

Tobacco farmers end agitation

Board chairman's initiative bears fruit

Traders agree to buy bright grade of tobacco at Rs 124 a kg

Both ITC and GPI have promised to increase quota for tobacco grown, he says

— Photo: Srinivas Kommuri



Camaraderie: Tobacco Board chairman G Kamala Vardhana Rao offering fruit juice to an agitating tobacco farmer in Ongole on Tuesday.

ONGOLE: Tobacco farmers agitating for the last nine days for a remunerative price for their produce, ended their stir on Tuesday with Tobacco Board Chairman G Kamala Vardhana Rao bringing about an understanding between traders and farmers.

The chairman flanked by Congress MLA from Santhanathanapadu c N Vijaykumar and TDP State Vice-President Karanam Balaramkrishnamurthy gave fruit juices to farmers observing relay fast at the tent pitched in front of the office of the Indian Tobacco Company(ITC) and ended their protest.

Addressing the farmers, the chairman, who was accompanied by Board executive director Subba Rao, said traders had agreed to buy bright grade of tobacco at Rs 124 per kg. ' have also impressed upon traders the need for increasing the average price for the produce to provide succour to growers who have suffered because of excessive rains and low productivity this time."

He said the traders had assured to ensure more buyers in the market. "I have told them you have bought for the sake of trade last time. This time you have to buy for the sake of farmers".

He further said "both ITC and GPI have promised to increase quota for tobacco grown in SLS(Southern Light Soil) and SBS(Southern Black Soil) this time".

Thanking the Board chairman for finding a solution to the issue, he pointed that tobacco growers had been facing hardship since Laila cyclone struck the coast last year. He wanted the Board to ensure an average price of about 120 per kg.

"The farmers have resorted to crop holiday in the past when pushed to the wall. The Centre, which gets rs 13,300 crore excise revenue and rs 4,400 crore foreign exchange, will be at a loss. Hence it should intervene in the market in support of farmers", Mr Krishnamurthy, also a former TDP MP, said.

CPI(M)-led Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam Prakasam District Secretary N Ranga Rao thanked the Board Chairman for his "pro-peasant" initiative, while TDP Ongole Constituency in-charge E Haribabu made it clear that "farmers will always have the option of boycotting auctioning if better average price is not maintained".

Hygienic fish market now in Nellore

Rajulapudi Srinivas

NFDB's 'Jala Pushpa Bhavan' is first of its kind in the country

– Photo: K. Ravi Kumar



New facility: The 'Jala Pushpa Bhavan' constructed by the National Fisheries Development Board at Barkas Centre in Nellore.

NELLORE: 'Jala Pushpa Bhavan'. The title sounds a picnic spot or some water body. But, it is the name given to a fish market constructed with hygienic conditions. The building was constructed by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), and the Municipal Corporation of Nellore in the city.

The fish stall, built at a cost of Rs.1.08 crore, is first of its kind in the country and about 70 similar markets are being constructed at various places in the country.

The market accommodates nearly 70 stalls, equal number of platforms for processing (cutting and cleaning), auction platforms, solid waste, and cold storage facilities.

Besides, space for drying fish, parking lots, toilets, drinking water and effluent treatment system are provided on the market premises. The model fish market will be convenient for both sellers and consumers with highly hygienic conditions, said NFDB Chief Executive P. Krishnaiah.

Speaking to The Hindu, he said the plan of the domestic fish market in Nellore was designed after visiting several countries.

The National Fisheries Development Board is constructing 70 such markets in India, with more than Rs.75 crore, of which 20 are being constructed in Andhra Pradesh.

The 'Jala Pushpa Bhavan' is the first fish stall being opened in the country on April 6. Apart from funding for fish markets, the NFDB also proposes to create awareness among women on the need to maintain cleanliness and provide training to women on maintaining the stalls.

"Our concept is to development fish markets with highly hygienic system across the country. The model fish market would be showcased in other States. The NFDB is also providing training for aqua farmers in raising fish and prawn tanks with latest technologies," said Mr. Krishnaiah.

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Farm sector top of the class in growth rate

Nagesh Prabhu

Stays well ahead of target set for first four years of Plan

It pips industry, service sectors in performance in fag end of 11th Five-Year Plan

Average growth in industrial sector is 6 p.c. against target of 11.1 per cent

Bangalore: Growth in the agricultural and allied sectors surged ahead of industry and service sectors in the first four years of the 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-12) in Karnataka.

The average State Gross Domestic Product (SGDP) growth rate during the first four years of the Plan was 5.7 per cent in the agricultural and allied sector as against the target of 5 per cent. The growth in the farm sector was much higher than the national growth of 2.9 per cent.

What worked

Normal monsoon and a slew of measures in the farm sector by the Central and State governments led to increased growth and production of foodgrains.

The foodgrains production increased from 120.49 lakh tonnes in 2007-08 to 128.38 lakh tonnes in 2010-11.

On the other hand, the industry and service sectors in the State have not been successful in achieving the targets in the first four years of the 11th Five-Year Plan.

The average growth of the industrial sector is 6 per cent against the target of 11.1 per cent.

The growth in the service sector too fell short of expectations, registering 9 per cent against the target of 11.2 per cent growth, according to official sources in the State Planning and Agriculture departments.

At national level

At the national level, industrial and service sectors recorded growth of 7.6 per cent and 10 per cent respectively in the first four years of the present plan.

Slowdown

The economic slowdown in 2007-09 was considered a major reason for the slow growth rate in the secondary and service sectors.

To move towards the 11th Plan targets, the State's growth performance this fiscal (2011-12) should be higher than 2007-08, official sources said.

In the first year (2007-08) of the present plan, the GSDP grew at 12.9 per cent on account of good performance in all sectors of the economy. The agricultural, industry and service sectors grew at 11.9 per cent, 10.6 per cent and 14.5 per cent, respectively.

