

Tirunelveli farmers learn root feeding technique

It has been developed by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University



Farmers of Melaneelithanallur block are being trained in coconut tonic root feeding technique as this area is one of the major suppliers of coconut to the district and other parts of Tamil Nadu.

Demonstrating the technique at a farm at Kurukkalpatti in the presence of a large number of farmers, including T. Vellapandian, Village President, Chinnakovilaankulam, Assistant Director of Horticulture, Melaneelithanallur Block, S. Raja Mohamed, said that Tamil Nadu Agricultural University's (TNAU) coconut tonic, being fed with the objective of substantially boosting nut weight, consisting micro and macro nutrients and hormones, was being fed to coconut trees through the roots to increase the nut weight. Tonic had the added advantage of reducing the button shedding, enhanced 'spathe emergence,' increasing the chlorophyll content and protecting the coconuts from pest and disease attacks.

The tonic could be fed to coconut trees twice a year at six-month intervals. In coconut, high yield must ultimately reflect on high copra output per palm. The TNAU coconut tonic, a boon to coconut growers, was being given to coconut growers at 25 percent subsidised cost, he added.

Explaining the method of feeding the tonic to the trees, Mr. Raja Mohamed said that the active roots in light orange yellow colour, in pencil-thickness, in two to two-and-half feet from the tree

trunk and four inch deep around the trunk, should be selected by digging a small pit. A slanting cut was given to the rear end of the selected root.

One small polythene pouch, given along with the tonic container, would be filled with 40 ml of the coconut tonic mixed with 160 ml of good water and tied tightly with twine to the cut root in such a way that the root was inside the pouch fully. "Earth up the soil nearby so that the tonic will not be oozing out. Tonic solution would be absorbed by the root within 1 to 2 hours, depending upon the dryness of the soil. Efficient absorption is possible when the soil is dry enough. Summer season is conducive for quick absorption," he said.

"A skilled labourer can do this infusion operation for 20 trees within an hour," Mr. Raja Mohamed added. One litre of this tonic should be mixed with four litres of good water and this five litres of solution could be fed to 25 trees at the rate of 200 ml per tree.

Assistant Agricultural Officers of Melaneelithanallur block M. Muthukumar, S. John Kennedy, K. Thangaraj and B. Premkumar participated in the demonstration.

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Restriction on cotton exports lifted

With abundant availability and a crash in prices, the Centre on Sunday removed the restriction on the export of cotton and permitted shipments under Open General Licences for the rest of the current season.

Go organic, become self-sufficient



Farmers preparing organic manure in Brahmanapalli village of Anantapur district. -Photo: By Arrangement

First-time visitors to this remote and drought-prone district are struck with the heady smell of cow dung the moment they enter the village. While this may be repulsive to the guests, for members of the 60-odd farmers in this village, it is their claim to fame because they now boast of health and nutritive wealth.

Every farmer in Brahmanapalli boasts of a 'No, No' to chemical fertilizer and pesticides thanks to four years of tireless work by members of Timbaktu Collective, a voluntary organisation active in Chennekothapalli, Penukonda and Roddam mandals in this district for over two decades now.

Bablu Ganguly and his wife Mary, who run Timbaktu Collective said: "When we came to the district and took up eco-restoration works in about 32 acres, just three km off the National Highway 7 in 1990, there was virtually nothing.

The hills were barren, sans vegetation and the people in the half-a-dozen villages where we started working were blissfully unaware of what they could do to improve the situation," they say.

The project

Timbaktu Collective's agro-farm bio-diversity work began in 1999 with 'Seeds of Hope', a project supported by 'Asha for Education', to document local agro-farm bio-diversity and to conduct experiments in organic farming techniques with a few select farmers.

In September, 2005, the Collective's first phase of 'Timbaktu organic' project began in earnest, supported by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust. In this phase, the lessons learnt during the documentation phase were taken to farmers.

About 350 farming families from eight villages were formed into 15 associations and were convinced to convert at least three acres of their land to organic, a total of 1,050 acres. In Phase Two, 18 more villages were covered with funding from the European Union and EED, a German organisation. Thus, a total of 1,190 families now grow organic food on 3,570 acres of land.

First organic village

But Brahmanapalli was the first village where every farmer went totally organic. Chennudu, who has two acres now has groundnut in the flowering stage. "Ever since we were convinced by Timbaktu Collective to go organic, we have benefitted immensely. It's now farmyard manure, neem cakes, neem oil that we use for all our crops, be it groundnut, paddy or millets."

