

Date:07/04/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/04/07/stories/2011040750121700.htm>

Tackling root knot nematode in carrot

Carrot is adversely affected by several pests, diseases and nematodes. Among them northern root knot nematodes, *Meloidogyne hapla* poses a serious threat to carrot cultivation in hilly region as it is able to survive in low temperature.

Primary symptom

The primary symptom is the formation of galls on side roots of tubers, formation of forked roots, split carrot tubers and spindle-shaped enlargements on tap and side roots causing yield losses.

The root-knot nematodes complete most of their life cycle within their host roots. The infective second stage juveniles hatch from the eggs and move through the soil in search of suitable host plants.

They usually penetrate the host roots just behind the root tip region and establish their special permanent feeding sites (giant cells) on the vascular tissues of the root.

Provide nutrients

The giant cells provide nutrients for the sedentary nematodes which continue to feed, enlarge and moult three times.

Root cells around the feeding sites are also induced to enlarge and form galls and often extensive secondary root formation and branching of the main root is seen.

Depending upon the host and soil temperature, the entire life cycle may be completed in 35 to 60 days. Mature females deposit eggs (550 to 1000) on the root surface.

The nematodes damage the xylem vessels and affect the uptake of water and nutrients. Apart from these injuries caused to root, they facilitate easy entry of other soil borne pathogens which cause root dieback disease.

Management

— Summer ploughing and exposing the soil to sun prior to planting for 1-2 months.

— Growing crops such as marigold. Soil application of Farm Yard Manure at 20 t/ha and Neem cake at 500kg/ha at the time of the ploughing.

— Soil application of Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria at 2kg/ha each at the time of the sowing.

— Rotation of carrot with non host/ poor crops like spinach, radish, barley and wheat.

— Soil application of Pseudomonas fluorescens at 2.5kg/ha mixed with 50 kg of FYM and application of carbofuran 3G at 33kg/ha.

P. Vetrivelkai, J. Suresh, & E. I. Jonathan

Horticultural Research Station, Kodaikanal and Centre for Plant Protection Studies, TNAU, Coimbatore

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Farm Query

Multipurpose machine

Can you kindly give me the contact details of a farmer in Madhya Pradesh who developed a multipurpose machine for different uses?

Pandarinath

Pune

Mr. Bhagwan Singh Dangi, from Madhya Pradesh developed a machine for both reaping, windrowing, weeding and drilling operations for different crops. About 15 litres of diesel is required for harvesting five hectares in a day. For details contact Mr. Bhagwan Singh Dangi, Madhogan, Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh 464001, mobiles: 9617729447 and 9713705195

Date:07/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/07/stories/2011040756422400.htm>

Pawar: States must be consulted on GM food crops

Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI: Union Agriculture and Food Processing Minister Sharad Pawar on Wednesday said the Centre must consult States on genetically modified (GM) food crops.

“We will have to talk to Chief Ministers and discuss all major issues with them,” he said when asked about Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's ban last month on trials of GM maize in the State following approval by the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC). Mr. Pawar was speaking to journalists here after inaugurating the National Conference on Kharif Campaign.

On Mr. Kumar's assertion that the assent of a State government must be taken before trials of genetically engineered crops were conducted on its soil, Mr. Pawar said: “What the Chief Minister is saying is correct. Under the rules, a [seeds] company that conducts trials of genetically engineered crops is supposed to inform the State government. ”

Last month, Mr. Kumar had taken umbrage to multi-centric trials in Bihar permitted by the GEAC and shot off a letter to Union Minister Jairam Ramesh. Mr. Ramesh asked the GEAC to stay its permission, while Mr. Kumar immediately ordered a ban on trials of Bt maize in Bihar.

The Chief Minister said failure of a multi-national hybrid maize seed that failed last year had cost the State government Rs. 61 crore as compensation paid to farmers.

Mr. Kumar also wrote to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on staying the Seeds Bill in Parliament saying it was tilted in favour of multi-national companies. He wanted the government to have a say in the pricing of seeds.

Mr. Pawar said Parliament would take a decision on the controversial Bill.

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FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Farmers' organisations can play a more constructive role

M.J. PRABU

Though Panchayati Raj is beneficial it destroys harmony in villages



Ajay Vir Jakhar (taking down notes) along with some farmer representatives.

“On trying to compile an endless suffering that farmers need to bear, one is left wondering if there exists a magic pill that can solve their problems,” says Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar, Chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj, New Delhi.

The biggest bane of the farmers according to him, “is that they vote on caste or religious lines, nudged by political leaders and later expect the government to deliver their needs as a community of farmers. Unfortunately, today, dearth of farmer leaders exists in all-political parties. Leaders represent their own individual communities and castes to win their elections,” he says.

Need for awareness

Surprisingly, more than a farmer, it is the policy makers who need to be educated - especially on marketing - because their decisions determine a farmer's future.