As a comparison, the agricultural, industrial and service sectors recorded growth percentage of 2.2, 9.7 and 9.5, respectively, in the 10th Five-Year Plan (2002-07). 'Overall show competitive'

The plan outlay for the State increased from Rs. 17,782.58 crore in the first year of the 11th Plan (2007-08) to Rs. 38,070 crore in the last year of the plan (2011-12). "Overall, the growth performance of Karnataka is competitive as compared to other States and at the national level, mainly contributed by tertiary and services sectors," said an official.

The per capita net income at current prices was estimated at Rs. 60,000 for 2010-11 as against Rs. 51,858 for 2009-10.

The growth rate in per capita net income was estimated at 15.7 per cent during 2010-11, as against 12 per cent during the previous year, sources said.

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Farm investors' meet will be held in October: Minister

Staff Correspondent

DAVANGERE: Murugesh Nirani, Minister for Small- and Medium-scale Industries, said on Tuesday that a global agricultural investors' meet would be organised during October in Bangalore.

Addressing a public meeting at Ramagatta village in Jagalur taluk on Tuesday, Mr. Nirani said that the Bharatiya Janata Party Government was committed to the welfare of farmers and the poor. It had introduced a scheme under which farmers could avail themselves of loans at low

interest. It had introduced the first ever agriculture budget. He appealed to the people of Jagalur to vote for BJP in the byelection.

Pension

Revenue Minister G. Karunkara Reddy said that over 11 lakh people were being given pension under the Sandhya Suraksha scheme. Pension for persons with disabilities had been increased to Rs. 1,000 a month from Rs. 600. The Government had released Rs. 5 crore for development of tanks in villages, he said. Mr. Reddy claimed that Mr. Yeddyurappa had mobilised resources from various departments and utilised them for welfare schemes for farmers. He said that the Opposition parties were envious about the growing popularity of the BJP and making baseless allegations against it. G.M. Siddeshwar, Davangere MP, and S.V. Ramachandra, BJP candidate for the Jagalur byelection, spoke.

Date:06/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/06/stories/2011040650170500.htm>

Yellow leaf disease puts areca growers in distress

Raviprasad Kamila

There is no permanent cure for it, says CPCRI

— PHOTO: RAVIPRASAD KAMILA



**An arecanut plantation that has been hit by yellow leaf disease at Todikana village in Sullia taluk
in**

SULLIA (DAKSHINA KANNADA): The State Government allocated Rs. 2 crore in the agriculture budget for 2011-12 for controlling yellow leaf disease in arecanut palms. This seems to have only added to the distress of areca growers as their palms are fast withering in Dakshina Kannada and Kodagu districts.

The Government's plans to control the disease seem to be misplaced as even the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasaragod, Kerala, has agreed that there is no permanent cure for the disease. Its director Geroge V. Thomas stated this to The Hindu.

Farmers have felt that they need assistance to grow alternative crops not steps to control the disease. The farmers are distressed that the Government has failed to announce any scheme to support oil palm cultivation as an alternative, said Ramesh K., an agriculturist and member of the committee which revised the production cost of arecanut for the Government recently.

The recommendation to encourage oil palm cultivation was made by the Deputy Director of the Department of Horticulture in Dakshina Kannada in a December 10, 2009 report to the Additional Director (Oil Palm Scheme) in Bangalore. It could begin on an experimental basis in 2010-11 scaled up subsequently, the official had suggested pointing out that Sullia taluk had the required irrigation facilities.

The disease has hit plantations in six villages of Aranthodu, Sampaje, Todikana and Markanja villages in Dakshina Kannada and Chembu and Kodagu Sampaje villages in Kodagu.

And, plantations have been partially hit in seven villages of Madappady, Aletti, Ubaradkka-Mittur, Harihara-Pallathadka and Kollamogaru villages in Dakshina Kannada and Koinadu and Peraje villages in Kodagu.

A farmer K. Vasanth Rao of Todikana in Dakshina Kannada said: "The only option now left is to cut the palms and raise an alternative crop."

Mr. Rao said that yield in the disease-hit plantations have come down by more than 50 per cent, forcing the farmers to either sell certain portions of their land or explore alternative avenues for living. Farmers used to get about 8 quintals of yield an acre a year but not longer.

An article by a four-member team of scientists of the CPCRI published by The American Phytopathological Society in November 2010 (Vol. 94. No. 11) has said that yellow leaf disease "is one of the most serious diseases in areca palms in India. It reduces the yield by as much as 50 per cent over a period of three years immediately following the incidence."

Extent

Statistics are not available with the Horticulture Department on the extent of plantations affected by the disease. However, farmers estimate that plantations in about 2,500 acres are withering.

Mr. Rao, who has been pursuing the cause of farmers with the Government for two years, said that there is no permanent cure for the vector-borne disease.

Dr. Thomas said that oil palms are susceptible to spear rot disease. "One of the earliest studies has shown that it can spread," he said.

Mr. Rao, however, said that farmers have seen a disease-free oil palm plantation of the Government near Goonadkka village in the taluk spread over seven hectares with about 1,000 oil palms planted in 1968.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Wednesday, Apr 6

Max Min

37.1° | 26°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 84%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:03

Sunset: 18:20

Barometer: 1009.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Apr 7

Max Min

38° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday

Apr 8



31° | 22°

Cloudy

Saturday

Apr 9



31° | 22°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

Apr 10



32° | 24°

Cloudy

Monday

Apr 11



32° | 25°

Cloudy

Tuesday

Apr 12



33° | 24°

Partly Cloudy



By PTI

06 Apr 2011 08:04:08 AM IST

Pawar writes to PM seeking more cotton exports

NEW DELHI: Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar has written to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urging increase in export quota of cotton by 1.5 million bales to 7 million bales to help farmers realise better prices, sources said Tuesday.

The government had put a quantitative cap of 5.5 million bales (170 kg each) on cotton exports for the year ending September this year.

In the letter, Pawar has noted that there is a case for more cotton exports as domestic production is high and there is a global shortage of the natural fibre, sources said.

