh tonnes and productivity was 1,334 kg per hectare.

The major sunflower market centres in Tamil Nadu are Vellakoil, Moolanur and Kodumudi, it said.

Suvarna Bhoomi scheme to help 27,841 farmers in Dakshina Kannada

Mangalore, April 19:

The Karnataka Government's 'Suvarna Bhoomi' scheme, which was announced in the State budget of 2011-12, will help improve the economic condition of 27,841 farmers with small holdings, according to Mr Subodh Yadav, Deputy Commissioner of Dakshina Kannada district.

Reviewing the progress of the implementation of 'Suvarna Bhoomi' scheme in the district here on Tuesday, he said that the district has around 1.9 lakh farmers with small holdings. Of them, 27,841 farmers will be selected under the scheme. Therefore the process of selection of beneficiaries should be transparent, he said.

Under this scheme, a farmer with land holding up to two acres will be given financial assistance amounting to Rs 10,000 in two instalments, directly through banks or cooperative societies. This will help take up activities related to horticulture, sericulture, organic farming, high-yielding oil seeds and pulses cultivation, apiculture and fish farming.

Mr Padmayya Naik, Joint Director, Department of Agriculture, Dakshina Kannada, said that his department will extend the benefit of the scheme to 16,704 farmers to take up cultivation of high-yielding oil seeds and pulses and for organic farming.

Horticulture boost

Mr Praveen K., Headquarters Assistant to the Deputy Director of Horticulture, Mangalore, said that 6,960 farmers in the district will be extended the benefit under the scheme to cultivate horticulture crops such as mango, pomegranate, banana, pineapple, papaya and others.

There is good demand for cultivation of arecanut, banana and coconut under horticulture produces in some taluks in the district, he said. However, intercrop cultivation in the existing horticulture plantation is not allowed under this scheme, he said.

Inland fisheries

Mr Parshwanath, Assistant Director, Fisheries Department, said that 1,392 farmers will be encouraged to take up inland fisheries in the district under this scheme. Stating that there is more stress on coastal fishing activities in the district, he said efforts will be made to popularise inland fishing in Sullia, Puttur, Bantwal and Belthangady taluks in the district.

Mr Naik said that April 25 is the last date for receiving application for Suvarna Bhoomi scheme from farmers.

Rice basmati, maize rise on pick up in demand

New Delhi, Apr 19:

Rice basmati and maize prices firmed by up to Rs 50 per quintal on the wholesale grains market today on pick up in demand against restricted arrivals from producing region.

Traders said pick up in demand against limited arrivals mainly pushed up rice basmati and maize prices.

In the national capital, rice basmati Pusa—1121 variety rose by Rs 50 to Rs 4,550—5,550, while maize gained Rs 20 to Rs 1,370—1,380 per quintal.

Following are today's quotations in Rs per quintal:

Wheat MP (deshi) 1,650—1,800, wheat dara (for mills) 1,210—1,215 chakki atta (delivery) 1,230—1,235, atta Rajdhani (10 kg) 175, Shakti bhog (10 kg) 175, Roller flour mill 640—660 (50 kg), Maida 750—780 (50 kg) and Sooji 820—840 (50 kg).

Basmati rice (Lal Quila) 9,500, Shri Lal Mahal 9,300, super basmati rice 9,000, Basmati common 5,600—5,700, rice Pusa—(1121) 4,550—5,550, Permal raw 1,850—1,900, Permal wand 2,050—2,150, Sela 2,100—2,175 and Rice IR—8 1,750—1,775, Bajra 990—1000, Jowar yellow 1000—1075, white 1,825—1,875, Maize 1,370—1,380, Barley (UP) 1,360—1,380 and Rajasthan 1,080—1,090.

STC invites bids for 31,000 t pulses import



New Delhi, April 19:

State Trading Corporation of India Ltd (STC) has invited bids for the import of 31,000 tonnes of pulses for sale in the domestic market.

The bid will close on April 20 and a decision on awarding the contract will be taken on the same day, the firm said in a statement on its website.

The company said bidders should source 25,000 tonnes of yellow peas and 2,000 tonnes each of desi chick peas (chana), black matpe (urad) and leamon tur (arhar) from Canada, Australia and Myanmar.

Black matpe and lemon tur should be from the current crop year, it said, adding that the shipment should reach Mumbai/Vizag and Chennai ports between May and June.

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