“Over the years, a number of farmers' organizations are becoming either offshoots of political parties or politically aligned. As a consequence, these become mouthpieces of political groups,” adds Mr. Ajay.

Being dependent on one party or the other, (as is usually the case), an organisation becomes more active during opposition rule.

Because of this, several groups are becoming inherently seasonal, agitating, channelising pent up frustration and anger against the government of the day,” he says and adds “at no point should this be mistaken to represent absence of good organisations.”

There are several organisations doing a good job, but are less known, as they work for the welfare of farmers and are not in the business of publicity. These groups are nearly lost in the vast ocean of namesake farmers' welfare organisations, according to Mr. Ajay.

Self propagation

“Everyone criticises aloud to get noticed,” he stresses. No doubt, criticism being valuable, gets public attention in the society, increases TV ratings, garners support, and eventually money and position.

At most seminars, farmer meets, and debates on agriculture, we find people projecting themselves, highlighting faults in sight. Positive discussions are a rarity, seems to be his view.

More influence

“Even though most agitations that hold up the roads and block traffic are for a farmer related cause, they do not achieve much. The farmers in the U.S. wield more influence on the government policy because they are better organised to look after their own interests,” he says.

Though 70 per cent of the farmers in India are women, very few admit women members, and even fewer shoulder constitutional responsibilities in their respective setups.

Farmers' organisations can play a vital role on two fronts: First enlighten the farmers' about wrong policies affecting them; and two, disseminate information of best available agriculture practices so that the farmer can make an informed decision for adoption.

Communication value

The value of good communication, pressurising policymakers, awareness and information access to farmers cannot be underestimated, according to Mr. Ajay.

“It becomes difficult to evaluate resultant gains or quantify the benefits. Funding obviously remains a major hurdle for those doing good work,” he adds.

The Panchayati Raj today acts like a double edged sword — providing much needed empowerment and benefits to the rural community on the one hand, and on the other destroying the social harmony in the villages .

“It acts to divide farmers on political lines by pitting one against the other in every street, to the point that farmer solidarity may be lost for ever,” regrets Mr. Ajay

Several possibilities

The possibilities of various positive roles that an organisation can play today to ease the farmers' suffering are endless if we vote on issues that benefit us irrespective of political affiliations, rather than on our vested ideologies, local and sectarian interests, according to him.

For more details contact Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar, Chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj, A-1 Nizamuddin West, New Delhi-110013, email:aj@bks.org.in, phones: 011- 46121708 and 65650384.

Date:07/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/07/stories/2011040756710200.htm>

Villagers celebrate fish harvesting

Special Correspondent

Around 20 villages participate in the annual event



FISHING for joy: Villagers catching fish at a pond at Kattakudi near Iluppur on Wednesday.

PUDUKOTTAI: Residents from about 20 villages in and around Kattakudi had a good catch of a variety of fishes at the 'meen pidi tiruvizha'—a celebration marking the community harvesting of fish at the sprawling tank in this village.

Apart from using fishing nets and mosquito nets, the villagers took part in the celebration by using even saris and dhoties to enhance their harvest. The annual celebration falls every summer, when the waters in the tank recede. People from Kattakudi, Malaikudipatti, Tirunallur, Atchanaickanpatti and Sethurapatti villages gathered at the tank at about 6 a.m. After the hour-long festival, the villagers carried home a hefty catch. A special feature of the 'tiruvizha' is that the catch should not be sold but should be taken home for consumption. Those fortunate enough to catch more fish are encouraged to share their harvest with the others.

The village panchayat makes arrangements for breeding fish when water level in the tank stabilises during the monsoon.

As water level recedes during summer, the community harvest of fish is celebrated with gaiety. The catch included 'kelki', 'kendai', 'viral' and 'kuravai'.

Date:07/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/07/stories/2011040756900300.htm>

Bankers told to give top priority to crop loans

Staff Reporter

Collector unveils annual credit plan

Photo: Basheer



Collector N. Srikanth releasing annual credit plan in Srikakulam on Wednesday.

SRIKAKULAM: Srikakulam district Collector N. Srikanth has expressed serious concern over the poor disbursement of loans to farmers in the district.

He asked the bankers to give top priority for crop loans at least in the new financial year so that farmers would not depend on private lenders for their financial needs.

Mr. Srikanth released the annual credit plan in the collectorate on Wednesday. He asked the officials of the various banks to fulfil their commitments in 2011-12 as they could not achieve targets in the previous financial year, causing untold miseries to farmers.

Reserve Bank of India Assistant General Manager T. Kiran Kumar asked the bank officials to release new loans as early as possible to instil confidence among the farmers in the district.

NABARD Assistant General Manager K. Subhramanyam asked the bankers to open new accounts for the farmers as many of them did not have access to banking in various villages.