The letter has been written ahead of group of ministers (GoM) meeting scheduled on April 7 which would discuss whether or not to allow more exports.

The country is estimated to have harvested 33.9 million bales in 2010-11 crop year as against 24.22 million bales in the previous year.

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Healthy greens

April 06, 2011 10:45:27 AM



They are the ones responsible for saving the plants from diseases as well as bringing about changes to keep them healthy. *Team Avenues* tells you more about plant pathologists

Just like humans and animals, even plants can be affected by infectious diseases and get feeble. These diseases are caused by living organisms called plant pathogens which include fungi, bacteria, viruses and parasitic plants. They can also be caused by air pollution, nutrient deficiencies and environmental factors. Plant diseases are a constant threat to the world's food and fibre crops. So, it is important to keep plants healthy as it is the base of our food chain, and hence comes the significance of plant pathology.

Plant pathology, also known as phytopathology, deals with the study of diseases in plants and is one of the sub branches of plant protection science. Plant protection science is the branch of agricultural science which studies the ways to keep plants healthy by protecting them from various damages especially with an aim of higher production.

Plant pathology is an apt career for those who have a keen interest in agricultural and biological fields. The studies in plant pathology mainly focus on plants mounting; understanding the organisms and agents that cause diseases; how the plants are affected by the diseases and how to control plant diseases. The field of plant pathology is interrelated to other biological fields such as microbiology, mycology, biochemistry, bio-informatics, virology etc.

Eligibility

Those who have a keen interest in agricultural or biological science can take up plant pathology as their career. This field offers a variety of career options. Graduate courses in botany, microbiology, horticulture, soil science, crop science, genetics, ecology, molecular biology,

biochemistry, physiology, etc will give a fair idea about plant pathology. Some B.Sc courses offer plant pathology as an area of specialisation.

Several agricultural universities offer specialised B.Sc graduation courses in plant pathology or plant protection. The eligibility criteria for all the above mentioned graduate courses are 10+2 or equivalent with physics, chemistry and biology with minimum of 50 per cent marks. Selection is based on merit and some reputed agricultural universities admit candidates through entrance examinations.

After graduation, one can specialise in the field of plant pathology by taking masters and doctoral degrees. Graduation with more than 60 per cent marks is required for taking up Master's degree and post graduation with a minimum of 60 per cent is required for doctoral (PhD) programmes.

Specialisation

Entomology (the study of insects), nematology (the study of nematodes or roundworms) and weed sciences are some areas associated with plant pathology and one can pursue courses in these specialised subjects to become an expert plant pathologist.

To join as a plant pathologist or for the post of agricultural research scientist in various concerned departments of the state and Central Governments, candidates have to qualify the 'Combined Entrance' conducted by various state and central recruitment agencies from time to time. Besides that, aspiring candidates can take up ARS NET exam (Agricultural Research Service and National Eligibility Test) to work as Lecturer in various agricultural universities and their affiliated collages.

During the course period the students will learn about different kinds of pathogens and their identification, the disease cycle, how to resist the diseases, how these diseases impact other living organisms such as human beings and animals, the economic impact and management of plant diseases etc.

Skills required

Plant pathology is a profession which requires lot of hard work and high level of patience, along with many years of study. The most important skill needed is none other than passion for the profession. Analytical and research skills, communication skills, ability to understand and express their ideas are the major attributes needed for a plant pathologist. Essential qualities needed are good observation skill i.e a keen eye for detail, ability to work along with a team and to take decisions independently. Plant pathologists should be very confident; be aware and prepared for taking up challenges; and be updated with all recent scientific developments regarding the field.

Job Prospects

With the increasing global demand for high-quality food, fibre, tree and ornamental plants, plant pathology is coming up as one of the hottest career options which provide various opportunities to Bio-Science graduates. This field provide ample opportunities both in the public and private firms.

Plant pathologists are playing a major role to boost up a country's agricultural productivity. Their main task is the management and control of the spread of diseases in plants. For this, they work together with other specialists like plant breeders, weed specialists etc.

Numerous job openings are available for the plant pathologists in areas like research, product development, sales, teaching, administration, regulatory work and private practice. Graduates in plant pathology can take up their career as plant geneticist, plant breeder, aquatic botanist, limnologist (study of life and phenomena of inland waters), physiologist, plant pathologist etc. They can be appointed as farm and greenhouse managers, park and golf course superintendents, agribusiness sales representatives and in other biological science positions. Professionals are much in demand in research firms like tissue culture laboratories, diagnostic laboratories and agricultural research centers. Agricultural field offers a number of opportunities for qualified persons. Apart from being a field plant pathologists, one can work as an agricultural research scientist or a lecturer or production in-charge in the processing food and allied industry.

Plant pathologists are appointed in agrochemical companies, seed companies, fertiliser companies, agricultural consultancies etc. Seed companies need their help to develop better seeds with more resistance power where as Fertiliser companies look for their help to solve the technical problems related to plant diseases.

Plant pathology has immense scope overseas and candidates with master's or doctoral degrees are in great demand in countries like US, UK, Australia, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand etc. But for working in these countries, one has to clear the English language eligibility tests like TOEFL or IELTS.

Remuneration

Remuneration of such professionals depends on their educational qualification, experience, position and skills. A fresh graduate from a well-recognised agricultural university can earn an initial package of `15,000-22,000 per month. An experienced person can earn up to `60,000. Senior pathologists, lecturers can earn lucrative amounts. Those who qualify Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) can perform research work in this field, and the fellowship is `12,000 per month. The average annual salary of a professional associate in the US varies from \$25,000-\$45,000.

Where to study

- Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana
- Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwavidyalaya, Madhya Pradesh
- College of Horticulture, Kerala
- Nagaland University, Kohima
- Allahabad School of Agriculture, Allahabad

Cane crushing over, mill owners owe farmers `139 cr

April 06, 2011 10:47:50 AM

Rajendra S Markuna | Haldwani

Cane crushing season is over, but cane farmers' dues running into crores are yet to be cleared by the sugar mills. Ideally, as per the norms all the unpaid dues need to be cleared within a fortnight of completion of cane crushing season.