"We were fed up of the chemical pesticides and fertilizer. Since we turned organic, our yields have improved and the quality of the food grown too. More importantly, our children do not fall sick that often like in the past," says Arunamma, the wife of another farmer.

Thanks to Timbaktu Collective, 1,190 families grow organic food on 3,570 acres in Anantapur district

Published: August 1, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 1, 2011 04:12 IST BELLARY, August 1, 2011

Over 8,000 tonnes of ore seized in Bellary

This comes less than 24 hours after 49 iron ore-laden lorries were confiscated



The iron ore that was seized at Hagari railway station in Bellary taluk, Karnataka, on Sunday. —
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Less than 24 hours after seizing 49 lorries transporting iron ore from BMC, a firm with which the Reddy brothers are said to be closely associated, the district authorities on Sunday seized 7,448 tonnes of iron ore being transported in two rakes (each rake comprises 58 wagons) in violation of the July 29 Supreme Court order suspending mining and transportation of iron ore from Bellary district.

Two rakes

Based on credible information that iron ore was being illegally transported in the rakes, the authorities swung into action and seized one rake transporting 3,724 tonnes of ore at Hagari railway station siding in Bellary taluk and another rake with the same tonnage at Toranagal in Sandur taluk.

In addition, the authorities seized 1,000 tonnes of ore unloaded at the JSW Steel Ltd. premises that was transported by road from Mysore Minerals Ltd. with which JSW Steel Ltd. has entered into a joint venture.

At Hagari, the iron ore purchased by Janaki Steels in Sidiginamola from Fomento company in Sandur taluk was loaded onto the train at Yeshwant Nagar loading point. The ore had to be unloaded at the Hagari station siding from where it had to be further transported to the Janaki steel unit by road.

At Toranagal the ore was loaded on the Fomento company premises and was being taken to JSW Steel Ltd.

Deputy Commissioner Amlan Aditya Biswas told *The Hindu* that verification of the permit issued by the Forest Department revealed that the rake stopped at Hagari was loaded at 10 p.m. on July 30. He turned down the claim of the steel unit that loading was completed on July 29 itself stating he would go by the documents.

“Transportation of ore, even with a valid permit, is illegal in the wake of the Supreme Court order which came into effect from the evening of July 29,” he said.

'No claimants'

On Saturday night, 49 lorries transporting iron ore from BMC to Cantonment station siding without permit were seized near Allipur on the outskirts of the city. Mr. Biswas said that so far no one had come to claim the ore seized near Allipur.

To a question, he said he would conduct an inquiry into Forest Department officials issuing permits for transporting iron ore even after the Supreme Court order, and submit a report recommending action for dereliction of duty.

Vigil to be stepped up

He said vigil would be stepped up to check movement of iron ore mined in Bellary district.

Two additional check-posts would be set up at strategic points.

“The Supreme Court’s order is limited to Bellary district. However, iron ore mined in Chitradurga and Tumkur districts is also transported through the district. Vigilance staff will verify documents to ensure that the ore being transported is from outside Bellary district before allowing it to pass through the district,” he said, and added that he had sought details of permits given to mining companies in those two districts for transporting the ore.

Mr. Biswas also said railway authorities had been informed about the Supreme Court order and had been instructed not to transport iron ore mined in Bellary district.

Sashidhar Bagli, Bellary tahsildar, Babu Kolekar, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Bellary Rural), and S.S. Hullur, Circle Inspector of Police, were among other senior officers present.

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Farmers seek safe disposal of poultry waste

Farmers urged District Collector J. Kumaragurubaran to make the poultry units pave way for safe disposal of dead fowls and poultry waste such as droppings of the birds.

The farmers who took part in the farmer's grievance meet here on Friday said that the poultry farms dumped the dead birds alongside the road and added that this led to foul odour and environmental pollution. They alleged that the faecal wastes were also not collected for months together as they have turned into breeding place for flies and polluting the vicinity to a great extent.

The Collector in his response said that all poultry farms have been instructed to dig disposal pits in their farm premises to burry the dead birds.

“The pits should be in the form of a cube with a height, length and breadth of 10 feet on each side,” Mr. Kumaragurubaran said and noted that officials concerned have been instructed to closely monitor the same. Steps are in fast progress to regularise the poultry industry after which norms to maintaining the farms and the surrounding areas clean would be ensured by imposing stringent action on violators, he added.

In his response to a petition on pollution caused by mushrooming dyeing units at Pallipalayam and Kumarapalayam, the Collector said that the Pollution Control Board is continuously taking a survey of those units and demolishing them with earthmovers in a phased manner.