Deputy General Manager R. Appadu and lead district manager Ch. Srinivasa Shastry said the plan with an outlay of Rs. 2145.64 crore had been approved at the meeting. About Rs.1200 crore will be disbursed for crops, agricultural and allied activities such as dairy, poultry, social forestry, and cold storages.

Date:07/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/07/stories/2011040760160300.htm>

23,000 farmers to benefit from NABARD programme

Amruta Byatnal

The project area consists of 18,513 hectares of land in 25 villages 78.8 p.c. of people in these villages depend on agriculture for livelihood

Pune: As many as 23,000 farmers from Akola and Sangmaner taluks in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra will be benefiting from NABARD's Climate Change Adaptation Programme, which seeks to enhance the ecosystem of the area.

Initiated as a pilot project in the country, the programme will "develop knowledge, strategies, approaches, measures and processes that will enable vulnerable communities to cope with climate change and adapt to impending impacts," a statement from the bank said. The project area consists of 18,513 hectares of land in 25 villages in both the taluks. Having witnessed drought several times in the past, the region was vulnerable to climate change, the statement said.

In the chosen areas, a majority of the households, 78.8 per cent, depend on agriculture. The CCA programme will mainly use watershed based conservation and measures to manage natural resources. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) that has funded the project partly has entered into an agreement with Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR) in

Ahmednagar for the implementation of the programme. One of the projects to be undertaken in CCA will be the development of Agro – Meteorology. Climatic changes will be communicated to the farmers immediately, through weather stations, with a view to improve agricultural output.

Other components of the programme include social mobilisation, women empowerment, watershed and ecosystems development, agriculture development, water budgeting, disaster risk reduction, awareness on renewable Energy, and livelihood interventions.

Date:07/04/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/07/stories/2011040757330300.htm>

Efforts on to increase salt production in State

Staff Reporter

BERHAMPUR: Efforts are on to increase salt production in the State by three times in coming years.

Central Salt and Marine Chemical Research Institute (CSMCRI) of Bhavnagar in Gujarat and Salt Department of the government of India have joined hands to improve quality and quantity of salt production on Orissa coast. Scientists of the CSMCRI initiated survey to identify barren coastal land in the State which can be used for salt production. They also surveyed areas where old salt beds have become defunct with time in the State. As per official records there are 5,143 acres of salt beds in the State out of it 3035 acres are functional.

Tech upgradation

Former superintendent of Central government's Salt Department S.K.Mohapatra, who is now a consultant of the CSMCRI said at present both the Central government's Salt Department and CSMCRI were seriously thinking about taking steps to improve salt production in Orissa through upgradation of salt manufacturing technology and taking up salt production on more patches.

Salt producers are being trained by scientists of CSMCRI.

Senior scientists of the CSMCRI V.P. Mohan Das and A.M.Bhatt who attended this training camp were of the opinion that with necessary changes in techniques, salt production can

increase up to three times without enhancement of present salt production area. Major advice for manufacturers was to use sub-soil brine rather than direct use of sea water for salt production. K.Sibaram Reddy, a salt manufacturer said with the help of scientists of CSMCRI he had been able to manufacture 100 tonnes of high quality salt from sub-soil brine lifted through pumps.

K. Duryodhan Reddy, secretary of Humma Binchanapalli Salt Production and Sales Cooperative said they had also taken up modern technique of salt production under guidance of CSMCRI scientists at their Goka salt factory and had been successful in increasing yield.

Date:07/04/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/04/07/stories/2011040762030800.htm>

Agriculture: problems remain unaddressed

Karthik Madhavan

Confederation of Farmers' Associations of Tamil Nadu comes out with a model election manifesto

Ban import of agriculture products cultivated in the country; create special agriculture zones

Nationalise rivers; desilt canals and remove encroachments; protect native cattle breed

COIMBATORE: Freebies promised, achievements or the absence thereof or political rhetoric have thus far dominated the election campaign. Core agriculture issues that are not only of interest to farmers but also to lakhs of voters, who are consumers of agriculture products, have not gained the prominence they deserve.

The election manifestoes of the two leading parties – the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam – have not much to say on

agriculture, says Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangham (non-political organisation) leader in Coimbatore Vazhukkuparai Balu. And whatever is there has more to do with subsidy, post-harvest management, loan waiver, etc.

DMK

The DMK's manifesto says if the party is voted to power, it will open farm service centres at primary agriculture cooperative banks, lend farm equipment at a reasonable rate, offer interest-free loan for capital expenditure in agriculture, open consumer markets in urban areas to bring about direct sale of agriculture products and introduce green vehicle services to sell farm produce at a reasonable price.

It also says that the party will fix procurement price keeping in mind the production cost, encourage establishment of food processing zones by offering tax holidays, extend freebies to farmers cultivating coconut and horticulture crops and increase drip irrigation subsidy from 65 per cent to 90 per cent. Perhaps the most important announcements from the DMK are that it will ban genetically modified crops in the State and establish a separate department for promoting organic farming.