But dues worth about `138.88 crore are yet to be paid by the sugar mills to the cane farmers in the hill State.

Among the sugar mills which owe the maximum dues include Iqbalpur sugar mill which has yet to pay `24.59 crore and `17.16 crore has to be paid by the Liberhedi sugar mill.

Similarly, the Baazpur sugar mill has to pay about `15.75 crore followed by the Lukashar sugar mill, which has to pay `15.68 crore, Nadehi sugar mill has to pay `14.49 crore, Doiwala sugar mill has to pay `12.89 crore, Gadarpur sugar mill owes `11.65 crore, Sitarganj sugar mill `11.42 crore, Kashipur sugar mill `8.14 crore among others.

The sugarcane mills had to pay a total of `627.93 crore to sugarcane farmers of the hill State this season. Out of the said amount, the different sugar mills have already cleared dues worth `489.05 crore to the cane farmers.

The matter of the fact is that given certain financial liabilities like loan that the cane farmers have to face, it has already been made clear that the sugar mills need to dispose off the dues to the cane farmers within 15 days after finishing the crushing work so that the concerned farmers could clear their loan and other financial liabilities, said Umed Singh Nagdali, secretary, Haldwanli cane cooperative society while speaking to The Pioneer.

NABARD conducts State level workshop on paddy cultivation

April 06, 2011 10:50:19 AM

PNS | Ranchi

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) on Tuesday organised a workshop to share the findings and experiences gained in implementation of the pilot demonstration of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) practices for Kharif crops.

MV Ashok, CGM, NABARD said that SRI had been an improved rice cultivation practice which emerged in the 1980's as a synthesis of locally advantageous rice production. "Responses from the farmers have been overwhelming seeing the benefits of the method. Jharkhand has been late in adopting the technology which promises to fight the problems of hunger and food security." The first phase of the project, targeted to cover 9,806 farmers with area coverage of 2,462 acre was launched in Kharif 2010 in 52 project areas covering 22 districts.

Average yield of paddy under SRI method was 4.9 MT/Ha as against the yield of 2.5 MT/Ha under traditional method. Grain yield in the method indicates 194 per cent increase and straw yield in SRI method indicates 189 per cent increase over the traditional method. Seed requirement is only 2-2.5 kg/acre of paddy land as against 20-25 kg/acre in the traditional cultivation practice.

The Chief Secretary SK Choudhury appreciated the efforts of NABARD in promotion of SRI in the State, and gave his vision about the strategies required for adoption of the SRI method in the state with the effort of government and NGOs. RP Singh 'Ratan', Director of Extension, Birsa Agriculture University explained about the challenges confronting large scale promotion of SRI among the farmers and mentioned that all the extension agencies need to come together for the purpose.

Navratra demand sends fruit prices soaring

April 06, 2011 10:54:11 AM

Manoj Kumar | Dehradun

In view of ongoing Chaiti Navratra, fruits prices have increased two fold in Dehradun and people have no option other than paying higher prices. This credit goes to middle men because prices of fruits in mandi and shops vary between three to four times.

While talking to The Pioneer Uttarakhand Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee official said that due to less supply of fruits, which come from neighbouring States, prices of fruits have gone up. Following festive season, its consumption have also increased four to five times if we compare with a normal day. This price will come down once Navratra would be over or after a week or so.

One of the employees of the department, who had a bag of fruits said that usually he purchases the fruits from Mandi because of rate different between Mandi and road side fruit sellers.

Anil Bisht, one of the shopkeepers at Sahastradhara, said that there is acute shortage of fruits at Mandi. we purchase fruits including Grapes, Orange, Papaya and others at higher prices. We have to include its transport cost, his wages and fruits perish due to hot weather its price vary between Mandi and shops”.

Aarushi, a house wife and came to purchase fruits from Mandi, said that she keeps fasting during Navratra. The prices of graphs, papaya, banana, orange, pomegranate, watermelon and other are much higher if we compare with last week.

She added that as the festival season is on, the district administration should make an arrangement to ensure availability of fruits for everyone during the Chaiti Navratra.

Business Standard

Wednesday, Apr 06, 2011

Removal of special margins may push up guar seed prices

Sharleen D'Souza / Mumbai April 06, 2011, 0:25 IST

After removal of special margins imposed on guar seed and guar gum, traders have again started taking fresh positions in the futures market. The margins were imposed more than a month ago to control price volatility. Prices reached unusual high levels and the relaxation in margins have not helped much in bringing these down, as fundamentals have come into play and prices are expected to go up again.

According to the direction from the regulator, National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange withdrew the 10 per cent special margin on guar seed and reduced the special margin from 10 per cent to five per cent for guar gum, effective April 4.

"Fresh demand for guar seed and gum are now coming in from the pharmaceutical industry as well as from millers," said Ajay Kedia of Kedia Commodities. Guar seed and gum prices are expected to remain bullish in the futures market, he added.

Guar seed futures have moved up three per cent and guar gum futures gained one per cent since Saturday.

The guar seed season is nearing to an end and arrivals in spot markets have declined. Daily arrivals have reached around 15,000-20,000 bags (1 bag = 1 quintal).

Last year, at this time of the year, daily arrivals stood at 25,000-30,000 bags, which indicate a drop of 20 per cent.

The guar seed crop in 2009-2010 stood at 450,000 tonnes, compared to 800,000-900,000 tonnes in 2008-2009.

"Stockists are holding back their stocks, which is also pushing up prices of the commodity," said a trader.

Good export demand for guar gum has led to rocketing prices, which may also result in increased acreage of guar seed this year. But the output will depend on the monsoon. The guar gum market, on the other hand, has been volatile, but strong demand for the commodity from the textile industry, as well as the crude oil exploration industry, is providing a good support for the commodity.

Some traders and exporters are said to have formed a cartel to jack up prices. There are big players in the major producing centres who are responsible for the price volatility of the commodity, an analyst said.