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On protecting rich farm lands from degradation by pollution

Very few people raise their voice against degradation of environment. Fewer lead agitations against it. It becomes more difficult when attempts are made to spoil the environment for making money in the name of development. **Era. Sa. Mugilan** , an activist from Erode, discusses the difficulties in sustaining a movement for protecting the environment with **S. Annamalai** on the sidelines of a conference on

'Resource politics' held in Madurai.

He has been mobilising people in Erode and Namakkal districts to protect rich farm lands from degradation by pollution. Mr. Mugilan has participated in or led agitations against pollution of Bhavani canal; de-gradation of fertile land by dumping effluents of a paper mill in Kabilarmalai and starting of a steel plant. He had to mobilise people on 31 occasions in a fight against a paper mill. In the process, he has faced 13 cases in one year.

The foremost difficulty faced by Mr. Mugilan is sustaining a people's movement. Mobilising people for demonstrations, dharna or a siege, especially for the cause of the environment, becomes more difficult as there is no guarantee that the struggle would end within a period of time. He has mobilised not only people but also cattle to protect the environment. The police have filed a first information report against cattle heads in one agitation.

"We have to collect money from the people themselves for such struggles. From Re one, we accept anything up to Rs 500." For every step taken by the people, there is a counter step.

"When we paste posters for an agitation, another set of posters comes up against it. When we go on fast on a demand, another fast, with people mobilised from other districts, takes place against the demand," says Mr. Mugilan. The unseen adversaries are more powerful and have political and official backing. Still the movement survives because of support from officials like U. Sagayam and R. Anandakumar, former Collectors of Namakkal and Erode respectively.

Mr. Mugilan has been mobilising people, especially farmers, under different banners. In a sustained struggle, they become clueless at some point. Except in a few instances, there is no sustained support from political parties for struggles to protect the environment. Added to this disadvantage is knowledge deficiency. "We are not fully aware of the laws governing environment. For example, it took a long time for us to know that a distance has been stipulated for locating industrial units along the course of the Cauvery. This knowledge helped us in stopping attempts to start a unit near the banks of the river," he recalls. What is painful for him is that sometimes caste colour is given to a struggle.

According to him, environment issues are of recent origin. He cautions that municipal waste is imported into the country from abroad for use in industrial units here. In the absence of any check, one is not sure about the degree of toxicity of the imported waste. Another factor that impedes the war against environment degradation is paucity of human resources. The

engineers of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board are supposed to inspect hazardous units at least one a month.

With just two engineers, how will it be possible to inspect, say, 350 units coming under 'ultra red' and 'red' categories in Namakkal district alone, he poses.

"Traditionally, we have been using leather and dyes. But our ancestors did not face any problems then. Now there is a grave threat from leather and dyeing units. The Noyyal is dead. And major rivers are getting polluted. Why not the industrial units adopt proper effluent process or go back to traditional methods," he asks. When a person stands up against all these hurdles, and then comes the lure of money.

"Industrial units think that it will be easy to buy activists." Each agitation looks new to him. In the absence of models, suited to the Indian context, and guidelines for struggles against assault on the environment, it is a difficult process of learning through experience.

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'Farmers involvement key to success of NICRA'



Farming fish: (From right) TANUVAS Vice-Chancellor Dr. R. Prabakaran, ICAR Director General Dr. S. Ayyappan, ICAR Dy Director General Dr. M.M. Pandey, TNAU Vice-Chancellor Dr. P. Murugesu Boopathi, and Collector J. Kumaragurubaran releasing fish fry into a pond at Vadavathur village in Namakkal on Saturday.

Vice-Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), Dr. R. Prabakaran, sought the active participation of farmers to realise the benefits of the National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) project.

He was addressing farmers of Vadavathur village at the inauguration of the Rs. 36 lakh NICRA initiative on Saturday.

“It has been designed to help you manage diseases in crops, cattle and climatic changes efficiently to help the riots reap better returns”, he added, also introducing artificial insemination among cattle.

Vice Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) Dr. P. Murugesu Boopathi said the NICRA would play a key role in increasing the State's annual food production from 85 lakh tonne to 115 lakh tonne by making best use of the barren lands in drought-hit villages. Namakkal Collector J. Kumaragurubaran said the district received an average annual rainfall of 760 mm, which is much less than the State's average of 920 mm. He further added that of the 331 villages in Namakkal, Vadavathur was handpicked because it received the lowest rainfall in the district over the last 20 years at 400 mm per year.