AIADMK

The AIADMK manifesto promises that the party will strive to boost rice production from 8.6 million tonnes to 13.45 million tonnes, bring about micro irrigation on 30,000 ha, and increase sugarcane production from 475.5 tonnes to 1,000 tonnes by extending sugarcane cultivation to over one lakh ha.

The party also talks about increasing milk production and restructuring milk farms. Farmers say the political parties do not really understand their needs and any manifesto they prepare will not reflect the reality. It is more to win votes than address agricultural issues.

Mr. Balu says the political parties are more or less silent on desilting ponds, removing encroachments from irrigation canals and protecting native cattle species. He says Gujarat government has managed its water resources in such a manner that the state does not

suffer from either floods or drought. Other farmers only agree with him.

Referring to the frequent floods during monsoon in delta districts, the farmers say that if only the irrigation canals have been desilted and removed of encroachments, those farmers will not suffer.

They say that no party is keen on spending on improving or maintaining agriculture infrastructure. Only if that is done, will the production improve. And only if the production improves the investments in cold storage or other post-harvest facilities will gain meaning.

The farmers also want the political parties to concentrate on increasing the area under millets, minor-millets, and native varieties of crops.

To voice their demands, the Confederation of Farmers' Associations of Tamil Nadu has come out with a model election manifesto.

Its demands include ban on import of agriculture products that are cultivated in the country, nationalisation of rivers, pollution control, fair procurement price, complete waiver of all agriculture loans, beneficial farm insurance scheme, efforts to protect nature, special agriculture zones, protection of native cattle breed, ban on sand quarrying to protect rivers and promotion of alternative energy to protect environment.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Thursday, Apr 7

Max Min
33.8° | 25.4°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 79%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:02

Sunset: 18:21

Barometer: 1010.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Apr 8

Max Min
36° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Apr 9



33° | 23°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

Apr 10



33° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Monday

Apr 11



32° | 26°

Cloudy

Tuesday

Apr 12



33° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday

Apr 13



33° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Wheat procurement going on in full swing

April 07, 2011 10:27:37 AM

Staff Reporter | Bhopal

Bhopal and Narmadapuram Divisional Commissioner Manoj Shrivastava issued directives to maintain all the facilities on the wheat procurement centres established for purchasing wheat on Minimum Support Price (MSP). He issued the directives for inspecting all the procurement centres.

Total 1,20,000 metric tonne wheat has been purchased till date on MSP across the Bhopal division. Total 17,890 metric tonne wheat has been procured in Bhopal, 31,905 metric tonne in Sehore, 30,239 metric tonne in Raisen, 19,740 metric tonne in Raigarh and 20,308 metric tonne in Vidisha.

Meanwhile, sufficient sacks are available for the purchase of wheat across the division. Divisional manager of State Civil Supply Corporation HM Singhal said that total 66 lakh sacks have been arranged in the division. More than 24 lakh sacks have been used from this stock already and 42 lakh sacks are still available.

Total 5,52,000 sacks are available in Bhopal, 21,19,000 in Raisen, 2,19,500 in Vidisha, 2,07,000 in Rajgarh, 10,66,500 in Sehore. Along with this, one rack of sacks is on the way to the division also. A total of 17 lakh sacks will be sent on the wheat procurement centres of the division on Thursday.

From this, Bhopal district will get 3 lakh, Raisen will get 4,50,000, Vidisha will get 2,50,000, Rajgarh will get 4,50,000 and Sehore will get 2,50,000 sacks and 9 lakh sacks will be in reserve stock, which will be made available according to the need on the procurement centres.

Meanwhile, Joint Commissioner Cooperation RC Ghiya inspected the procurement centres, which are established in Ramdasi, Bhaunra, Dabri, Ashta of Sehore district in the last few days. He has sought clarification from the Manager of Marketing Cooperative Institution of Ashta SK Jaiswal for violating the directives of State Government.

Decks cleared for supply of Narmada water

April 07, 2011 10:27:32 AM

Staff Reporter | Bhopal

The State Cabinet at its meeting on Wednesday decided to provide Narmada water to the residents of Bhopal by May, 2011.

The Cabinet decided that on the basis of consent given by the construction firm of Narmada Water Supply Project, Bhopal to complete the trial run by April 2011 and start Narmada water supply by May 2011 the facilities proposed by the department would be provided to it.

On the condition of trial run and testing of the project by April 2011, it may be considered to postpone till April 2011 the encashment of the bank guarantee received in lieu of the first installment. If case the joint venture fails to complete the trial run and testing by April 2011 and to start Narmada water supply to Bhopal by May 2011, the bank guarantee for the amount released as first installment would be encashed and the second installment would not be released.

Similarly, in case Narmada water supply starts by May 2011, the second installment would be released after obtaining irrevocable bank guarantee of 24 months in the first week of June 2011.