Board raises tobacco price by Rs 4 per kg

D Gopi / Guntur April 6, 2011, 0:22 IST

The Tobacco Board has agreed to increase the minimum guarantee price by Rs 4 a kg to farmers of F1 Grade from the current Rs 120. This was decided after board Chairman G Kamalavardhana Rao held meetings with representatives of farmers and traders.

Farmers of southern light soils in Prakasam district, who have cultivated flue-cured virginia, have been insisting on remunerative price. However, traders were offering only Rs 112.98 a kg as against Rs 119.9 in the 2010 season.

According to traders, prices in global markets have come down due to surplus output in the last two years and there was not much demand for Indian tobacco in international markets like Brazil and Zimbabwe.

The highest price so far offered for the fine quality tobacco stood at Rs 120 a kg, while the lowest was Rs 90 a kg. "This year, there is a shortage of 15 million kg of tobacco in Andhra Pradesh against the permitted crop of 170 million kg, due to the untimely rain in December 2010," Rao said.

The board has been planning to open seven more auction platforms in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka for the next season. The board has 20 platforms in Andhra and 11 in Karnataka. It has sent proposals to the Centre to open four new platforms in Andhra and three in Karnataka.

FCI sets 26.3 mt wheat procurement target

Komal Amit Gera / Chandigarh April 6, 2011, 0:21 IST

Expecting bumper wheat production in most states, government agencies are targeting procurement of 26.3 million tonnes (mt) of the foodgrain against the 22.5 mt collected last year.

Senior Food Corporation of India (FCI) officials said the early comparative figures may vary due to various reasons but they expect to achieve the target comfortably.



Of the 26.3 mt, a substantial 21.2 mt is estimated to be lifted from Punjab (10.7 mt), Haryana (6.5 mt) and Uttar Pradesh (4 mt). Punjab and Haryana, which contribute close to 70 per cent to the national pool of wheat, are likely to increase their contribution this year.

Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh were the first to start the process by March-end followed by Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. In Punjab, wheat procurement was supposed to start on April 1 but there will be a delay following late arrivals.

Over the past week, agencies have purchased 434,000 tonnes of wheat from centres across India under the decentralised procurement scheme, against the 763,000 tonnes in the corresponding period last year.

Punjab, which had contributed 10.2 mt to the central pool last year, is expected to make an additional contribution of 500,000 tonnes. Haryana is expected to add 200,000 tonnes more to the national pool over last year's 6.3 million tonnes to 6.5 million tonnes.

But the most significant improvement in wheat production was witnessed in Uttar Pradesh with a 250 per cent increase over last year's output — from 1.6 mt in 2009-10 to 4 mt this year.

According to sources, wheat acreage has also seen an increase of 5-10 per cent in the state.

The timely availability of quality seed and favourable weather helped the UP farmers with better yield.

The latest FCI data shows that agencies have already procured 432,000 tonnes (Madhya Pradesh), 2,500 tonnes (Gujarat), 82 tonnes (Haryana) and 140 tonnes (Uttar Pradesh). Procurement in Rajasthan and Bihar will start in the second half of April.

Rising inflation poses risks to sustaining growth: Gokarn



Mumbai, April 5:

In yet another indication that the Reserve Bank of India will press ahead with its calibrated rate hikes, the Deputy Governor, Dr Subir Gokarn, on Tuesday said the central bank cannot afford to be slack on inflation merely because it is coming from a certain set of factors.

Monetary Policy, according to the top RBI official, cannot stay idle on the assumption that inflation is not from the demand side. In its mid-quarter Monetary Policy review last month, the RBI said that based on the current and evolving growth and inflation scenario it is likely to persist with the current anti-inflationary stance.

Allaying fears that hike in interest rates by the RBI could lead to a slowdown in investments, Dr Gokarn said it is better to have some constraint or restraint now with prospects of stabilisation later on, as against no restraint now and collapse later. "We don't want to be in a situation where the only way to deal with inflation is to squeeze out growth completely. Sustainability of growth in future requires lower inflation now," the Deputy Governor said in his address to the members of industry body, FICCI.

If there are signs of a spill over from supply side to the core, then a monetary response is warranted to prevent the process from spiralling out of control, Dr Gokarn said. "The challenge is to keep growth as high as possible without the risk of inflation spiralling out of control," Dr Gokarn said.

Blueprint for next farm revolution



The pressures to improve farm-level efficiency and productivity are building up.

The blueprint for the second agricultural revolution would have to include an effective strategy for improving productivity. Modernisation of the supply chain and the growth of agro-processing will make this strategy work.

April 6, 2011:

The Eleventh Plan, articulated the deficiency in the achievements of agriculture since the planning began. While the GDP from agriculture increased by more than 300 per cent, GDP per agricultural worker rose by only 75 per cent during the period from 1950-51 to the beginning of the new Plan.

Five years on, on the eve of the Twelfth Plan, the relative positions in terms of overall agricultural GDP growth and GDP per agricultural worker may not change significantly. Would the new Census show decline in the number of agricultural workers, including cultivators? That, perhaps, is one element of the agricultural revolution that is necessary for a viable strategy for the new agricultural revolution.

So far, the movement of labour from agriculture to non-agricultural employment has been more due to the 'push' factors rather than the 'pull' factors of non-agricultural sectors.

According to the Eleventh Plan, one of the problems has been the inability to equip those in agriculture to access opportunities emerging in the faster growing non-farm sector. The Plan also said “half of those engaged in agriculture are still illiterate and just 5 per cent have completed higher secondary education”.

Better infrastructure

Five years from then, the early figures from the new Census give some hope that these numbers on education of the rural population may have changed for the better. Of course, those who are better equipped may have left farming for the better opportunities, leaving the less equipped behind.

There is also the issue of ageing of the workforce that is left behind and greater proportion of female workforce in agriculture as well.