Projects that were inaugurated as part of the Rs. 36 lakh initiative includes stocking of in temporary water pond, automatic weather station, water harvesting structure at Senkuttai, protrait nursery unit, custom hiring of farm machineries and implements. Drought resilient seed materials and livestock were also distributed to farmers.

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Farmers seek Poultry SEZ status for Namakkal

20 per cent is region's share in poultry export

The district that contributed 20 per cent to the country's share of poultry export should be declared a Special Economic Zone for the Poultry Industry, secretary of All India Poultry Products Exporters Association Valsan Parameswaran has said.

The demand was made to Secretary of the Department of Agriculture Research and Education and Director General (DG) of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Dr. S. Ayyappan during an interactive session that the poultry farmers had with Dr. Ayyappan and vice-chancellors of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and Tamil Nadu Veterinary and

Animal Sciences University here on Saturday night. It was organised by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

According to Mr. Parameswaran, declaring Namakkal an SEZ would help the poultry farmers to enhance their business.

Dr. Ayyappan, in his response, assured that this request would be taken up at the brainstorming session of the Planning Commission to be held on August 1.

Another demand put forward at the session was on the need for subsidised rates for food stuff for the poultry industry.

Pointing at the increasing prices of raw materials (grains) in the last few years, President of the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers Association R. Nallathambi urged Dr. Ayyappan to help farmers procure food materials at subsidised rates. "Damaged food grains that go waste could be used as feed for the chickens," he suggested.

Vaccines

A farmer, P. Devaraj, told the director general that each egg-laying bird (layer bird) had to be administered with nearly 12 vaccines, and said this number had to be brought down considerably by improving the quality of the vaccines.

He also expressed the need for establishment of a hi-tech laboratory that would ensure quicker detection of diseases, and certify products of export standards.

Another poultry farmer urged the government to set up a common cold storage and egg products processing facility, as it would be beyond individual farmers to establish such units.

Treating poultry on a par with agriculture, by giving it benefits such as loans at seven per cent interest, was their other important demand.

After listening to the demands, Dr. Ayyappan told *The Hindu* that agriculture contributed to 14.5 per cent of India's GDP, and livestock farming accounted nearly 30 per cent of that.

The share of poultry in this was 30 per cent of that of livestock farming, he said.

Response

Distribution of damaged grains as feed for chickens would be taken up with the Food Council of India (FCI), the director general said, and added facilities sought by the farmers such as cold storage and processing unit would be put up for Ministry of Food Processing Industries for action.

Published: August 1, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 1, 2011 04:09 IST Udhagamandalam, August 1, 2011

Farmers should help prevent soil erosion, says Food Minister

Relief distributed to farmers hit by flash floods last year



Extending help: Food Minister M.Buddhichandran distributing flood relief at Thoraihatty near Udhagamandalam on Sunday. - Photo: M.Sathyamoorthy

In view of the Nilgiris being a landslide-prone area, farmers should accord high priority to soil conservation, said the Tamil Nadu Minister for Food and Civil Supplies M.Buddhichandran at Thoraihatty village near here on Sunday.

He was distributing relief cheques to farmers who had been affected by flash floods which had occurred during August 2010.

Pointing out that soil erosion was a major source of concern in the district, he said that soil conservation should become an important component of farm operations.

It would ensure that crops are not washed away during heavy rains.

Stating that in the August 2010 floods 1,244 farmers in Thuneri, Kadanad and Ebbanad panchayats had been affected, he said that over 50 percent of annual crops like potato, cabbage and carrot cultivated over 265.49 hectares had been washed away.

A sum of Rs. 15.93 lakh had been released from the Tamil Nadu Disaster Relief Fund to help the affected farmers.

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa is systematically fulfilling her poll promises, he said and added that as assured she has recently recommended to the Prime Minister that the Badagas of the Nilgiris should be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes.

Steps would be taken to establish tea factories at Nanjanad and Gayakandi.

Village head Mayan welcomed the gathering on the occasion.

Among those who also participated were the president, Thuneri Panchayat, N.Bheeman and the Joint Director of Horticulture in-charge J.Haldorai.

Later, Mr.Buddhichandran addressed a meeting of the Nilgiris district AIADMK here.

Published: August 1, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 1, 2011 04:10 IST ONGOLE, August 1, 2011

Karamchedu farmers determined to go for crop holiday



Paddy growers stand clueless on what to do with their harvest at Karamchedu in Prakasam district. — Photo: Kommuri Srinivas

Faced with the problem of plenty, paddy growers in Karamchedu mandal of Prakasam district have decided to go for crop holiday this kharif season and look to the Union and State Governments to take immediate steps to lift their three-year unsold stocks.