The Cabinet discussed the fifth Human Development Report for year 2011 and decided that it would be focused on agriculture, food security and nutrition. It may be mentioned here that the first HDR of the State was focused on education. The subsequent HDR of year 1998 was focused on health, that of year 2001 on gender and the HDR of year 2007 was focused on human development in the State.

The previous HDRs drew attention to human development and imminent issues thereof. These HDRs served as important document to indicate the shortcomings of the measures taken by the Government and the norms for programmes, structure and outcomes.

The Cabinet granted permission for sanctioning regular pay scale posts for Eklavya Model Residential Schools at Narrainala in Jabalpur district and Kesala in Hoshangabad district. A total number of 92 posts would be created and an annual financial burden of ₹155.04 lakh would entail on this.

The Cabinet also decided to allot 72.62 acre land to the Central Personnel and Administration Directorate General, Indo-Tibetan Police Force section-2, New Delhi for establishment of office and battalion at village Kanhasaiya near Bhopal.

The Cabinet also decided to re-determine the benchmark prescribed for promotion to the posts of Director, Medical Education, Dean, Medical College, Principal, Dental College and Director, Regional Ophthalmology Institute.

Business Standard

Thursday, Apr 07, 2011

CACP fixes kharif MSPs, wants freer rice trade

Anindita Dey / Mumbai April 07, 2011, 0:58 IST

Removal of the export ban on rice and allowing private retailers to procure grain for the Public Distribution System are among the recommendations made by the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) while fixing minimum support prices (MSPs) for various kharif crops.

The report was given to the Union agriculture ministry last week. The report also asks for waiving the mandi tax for foodgrain, to lower the gap between wholesale and retail prices. And, to compensate farmers not covered by the MSP structure in another way.

It also wants more incentives for the eastern region to grow paddy and wheat, to diversify away from the traditional dependence on the north for these products.

The MSP it has recommended for paddy is Rs 1,080 a quintal, against the current MSP of Rs 1,000 a qtl. The Commission feels paddy farmers are "net-taxed".

Official sources said the price a rice farmer gets in the current restricted environment was lower than what it would have been in a free market for trade. Rice is currently not exported, except for some varieties of basmati.

The CACP has fixed the MSP for cotton at Rs 2,800 per qtl (Rs 2,500 per qtl now), for sunflower at Rs 2,850 per qtl (Rs 2,350 now), tur/arhar at Rs 3,100 (Rs 2,800 now), urad at Rs 3,300 (Rs 2,900), moong at Rs 3,450 (Rs 3,170 now), niger seed at 2,900 (Rs 2,450) and sesame at Rs 3,900 (Rs 2,900). That for tobacco has been kept at Rs 5,000 per atl.

This review covers 15 kharif crops: the cereal ones of paddy, jowar, bajra, maize and ragi; tur, urad and moong among pulses; groundnut, soyabean, sunflower, sesame and nigar seed in oil seeds, and cotton and tobacco. As for MSP coverage, it says half of all farmers aren't getting the benefit. In which case, there must be other compensatory mechanisms. The report also makes a pitch for a focused agricultural budget on seed and technology development.

The CACP also feels the higher inflation overall is not due to the MSP system or grain prices, but due to the higher prices of meat, dairy products and fish. Determination of MSP takes into account cost of production, changes in input prices, input-output price parity, trends in market prices, demand and supply, inter-crop price parity, effect on industrial cost structure, effect on cost of living, on the general price level, the international price situation, parity between prices paid and received by farmers, and the effect on issue prices and implications for subsidy

THE HINDU Business Line

Country set to make record 235.88 mt food harvest



PTI Mr Sharad Pawar

New Delhi, April 6:

The Centre has revised upwards its wheat output estimates for 2010-11 to 84.27 million tonnes (mt), perhaps setting the stage for lifting restrictions on grain exports.

The 84.27 mt figure — based on the third advance estimates of crop output released by the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, here on Wednesday — is higher than the second advance estimate of 81.47 mt made on February 9.

Mr Pawar's Ministry has also significantly raised its production estimate for oilseeds (especially soyabean), sugarcane and pulses. Sugarcane output, which was put at 324.912 mt in the first advance estimate and 336.698 mt in the second, is now projected to touch 340.545 mt. Whether it would translate into higher-than-anticipated production of sugar is to be seen.

On the whole, 2010-11 is expected to register a record harvest of foodgrains (235.88 mt) — and within that, wheat and pulses (17.29 mt) — in addition to oilseeds (30.251 mt) and cotton (33.927 million bales). Within pulses, arhar (3.15 mt) and urad (1.82 mt) production are slated to hit all-time-highs, just as soyabean (12.589 mt) and castor-seed (1.307 mt) are in oilseeds. But the real story is in wheat, the harvesting of which has just started. A crop size of 84.27 mt will, apart from contributing to a further easing of food inflationary pressures, also pose problems for the Food Corporation of India.