The blueprint for the second agricultural revolution would have to include an effective strategy for improving productivity per worker and this may not be an automatic consequence of increasing land productivity. And the labour productivity is a function of not only on-farm productivity but also employment opportunities in the non-farm sector, in an ideal situation, close to the farms.

This will make movement from farm to non-farm employment easier and more likely. The security of links to the farm as an insurance is likely to encourage the move to the other sources of employment.

These strategies were obviously not unknown so far. However, the strategies that have been implemented are essentially to improve land productivity. The rural infrastructure development programmes have laid the foundation for a new strategy. The improved infrastructure, especially roads and electricity, can bring new opportunities close to the rural areas, if not in the rural areas.

Demand for produce

The experience of the last two years has also been one of stable and growing demand for farm produce. The reduction in marketing inefficiencies would make supply chains more effective and may not have immediate impact on on-farm productivity.

The changes in the composition of demand — whether it is towards fruits, vegetables, milk, livestock and processed food — point to a future in which demand for farm produce would rise significantly.

The modernising supply chains, marketing and processing enterprises provide new employment opportunities for the rural workforce.

The pressures to improve farm-level efficiency and productivity are building up for other reasons as well. The rising demand for labour for rural development works, including those under NREGA, has meant that the farm-level efficiency would have to improve.

The new work opportunities in the off-farm occupations will also add to the pressure to raise efficiency of use of labour on the farm.

What will make this overall strategy work, obviously, is the modernisation of the supply chain and the growth of agro-processing that will meet the rising demand.

As the growth in demand stimulates growth in output, there will be new employment opportunities on the farm as well. These will require new skills and new technology. The rural workforce needs to acquire skills and the farmers to adopt technologies.

New skills and technology

The vision of raising the share of manufacturing sharply, expressed in the Budget speech of the Finance Minister this year, presumably in a reasonably short time-frame, also complements the strategy for the next agricultural revolution.

It is unlikely that such large increase in manufacturing activity can take place without generating significant new employment and employment opportunities for the rural workforce.

The transformation from low-income agriculture for the farmers and farm workers to reasonably high-income agriculture cannot happen in a situation where demand for the produce is not growing. It cannot happen without the supporting technological changes. It cannot happen if employment opportunities do not open up for the farm-based workforce.

The rising demand conditions have finally arrived. The rural infrastructure is emerging.

This would be an important opportunity for Indian agriculture to achieve transition to higher income, based on sustainable demand rather than the one based on subsidies. One key to the blueprint is still outside agriculture, in the rising manufacturing sector.

Govt to look into areca import at sub-floor rate



Mangalore/ New Delhi, April 5:

The Union Government has started looking into how arecanut import was allowed at a much lower price than the floor price of Rs 35 a kg fixed on June 4, 2008.

This follows a *Business Line* report in this regard on Monday where it was reported that the details provided by the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry to the Dakshina Kannada MP, Mr Nalin Kumar Kateel, are an indication of the Government admitting the fact that arecanut

imports have taken place from various countries in the last two years at a price lower than the floor import price.

In one case, the import price was as low as Rs 13.72 a kg.

Official sources told Business Line that the Customs Department and the DGCI&S will be asked to look into how arecanut import was allowed at a much lower price than the floor price of Rs 35 a kg fixed on June 4, 2008.

However, the representatives of growers and arecanut cooperatives have sought a ban on the import of arecanut to the country, as India is self-sufficient in its production. (In 2009, India produced 4.89 lakh tonnes of arecanut).

The import had detrimental effect on the arecanut price in India in the last two years, they said.

POSSIBILITY

Though not sure of how such imports have taken place, the sources said the only possibility is that imports of such restricted items can be allowed against a licence.

However, if the importer does not have a licence, the Customs may impose a penalty/fine on such imports and allow them into the country, they said.

But the quantum of fine imposed on such restricted items will not show up in the imported value, and therefore, the original price mentioned in the Bill of Entry (which in this case is the price lower than the floor price) will be taken as the imported price. This, in turn, results in discrepancy, the sources said.

BAN IMPORT

Mr K. Padmanabha, President of Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd, said that if the Government is serious about the welfare of farmers then it should impose a total ban on the import of arecanut.

“If the Government is serious is about imposing a ban on ‘gutkha’, in which arecanut is a major ingredient, why can’t it impose a ban on the import of the commodity itself,” he said.

The import did not allow the price to come up in the domestic market. Apart from this, import at a lower rate also affected the revenue of the Government, he said.

INFERIOR QUALITY

Endorsing the views of Mr Padmanabha on the ban on import of arecanut, Mr M. Srinivasa Achar, President of All-India Areca Growers' Association, said that the imported stocks of arecanut are of inferior quality. For most of the nations that export arecanut to India, it is a forest crop for them. It is not a cultivated crop abroad. The quality is not good in those countries.

“Fortunately, none of the foreign goods is as good as Indian goods,” he said.

He expressed concern that the imported quantity of arecanut would be much more than the government figures of 41,797 tonnes and 39,526 tonnes of arecanut during 2008-09 and 2009-10, respectively.

Nabard's loan disbursement up 43% in Bengal



The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in West Bengal saw a 43 per cent growth in loans

Kolkata, April 5:

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in West Bengal saw a 43 per cent growth in loans to the State Government and financial institutions in 2010-11 over 2009-10.

NABARD also increased its lending to the central cooperative banks (CCBs) and regional rural banks (RRBs), operating in the State, by 58 per cent to Rs 855.09 crore.

Mr N.S.P. Rao, Chief General Manager of NABARD in West Bengal told reporters here on Tuesday that considering that 95 per cent of the farmers in the State are small and marginal, the re-financier enhanced its coverage.

NABARD sanctioned 78 new schemes for funding rural go-downs in the State. These will create an additional storage capacity of 83,375 tonnes. According to Mr Rao, NABARD has taken up around 22 animal husbandry projects.

In a pilot project in the farm sector, NABARD provided 175 mobile phone-based services to Farmers' Clubs through Reuters Marketing Link. Mr Rao indicated this would be scaled up this fiscal.