Ahead of sowing normally done in the second fortnight of August every year, farmers coming under seven lift irrigation schemes and covering over 3,600 acres in the Karamchedu mandal, considered to be the rice bowl of Prakasam district, have resolved to skip paddy cultivation saddled with carryover stocks of 6.20 lakh bags of 75 kg in the last three years.

“There is no point in continuing paddy cultivation when we are not in a position to even break even let alone making profit in the present situation” says Komamuri canal distributary committee former Chairman Jagarlamudi Anil Babu in Karamchedu while talking to *The Hindu* showing the fully stocked “Puri,” (indigenously designed storage device made of paddy straw to ward off pest attacks).

Enthused by the good demand for Nellore varieties of Paddy in the past, the farmers had taken to NLR 892 in a big way in the last three years after getting a high price of Rs.1,300 per bag of 75 kg in 2008.

However the paddy price had plummeted to Rs. 650 to Rs. 700 now, Mr. Babu explained.

Thirty-year-old P. Venu highlighting the plight of youngsters like him “even if a farmer owns 30 acres he is finding difficult to get married.

No woman is ready to marry a person from the farming community these days”.

Another farmer Raavi Viswanatham from Kongalamarru wanted the Government to announce support price for farm produce by adding 50 per cent to cost of production as suggested by noted agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan. Octogenarian farmer Y. Subba Rao looking at the piled up stocks in Puri says “tenants are shying away from taking our land on lease even for a meagre rent of four to five bags now a days.

Going down the memory lane, 70-year-old Tirupataiah, who owns two acres recalls "we were able to save each year and go for purchase of lands in the past. Farming is no longer profitable these days with ever-increasing cost of inputs and unremunerative price for our produce." Seventy two-year-old farmer Veeraiah says "The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has added to our woes pushing up wage cost. We are forced to shell out Rs. 125 in case of woman farm worker and Rs. 200 in case of men farm worker"

Another farmer Indla Valaiah, who owns five acres in nearby Swarna, putting a brave face in the wake of unprecedented crisis, says "tenant farmers are not ready to take on lease our land even if we give it rent free".

The 60-year-old farmer who owns five acres of land says "I want to avoid keeping my land fallow. But there are no takers for land lease", says Valaiah who does not want to risk taking up paddy cultivation spending Rs.18,000 to Rs. 20,000 per acre and getting only 25 to 30 bags and that too if weather conditions are favourable.

hindustantimes

Mon,01 Aug 2011

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Monday, Aug 1

Max Min
32.5° | 26°

Rain: 0.2 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 84%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 5:54

Sunset: 18:36

Barometer: 1001

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Tuesday, Aug 2

Max Min
34° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Aug 3	Aug 4	Aug 5	Aug 6	Aug 7
				
31° 26°	32° 27°	33° 26°	33° 26°	34° 27°
Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy



Farmers' body continues to serve quality milk to people

August 01, 2011 12:18:03 AM

Staff Reporter | Bhopal

Milk producing farmers' cooperative institution Bhopal Dugdh Sangh has been making available high-quality Sanchi Milk and milk products at reasonable rates to the consumers of the city and nearby areas for the last 30 years.

The Dugdh Sangh collects milk from rural cooperative milk societies. As many as 30 quality tests are conducted at various levels right from the milk collection process up to handing over Sanchi Milk packets to consumers. Only after these tests, Sanchi Milk is made available in polythene packets to consumers as per the norms laid down by Prevention of Food Adulteration Act.

The milk packet reaching the consumer has name of category, quantity of fat and non-fat and use-by-date inscribed on it clearly. Sanchi is adulteration-free milk of stipulated standard. It is due to the high quality that the sale of Sanchi Milk is increasing constantly.

The Dairy Federation issues advance cards from 10th to 14th date of every month for home delivery of milk, ensuring supply and facilitating consumers. Through the cards, supply of milk is ensured through the milk parlours near their houses. The Dairy Federation has urged the consumers to invariably obtain letter from the sales centre in-charge after making payments for advance cards. Supply of milk is not possible by the Dairy Federation in the absence of the advance card.