As on April 1, total grain stocks in the Central pool were placed at 45 mt (15 mt wheat and 30 mt rice) as against their corresponding normative required levels of 21.2 mt (7 mt and 14.2 mt) for that date.

“Our stocks are more than the buffer norm. In such a situation, we must take a view on exports as soon as possible. I am sure the Government will apply its mind and take an appropriate decision amidst bumper harvests,” Mr Pawar told presspersons.

The latest foodgrain production estimate of 235.88 mt surpasses the previous record of 234.47 mt achieved in 2008-09. Exports of wheat have been banned since February 9, 2007, with non-basmati rice shipments, too, prohibited with effect from April 1, 2008.

Sharad Pawar asks Andhra Pradesh to deregulate cottonseed prices



Hyderabad, April 6:

Even as the Andhra Pradesh Government is readying a plan to fix cottonseed prices, Mr Sharad Pawar, Union Minister of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, had asked the State to deregulate the cottonseed pricing so that seed companies could pay more remunerative prices to seed growers.

In a letter to Mr N Kiran Kumar Reddy, the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, last month, Mr Pawar felt that imposition of price controls, especially at a time when most of the sectors of economy are opening up, would only 'bureaucratise' the seed industry.

The State Agriculture Department has initiated talks with cotton farmers, seed growers and seed companies to take a decision on the latter's demand that price for Bollgard-I and Bollgard-II should be increased for the ensuing kharif season. They wanted a hike of Rs 200 on BG-I (from Rs 650 to Rs 850) and Rs 300 on BG-II (from Rs 750 to Rs 1,050).

The Commissioner for Agriculture is expected to send a report to the State Government suggesting the tags for BG-I and BG-II for the coming season. A decision is expected this week.

“A competitive and vibrant seed industry would be able to serve the interests of farmers by ensuring the timely availability of cottonseeds at reasonable prices,” Mr Pawar observed in the letter, a copy of which is available with *Business Line*.

Price leash

Andhra Pradesh had imposed price controls on Bt cottonseeds due to which their prices had remained unchanged in the last few years despite “substantial increase in their cost of production.”

High prices of raw cotton this year dis-incentivised seed growers, making them to shift to commercial cotton from seed growing. “The area under Bt cottonseed cultivation has reportedly come down. This would adversely affect the availability of Bt cottonseeds in future. In the long term this would harm entire cotton economy,” he cautioned.

“This trend can only be reversed if cottonseed farmers are paid substantially higher prices to encourage them to continue with production of Bt cottonseeds. This needs revisiting of policy that regulates cottonseed pricing,” he said in the letter.

Efforts on to ensure seven-hour power supply for farm operations in AP



Hyderabad, April 6:

With the growing gap between demand and supply due to summer and requirement for pumps to support farm operations, efforts are under way to streamline power supply to different consumer segments, including industrial and domestic.

The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, today directed seven hour supply to the farmers and no cuts for domestic sector consumers in the State.

This follows a review meeting of the power sector at the Secretariat today wherein a detailed discussion was held with regard to ensuring seven hours of power supply to the farm sector during the rabi season farm operations. This decision was taken to protect the standing rabi season crop.

According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office, the Chief Minister also called upon APTransco to update feeder-wise information on agriculture supply on the Web site regularly.

The distribution companies (Discoms) are currently supplying around 253 million units (MUs) a day and meeting the peak demand of 11,384 MW. The average energy demand met during March 2011 was 255.5 MUs as against 231 MUs during the same period last year, reflecting an increase of about 10.5 per cent. The peak demand met during this March was 11,829 MW as against 10,880 MW last year same month.

Streamline supply

Mr Reddy also called upon the Chairman and Managing Directors of Discoms to hold local committee meetings along with MLAs to streamline supply of power.

The Government has decided to make efforts to procure additional gas supply of 2 mmscmd. This will be by swapping with NTPC. Since this involves concurrence of the Central Government, Ministries of Power and Petroleum and Natural Gas, it is likely to take some time.

To meet the growing requirement, the Government has directed APGenco to add more hydel power from Srisaillam, Nagarjunasagar and Sileru complex. Meanwhile, the Rayalaseema Unit-5 of 210 MW is back in service after rectification.

However, industrial consumers have been raising concerns of growing power cuts, which could possibly disrupt their production schedules. From April 1, new tariff regime has come into effect, with marginal rate hike for domestic consumers using more than 300 units a month.

Year's highest volume so far at Coonoor tea sale



A tea garden near Coonoor. (file photo)

Coonoor, April 6:

A volume of 13.60 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No: 14 of the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) to be conducted on tomorrow and Friday, reveals an analysis of the listing by brokers.

This is the highest volume so far in 2011 except Sale No: 2 held on January 13 when 14.22 lakh kg was offered. It is as much as 1.53 lakh kg more than last week's offer and 49,000 kg less more the offer this time last year.

Of the 13.60 lakh kg on offer, 9.50 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.10 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 12.80 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.80 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 0.41 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 9.09 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.39 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 3.71 lakh kg, CTC.