In 2010-11, NABARD's disbursement to the State Government under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) increased by 26 per cent to Rs 1,160 crore.

In 2009-10, RIDF loans disbursed were Rs 922 crore. The projects taken up last year included improvement of rural connectivity, creating additional irrigational facilities and flood protection structures.

Arecanut growers seek rehabilitation package from Govt



An arecanut plantation in Sullia Taluk, Dakshina Kannada.

Mangalore, April 5:

Affected by the volatility in the arecanut market and increase in the production cost, arecanut growers (under the banner of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha) in Dakshina Kannada district have asked the State Government to solve their problems.

In this regard, the Dakshina Kannada district committee of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) will stage a protest in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office in Mangalore on Thursday.

Addressing presspersons here on Tuesday, Mr Ravikirana Punacha, working president of the Hasiru Sene wing of KRRS, said that the volatility in the market, increase in production cost and diseases plaguing the arecanut plantations have led many farmers to debt traps.

Yellow leaf disease

He said that many arecanut plantations in northern Kodagu district and southern parts of Dakshina Kannada district are affected by yellow leaf disease. In spite of research by various agencies, no solution has been found to the problem.

In such a situation, the Government should initiate steps to waive loans of affected growers and announce a rehabilitation package for them. It should also advise suitable alternative crop to the arecanut growers in those areas, he said.

Repeated appeals were made to both the Central and the State governments in this regard. In spite of this, the budgets of both the governments did have steps to tackle problems related to arecanut growers, Mr Punacha said.

He said that the production costs in agriculture and dairy farming are going up every day. In such a situation, the Government should fix a scientific production cost for these sectors.

Farm policies

Taking a dig at the agriculture policies of the governments, Mr Punacha said that the agriculture policy of one region may not hold good for the other region. In such a situation, steps should be taken to devise the policies based on the geographical conditions of the regions concerned, he said.

Adequate compensation should be paid to farmers whenever fertile land is acquired for any development project. Projects which are detrimental to the environment should not be allowed in the district, he said.

Mr Punacha said that Mr Kodihalli Chandrashekhar, President of KRRS, will lead the protest march in Mangalore on Thursday.

Rice procurement crosses last year's level in Chhattisgarh, MP



New Delhi, April 5:

Rice procurement in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh has exceeded the last year's volume but at the national level it is still down by one per cent so far.

According to the latest FCI data, the government has procured 25.24 million tonnes (m.t.) of rice so far since October last year, down by about one per cent compared to the year-ago period.

The government had procured 32.03 m.t. of rice in the entire 2009-10 marketing year.

The procurement process is going smooth in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

The combined rice procurement in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh stood at 3.79 lakh tonnes, higher than the total procurement in these two states in the entire 2009-10 marketing year.

During last marketing year, the procurement stood at 3.61 lakh tonnes in the two states.

The marketing season for rice starts from October and it ends in September.

Food bowl's poor show

The scenario, however, is not good in Punjab, considered the 'food bowl of the country' and other important states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa.

Rice purchase in Punjab stood at 8.63 m.t. so far against 9.28 m.t. in the year-ago period on account of less arrivals, the FCI data said.

According to the Agriculture Ministry's second advance estimates, the country is estimated to produce 94.01 m.t. of rice in 2010-11 crop year.

Rice is grown in kharif and rabi season.

Promote tea aggressively to stop sales decline: Producers



Coonoor, April 5:

Tea producers have asked for aggressive promotion to activate demand and arrest the decline in the earnings.

“In the first quarter of 2011, producers who sold their teas through the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) have lost Rs 3.55 crore compared to the same period of last year. If this trend continues, when the year ends, the turnover will be around Rs 12 crore less than in 2010. But already, in 2010, the turnover was Rs 23 crore less than 2009. Hence, this will result in a large cumulative loss”, Dr S Ramu, President, Nilgiri Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers' Association, told Business Line.

“We are concerned that the decline in earning had been increasing month after month in 2011.

Jan turnover

In January end, turnover was 2.33 per cent less than January 2010. By February end, the shortfall had increased to 3.92 per cent and by March end, further to 4.68 per cent compared to the corresponding period of last year.

So, aggressive promotion is needed to activate the demand and arrest the declining trend in earning, Mr Ramesh Bhojarajan, Vice-President of the Association, said.

Spot rubber rules steady



Kottayam, April 5:

Spot rubber finished almost steady on Tuesday. The market opened better and improved further on early trades but lost ground following declines on domestic futures.

But a partial recovery on the National Multi Commodity Exchange during closing hours did not make any impact in the market.

According to observers, there was no selling pressure from dealers and the prices remained under pressure on buyer resistance. The trend was mixed and volume low.

Sheet rubber finished unchanged at Rs 241 a kg after hitting an intraday high of Rs 244 a kg in the morning session. The grade improved to Rs 243 (240) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, as reported by the Rubber Board.

The April series weakened to Rs 242.04 (245.55), May to Rs 248.98 (252.59), June to Rs 252.75 (257.39) and July to Rs 253.35 (258.81) a kg for RSS 4 on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) closed at Rs 266.13 (258.08) a kg at Bangkok. The April futures for the grade increased to ¥482.7 (Rs 254.30) from ¥460 a kg during the day session but then remained inactive in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 241 (241); RSS-5: 236 (236); ungraded: 231 (232); ISNR 20: 235 (235) and latex 60 per cent: 140 (140).

An initiative to make cotton cultivation economical, eco-friendly



Coimbatore, April 5:

It is not often that cotton farmers get to meet brand retailers and project partners, more importantly foreigners for a face-to-face interaction. Most farmers hardly know which spinning mill is sourcing the produce from their field, much less, the retail brands at the end of the supply chain. And this was no chance meeting either.

When Solidaridad, a global network organisation, facilitated a meeting of select cotton farmers engaged in “Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)” project with brand retailers such as Arvind, IKEA,

Marks & Spencer and Nike among others here, five cotton farmers from Athur belt in Tamil Nadu and an equal number or more from the North seemed quite proud that the produce from their farms were reaching places they could never dream of visiting in their lifetime.