Deficient rains: Farmers losing hope over Kharif crops in Jajpur

July 31, 2011 11:08:18 PM

AKSHAY ROUT | Jajpur

Farmers have virtually given up their hopes on kharif crops this year, which have almost withered due to the month-long dry spell underway in non-irrigated Kankalapala, Olia, Duburi, Dudhijori, Rasola, Kuhika and other villages in Jajpur district. “Problems like scarcity of fodder, drinking water and wage employment are assuming severe proportions due to scanty rainfall,” said Parma Bikra, a farmer of Chinkudipala.

A visit to several villages of Sukinda areas and interaction with the farmers and labourers has revealed their cup of woes. With more than 70 per cent deficit in rainfall in July, large tracts of paddy saplings have withered. Even a good rain at this juncture cannot revive the dying saplings. Farmers, particularly, the small and marginal ones, have almost given up hopes and are gearing up for migration.

In Bandhga village, many farmers had sown paddy seeds in about 500 acres of land but not even one is hopeful of any return, said Sarba Kandi (45), who had sown paddy seeds in five acres of land.

According to the Meteorological Department sources, the State experienced 31.1 per cent of deficient rainfall during July this year. Further, during June, the deficient rainfall stood at 14.6 per cent.

Government sources said most of the blocks in the district had experienced drought in 2009 and 2010.

According to sources, the district has received only 16.3 mm rain as against an expected 54 mm for the kharif season. The sowing areas in the district are spread over 3.5 lakh hectares, while so far seeds have been sown on only 78,000 hectares. As compared to last year's sowing percentage of 53.5 during the kharif season, the district has witnessed sowing in only 21.8 per cent of farmlands till mid-July.

Last year, the rains were bad and this year is the second in succession with a bad monsoon. This has led to considerable stress on the fallback mechanism. The farmers will have to see at least a major parts of their paddy crops wilting. However, the drought situation is far more complex this year than the farmers faced before.

K'handi farmers demand extension of insurance deadline

July 31, 2011 11:02:36 PM

PNS | Bhawanipatna

Farmers blocked the main road at Dharmagarh on Saturday demanding extension of last date for filing form for crop insurance. The last date of filing in the form to insure crop was August 30 last year. There was unprecedented queue for long time at the offices to fill the forms by the farmers but many were unable to do it. The deficient rain in the months of June and July has set the alarm bell ringing for an impending drought and the farmers are in a hurry to insure their

crops as it would somehow compensate them in the event of crop loss.

However, reports said that farmers did not get the actual information for the last date of filing the form.

Appreciate soil-water-plant synch for evolving farmer-friendly technology

July 31, 2011 11:01:09 PM

PRASANNA MISHRA

Top ten millimetre of the earth's surface is formed by natural disintegration of the parent rock. The process creates voids between the adjacent pieces. The aggregate voids amount to about 40-50 per cent of pore space inside the overall volume, which, in appropriate conditions, can provide storage for rainwater. This concept, if widely implemented, could render necessity of huge irrigation reservoirs redundant. In the context of the growing articulation of unavoidable trauma arising out of displacement of people due to various projects, we should seriously consider alternative solution to irrigation through conventional system. I do not expect that our irrigation engineers and their supporters would agree to this approach immediately; but time for an urgent discussion on this alternative to facilitate a consensus on the issue seems to have arrived.

Agricultural soil supports crop life. If 50 per cent of the pore space within the topmost layer is filled with water, soil is said to be saturated. If water stands on such soil, it is said to be super saturated. We must appreciate that only less than half of the water available at saturation is utilisable by crop plants. While many crops, besides paddy, can tolerate presence of the excess water at saturation/super saturation state; many other commonly grown crops need unsaturated soils for survival. This shows that for growing different crops, availability of water has to be different.

Soil-moisture regime (percentage of water-filled pores in soil) is the determinant factor for crop choice. High and medium lands are ideal for non-paddy crops. If these lands are oversaturated, we lose this vast natural asset for growing such crops. The reason why our irrigated commands are not having mixed pattern of cropping is due to non-appreciation of this basic concept. If we continue to saturate all types of land -- upland; medium land and low land; paddy would continue to be the dominant crop and growth of other crops would continue to elude us.

When irrigation is given, top soil gets saturated first. To lessen wetness of such soil, the incoming flow of canal water must stop long enough so that excess water drains out to make room for air. Canal water must stop flowing for some more time to allow at least half of the available moisture to be used up by the crop. Irrigation may resume only after that. For this to happen, engineers have to reorient their perception. Fortunately, about 50 per cent of the total water available in saturated soil is loosely held (termed as gravitational water) and, if given sufficient time, can be easily drained out by gravity, leaving the other half, which remains adsorbed by soil particles. Only half of it can be used through transpiration by plants. The rest cannot be easily extracted by plants. It remains in the soil and should be discounted from the next irrigation. Such management is possible if the command areas of the irrigation projects are put to detailed investigation for assessing the moisture regime at micro level. It would be improper exploitation of land and water if we do not do this analysis on the plea that an irrigation project is too vast an enterprise to warrant detailed analysis of the ayacut and make release of water dependent upon the result of such analysis. Our irrigation systems, created with huge investments, nevertheless need fine-tuning to make agriculture productive.