In the 13.60 lakh kg, fresh tea accounts for 11.69 lakh kg and 1.91 lakh kg comprises teas remaining unsold in previous auctions. Accumulation of unsold teas is causing concern to producers – last week, as much as 46 per cent remained unsold despite shedding Rs 3 a kg. Quality teas, however, fetch good bids.

This week, Vigneshwar speciality teas continued to top CTC market. “Our Pekoe Dust topped at Rs 165 a kg. Our Red Dust and Super Fine Dust fetched the next high prices in dust market. In all, our 11 grades got Rs 118 and more,” Vigneshwar Managing Partner, Mr Ramesh Bhojarajan, told *Business Line*.

Nutmeg, mace prices soar on short supply



Kochi, April 6:

The prices of nutmeg and mace continued to soar on short supply in the domestic and international markets.

Unfavourable weather in growing countries such as Sri Lanka and Indonesia reduced the output last year and harvesting is reported to be delayed in Sri Lanka this year due to untimely rains, trade sources here said.

Meanwhile, industry sources claimed that in India “unseasonal rains have destroyed the flowers hence, 30 per cent shortage is expected in the coming 2011season.” According to them, there is a likely shortage in Sri Lanka also in the coming seasons due to unseasonal rains and hence prices are expected to move up further.

Decline in output in supply sources has pushed up the prices of mace to Rs 1,700-2,000 a kg here depending upon the quality/colour, they said.

Farm grade nutmeg with a shell is ruling at Rs 425-450 a kg while that without shell is at Rs 700 a kg and above, they said.

Indian output of nutmeg with shell is estimated at 13,000 tonnes and when the shells are removed it would come to about 9,000 tonnes.

Indian domestic demand for mace is estimated at around 1,600-2,000 tonnes a year against production of around 800-1,200 tonnes. The shortfall is met by imports mainly from Sri Lanka under duty free imports, they said.

Meanwhile, one section of the trade said the requirement of nutmeg has ranged between 13,000 tonnes (without shell) and 15,000 tonnes given its growing use in indigenous medicines/drugs, cosmetics and in various food products. The demand includes exports which ranges between 1,500-3,000 tonnes depending upon availability and price, they said.

During Apr-Feb 2010-2011, the country exported 1,550 tonnes of nutmeg and mace valued at Rs 69.77 crore at an average unit value of Rs 450.12 a kg. Against this 3,210 tonnes of it were exported in the corresponding period in the previous fiscal valued at Rs 88.92 crore at the average unit value of Rs 277 a kg, official sources said.

NABARD assistance to Punjab reaches new high of Rs 5,690 cr

Chandigarh, April 6:

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) on Wednesday said financial assistance extended to Punjab touched a new high of Rs 5,690.16 crore in 2010-11, 24 per cent more than the support provided in 2009-10.

“There has been an increase of 24.37 per cent in financial assistance (refinance and loan) to Punjab by NABARD for bringing about sustainable development of agriculture, allied activities and strengthening of rural infrastructure,” NABARD Chief General Manager, Mr S.C. Kaushik, told reporters here on Wednesday.

NABARD extended credit for crop loans to the tune of Rs 4,275 crore to Punjab State Cooperative Bank and three regional rural banks last fiscal, a jump of 25 per cent over the credit disbursed in the previous year.

This credit is extended at a concessional rate of interest of four per cent a year for disbursement of loans to farmers at seven per cent interest with a relief of two per cent for regular payers.

More disbursement

Reversing the declining trend in refinance off take for capital formation in the farm sector, an amount of Rs 976.25 crore was given by NABARD as refinance to Punjab State Cooperative Agriculture Development Bank, cooperative banks and commercial banks for dairy development, minor irrigation, farm mechanisation, horticulture, land development, etc.

The amount so refinanced was 37 per cent more than the previous fiscal. However, Mr Kaushik expressed concern over the declining recovery rate of the primary agriculture development bank in the state. “The recovery rate of primary banks in Punjab stands at 59 per cent, which is quite low compared with recovery in other states,” he noted.

Under the RIDF scheme, NABARD sanctioned a loan of Rs 602.02 crore to the Punjab government last fiscal for 170 projects, taking the cumulative sanction to Rs 4,614.36 crore.

Major projects supported under the RIDF are rural roads, bridges, irrigation, rural sanitation and social sector projects.

Mr Kaushik also said the thrust area for NABARD would now be promoting the establishment of rural godowns for foodgrains storage in view of insufficient space in the state. “There is a shortage of space for storing food grain in Punjab — 68 lakh tonnes,” he said.

Observing that tractors are not working to the optimum level of usage in the state, Mr Kaushik said that NABARD had asked banks to finance innovative farm implements like happy seeders, laser levelers, ratavators, etc.