The farmers seemed genuinely proud of being a member of the BCI project, which aims to promote measurable improvements in cultivation practices to make cotton cultivation economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.

Sharing his experience with *Business Line*, R Aligivel, a cotton farmer from Athur said he used to spend around Rs 6,000/acre before being initiated into the BCI. "Now I am able to save around Rs 2,000/acre. The outgo is roughly Rs 4,000/acre now and the price that the cotton fetches in the market is remunerative."

These farmers have been introduced to the project by Super Spinning Mills. Mr Aligivel however maintained that there was no binding clause to sell the produce only to SSM. "We make the cash and carry sale at the market yard."

To a query on agriculture labour, the grower said "there is shortage of manpower, but we manage to rope in farm hands from the Southern districts during the picking season."

'Our philosophy is to develop a market for "Better Cotton," to make production better for the people who produce it," asserted Ms Deboleena Sengupta, Team Leader, Solidaridad – India.

She said that Solidaridad formulated production principles and criteria to provide a global definition of "Better Cotton."

"We provide support by working with implementing partners, link them to the market, monitor, evaluate and measure progress to ensure that the intended impacts the beneficiaries directly."

The initiative which was started last year is being taken forward by eight project partners and has within its fold around 14000 farmers.

At the end of season review, Ms Sengupta said that there was an overwhelming response to this initiative and close to 30,000 farmers had evinced interest to become members during the second year of the project. "We provide only knowledge advice and it is a flexible model," she added.

Strong global cues support edible oils



Mumbai, April 5:

Edible oil market witnessed firm trend on Tuesday on the back of bullish undertone in the global palm and soya oil futures market. Despite lower closing of the Malaysian market, palmolein rose by Rs 8 and soya refined oil increase by Rs 12 for 10 kg, in Mumbai. Groundnut oil with a gain of Rs 10 touched Rs 800 marks.

Cotton refined, sunflower oil and rapeseed oil increased by Rs 5 respectively in line with imported oils. Even after the price increase, the volume in spot was nominal in resale due to thin buying by stockists and poor retail demand. Morale was steady, said traders.

A wholesaler said soya oil futures traded on a positive note on continued buying interest and driven by tight-ending stock projection in the US. Likely decline in US soya acreage gave underlying support to the Indian market. Indore NBOT soya oil futures closed little unchanged after initial rise on speculation that rising soya oil supply from Argentina and Brazil may cool down the morale.

In Rajkot, groundnut oil ruled steady at Rs 1,240 for the telia tin and Rs 805 for 10 kg “loose.”

New crop arrivals picking up in Gujarat and southern markets are weighing on sentiment.

BMD CPO futures closed lower by 15, 9, and 16 ringgits a tonne on profit-taking as investors focus on rising supplies. Higher production is expected in April in Malaysia. At the Mumbai market, about 450-500 tonnes palmolein was resale traded at Rs 560 for April delivery.

There was no direct trade with refineries. Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 562, Ruchi's rates for palmolein were Rs 560, soya refined oil Rs 601, and sunflower oil at Rs 668. Allana was offering palmolein at Rs 562 for 10 kg. There were no buyers for indigenous oils in ready. One steamer carrying 14,000 tonne CPO is scheduled to unload in a day or two, sources said.

Malaysia's CPO futures - NBOT futures:

Malaysia's BMD CPO futures April -11 closed at MYR 3,410 (3,425), May -11 at 3,386 (3,395) and June – 11 closed at 3,366 (3382) MYR a tone. Indore, NBOT soya oil futures April – 11 was Rs 615.80 (Rs 615.70) and May-11 was Rs 626.50 (Rs 628.10).

Mumbai commodity exchange spot rate (Rs/10kg): Groundnut oil 800 (790), soya refined oil 602 (590), sunflower exp. ref. 630 (625), sunflower ref. 680 (675), rapeseed ref. oil 605 (600), rapeseed expeller ref. 575 (570), cotton ref. oil 595 (590) and palmolein was 566 (558).

Pawar pleads for more cotton exports

April 5, 2011:

New Delhi, Apr 5 Agriculture Minister Mr Sharad Pawar has written to Prime Minister Mr Manmohan Singh urging increase in export quota of cotton by 1.5 million bales to 7 million bales to help farmers realise better prices, sources said today.

The government had put a quantitative cap of 5.5 million bales (170 kg each) on cotton exports for the year ending September this year. In the letter, Mr Pawar has noted that there is a case for more cotton exports as domestic production is high and there is a global shortage of the natural fibre, sources said.

The country is estimated to have harvested 33.9 million bales in 2010-11 crop year as against 24.22 million bales in the previous year. Currently domestic prices of cotton are ruling firm at Rs 62,000 per candy (356 kg) while international prices are higher by 3 to 4 per cent.

Food processing: Govt scraps taskforce

New Delhi, April 5:

The Centre has scrapped a five-year-old taskforce for food processing industry after it felt the system was ineffective and could not make any progress.

The Food Processing Industries Ministry had constituted a taskforce way back in 2005-06 for the promotion of food processing companies at national, zonal and regional levels.

“Ministry has recently reviewed the effectiveness of the system (taskforce) and has observed that it is not achieving the desired objectives. It has therefore, been decided that the existing set up stands abolished,” according to the order issued to the state governments.

The nomination of the taskforce members (at three levels), whose tenure still remains valid, also comes to an end with effect from March 16, the order said.

“The performance of the taskforce was reviewed after the Ministry received complaints that some private members were misusing their powers,” a senior government official told PTI.

It was also found that the utility of the system was very low, the official said, adding that the Centre would now directly work with the state governments for the promotion of food processing industries.

The Food Processing Industries Ministry is responsible for developing a strong food processing sector with a view to create increased job opportunities in rural areas, enable the farmers to reap benefit from modern technology, create surplus for exports and stimulate demand for processed food.