The subsurface water moves along the hydraulic gradient which keeps on changing from point to point according to the resistance offered by the subsurface soil. Technology is available to track the spread of subsurface water. We can locate areas within the ayacut which are water enriched through gravitational flow. Such area should receive discounted irrigation. Scientists working as system users had tried this principle and had successfully segregated non-paddy

and paddy area in the Hirakud command during 78-79 to 81-82. It is possible to repeat such experiment.

The characteristics of the soil must be considered to get the desired effect. Lack of understanding of soil-water-plant relationship has led to a paddy-dominant crop pattern in all irrigation commands of Odisha.

The pattern of moisture extraction by crop plants is a feature our irrigation engineers should make increasing use of. Irrigation laws drafted in India years ago look anachronistic today and need refinement in view of the evolution of large numbers of photo-insensitive varieties of different crops. The delivery patterns have to be re-fixed accordingly.

Scarcity of water at tail-ends of the canals is widely known. In spite of spending crores of rupees repeatedly on repairs, tail-end scarcity continues to be an issue and only confirms that such repairs are not a solution. It is possible to make tail-ends as green as the head-ends with right measures. We have to note that for every unit of water consumed by paddy, two units are required to help carry it around.

Ultimately, the unconsumed part finds its way to the drain. At least one unit out of this must be collected and put back to the canal. If it is said that 'canal-cutting has come to stay,' it is not without any basis. Farmers have done it as a measure of desperation. They noticed that under the continuous supply pattern, the high and medium lands were getting too wet for any non-paddy crop. Initially, they left such lands fallow. Soon, they discovered that paddy can be grown on them provided some additional water could be organised later.

Initially, water had to be taken stealthily because it was resisted by farmers at the tail-end. A game of hide-and-seek went on for some time till the farmers gave up fighting. Then, the canals were cut openly and the paddy area increased close to 100 per cent in all the head-end outlet areas. People were observing that the water being drawn through the cuts was becoming

surplus for the head-end outlet commands and was flowing down the drain. They soon found a way to irrigate the lower part of the tail-end outlets. The upper part remained un-commanded because the outlets were dry. The only option to enliven the dry outlets was to pump water from drains and put it in the dry canals.

Through a pragmatic approach but in violation of the existing law, the irrigation system has been tinkered with but paddy output in Rabi increased.

We have to rationalise the delivery pattern as per the people's need.

There is every reason to believe that conjunctive use of water will lead to a win-win situation. Antagonism among farmers in different reaches of the ayacut will end; harmony will be restored. Repeated use of used water is the only option. Twice the volume of water required for irrigation flows into the drain/ sub-surface layers as surplus. If this water is left unused, it will create drainage congestion. If we cut open drains to let it out of the irrigation commands, the efficiency of water use will remain low, while a sizeable part of the command will be deprived of water.

We have now two situations. On one hand, we can have 50-70 per cent Rabi command lying fallow and on the other, 65 per cent of water in the drains causing water-logging. The need is to relieve drainage and provide irrigation to the Rabi fallows. We have to adopt "Irrinage". This term is being suggested in the world forums to give equal importance to drainage with irrigation. Recycling by pumping has many advantages.

Apart from removing drainage congestion and removing tail-end scarcity, it has great scope for inducing a productive cropping pattern. Pumping from the drains also induces depletion in the moisture level of low lands. Paddy yields respond very well to the oxidised root zone environment. In addition, such an environment lends itself excellently well for a third crop to thrive. This will mean a three-crop pattern in low lands without additional irrigation. Let me hope the Government would take a holistic view and help farmers.

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Forest dept probes involvement of NGOs in poaching

July 31, 2011 11:06:09 PM

PNS | Dehradun

The State Forest Department is investigating the possibility of informants working for NGOs being involved in actually encouraging poaching of leopards and other wild animals. This line of action was taken following the involvement of a seasoned criminal in the seizure of leopard pelts including one from a recently poached feline and arrest of two persons from Mussoorie. Meanwhile, the Wildlife Trust of India vice chairman Ashok Kumar has stressed that if investigations prove that anyone working as an informant for the WTI is abetting poaching, then the service of the person will be terminated and the person will be handed over to the authorities to face legal action.