'Steps to control inflation depend on grains output'

New Delhi, April 6:

Expressing concern over high food inflation, the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, has said the Government is taking all possible steps to keep inflation under control, but the success of these measures depends on the production of foodgrains and other related commodities.

"The government of India and state governments are concerned about inflation, especially of high inflation of food articles in recent times," Mr Pawar said while addressing the Kharif conference here today.

Food inflation stood at 9.5 per cent for the week ended March 19 amid easing pulses prices, even as fruits and protein-based items remained costly.

Food inflation based on the wholesale price index (WPI) had risen to 10.05 per cent for the preceding week leading up to March 12 after remaining in single-digit for two weeks.

The Minister said high food inflation was partly due to the failure of the monsoon in many states during 2009-10 and partly due to increased income levels and a preference for high quality fruits and vegetables, besides crop failures during certain periods, such as in the case of onions.

"The Government is taking all possible measures to keep inflation under control, but success of these measures depends very largely on the production of foodgrains and other agriculture and related commodities," he said.

The country is estimated to have produced 235.88 million tonnes of foodgrains in the 2010-11 crop year (July-June) against 218.11 mt in the previous year.

Pawar for enhancing fertiliser output

April 6, 2011:

New Delhi, Apr 6 Fertiliser production need to be enhanced to 35 million tonne per annum from the current level of 21 million tonne to boost farm production, said Mr Sharad Pawar, Union Agriculture Minister.

“It is estimated that country will require about 45 million tonne of nutrients to produce about 300 million tonne of foodgrains by 2025 to feed its growing population,” Mr Pawar said while addressing a kharif conference here.

Mr Pawar said since 8-10 million tonne of nutrients can be supplied through organic sources, the rest has to come from chemical fertilisers.

“This implies that domestic supplies of fertilisers have to be increased substantially from the present level of 21 million tonne to about 35 million tonne per annum to bridge the nutrient gap,” he added.

Highlighting the importance of fertilisers in raising crop production, Mr Pawar said “about 50 per cent increase in agricultural production in post green revolution era is attributed to use of fertilisers alone”.

The minister also emphasised on the need to augment the supply of organic nutrient sources for supplementation of chemical fertilisers.

The country had imported 16.17 million tonne of fertilisers in April-November in the last fiscal, almost equal to the total import of 16.38 million tonne of farm nutrients in the entire 2009-10.

Wheat procurement dips 52% on lower arrival

April 6, 2011:

New Delhi, Apr 6 The government has procured 4.72 lakh tonnes of wheat this year so far, which is lower by 52 per cent from that in the year-ago period, due to less arrival of the grain in Haryana and Madhya Pradesh.

Food Corporation of India (FCI) had bought 9.87 lakh tonnes of wheat in the corresponding period of last year. Wheat procurement starts from the middle of March and picks up from April 1. The procurement ends in June.

The government had procured 22.5 million tonnes in the entire 2010—11 marketing year (April—March). FCI expects the procurement to touch 26.2 million tonnes in 2011—12 as output is estimated to be a record 84.27 million tonnes in 2010—11 crop year (July—June).

In Madhya Pradesh, procurement has declined to 4.68 lakh tonnes till yesterday from 7.72 lakh tonne in the year—ago period even though state is paying Rs 100 per quintal more to farmers than the Centre's minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 1,120 per quintal.

Arrivals in Madhya Pradesh declined to 5.71 lakh tonnes compared to 9.80 lakh tonnes in the period under review.

However, the government's purchase in Gujarat has risen to 3,562 tonnes so far from 120 tonnes in the year—ago period. In Gujarat, arrivals this year are higher at 87,362 tonnes as against 77,194 tonnes in the year—ago period. The arrival of wheat crop in Haryana has not picked up yet due to delay in harvesting. So far only 329 tonnes of wheat has arrived in Haryana mandis compared with 2.07 lakh tonnes in the year—ago period.

Govt pegs foodgrains output at record 236 mt



Business Line The Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar (file photo). -- Ramesh Sharma
New Delhi, April 6:

The country's foodgrains production is estimated at a record 235.88 million tonnes in the 2010-11 crop year, ending June, on the back of the highest-ever output of wheat and pulses, the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, announced today.

"The third advance estimate figures are available with me, which show an all-time record production of foodgrains at 235.88 mt. Wheat at 84.27 mt and pulses at 17.29 mt are also the highest recorded production ever," Mr Pawar said while addressing the Kharif conference here.

The earlier record of 234.47 mt was achieved in the 2008-09 crop year. The earlier record of 80.8 mt of wheat production was achieved in 2009-10. The previous pulses production record was 14.91 mt in the 2003-04 crop year.

The country's output of foodgrains comprises wheat, rice, pulses and coarse cereals.

The country's rice production is pegged at 94.11 mt in the 2010-11 crop year (July-June) as against 89.09 mt in the previous year. Coarse cereals production amounted to 40.21 mt in the 2010-11 crop year as against 33.55 mt in the previous year.