It will be recalled that acting on a tip off from informants, the Mussoorie forest division staff had recently nabbed a total of three persons for their involvement in the poaching of two leopards and attempt to deal in the pelts of the two felines. According to official sources, one of the two leopard pelts was more than a year old while the other pelt seemed relatively fresh which has elicited focus on the possibility that this leopard could have been poached after the person who acted as informant encouraged the villager

concerned to supply a pelt. The informant believed to be behind the seizure and also suspected of encouraging the villagers to supply a fresh leopard pelt, Bhagat Ram has a criminal record of involvement in smuggling of liquor and narcotics. He is believed to be the informant behind many other wildlife commodity seizures in Chakrata and Dehradun during the past couple of years. During April this year, he was detained with two leopard pelts by the police in Himachal Pradesh while trying to cross into Uttarakhand but later released. On condition of anonymity senior Forest Department officials also acknowledge that there is a probability of competition between wildlife NGOs causing their informants to encourage villagers to poach wild animals so

that the number of seizures can be increased. Increase numbers of seizures of wildlife commodities help the NGOs in eliciting funds from national and international sources.

Business Standard

Monday, Aug 01, 2011

Barring soybean, area under major oilseeds declines

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai July 31, 2011, 0:15 IST

Despite a recovery, acreage of groundnut, sunflower and castorseed recorded a sharp decline this year due to low rainfall in major producing areas during the peak sowing season. The three major kharif oilseeds are sown for a month starting June 15 and harvested between October and December.

Data collated by the ministry of agriculture showed the area under groundnut declined 28.37 per cent as on July 21. The sowing area under sunflower and castorseed plunged 41.6 per cent and 22.2 per cent respectively. The decline in area is expected to lower the output of oilseeds and vegetable oil thereafter resulting into a possible price increase.

"The rainfall intensified in the last week, thereby, forcing farmers to bring more and more under the kharif oilseed crops. We feel the area will increase in the coming days," said Satyanarayan Agarwal, president of the apex trade body Central Organisation for Oil Industry & Trade (COOIT).

SHRINKING

Acreage area under kharif oilseeds (In mn hectares, as on July 21)

Crop	2010	2011	% change
Groundnut	3.78	2.71	-28.37
Soybean	8.09	9.12	12.66
Sunflower	0.16	0.09	-41.61
Nigerseed	0.06	0.03	-51.78
Castor	0.23	0.18	-22.22

In the week ended July 14, however, sowing area under the three major oilseed crops (groundnut, sunflower and castorseed) was lower by over 50 per cent. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are the leading producers of edible oilseeds in India.

Rainfall has been deficient across all major growing regions especially during the later half of June. Monsoon rainfall has improved recently in central India thereby accelerating the delayed sowing of soybean in Maharashtra. Soybean planting is nearing completion in Madhya Pradesh.

During last week, Gujarat received the much-needed above normal rainfall thereby easing the dry spell. Unfortunately, however, the planting period for groundnut seed has lapsed forcing the farmers to switch to cotton and other crops.

Traders hope the revival in monsoon will increase the sowing activity enabling the farmers to reach the oilseed area as that of last year.

Even if farmers intensify sowing for the extended kharif period, the overall area under oilseeds this year will remain subdued at least by 10 per cent. Especially in Gujarat where oilseeds are major crops, 10 per cent deficit in sowing area will result into crop diversion of 100,000 hectares, said B V Mehta, executive director of the Solvent Extractors' Association (SEA).

In the fourth advanced estimated, the ministry of agriculture has estimated 25 per cent rise in overall oilseed output from 24.9 million tonnes to 31.1 million tonnes which will be supplemented largely by 12.66 per cent increase in area under soybean. This means, India will have 2.2 million tonnes of additional vegetable oil this year. Accordingly, vegetable oil imports should come down to below 8 million tonnes which looks impossible, said Mehta.

In case edible oil producers want to keep their selling price under control, they will have to increase blending of palm oil with others including soybean, sunflower and castor oil.

"Substitutes are always available and hence, consumers need not worry. Oilseed crop in Ukraine has been good. Hence, we will import from Ukraine in addition to existing suppliers like Indonesia, Malaysia and Argentina," said Agarwal.

With the estimated increase in cotton production, processing of cotton oilseed will bridge the deficit of other vegetable oil for blending with sunflower, castor and groundnut, he added.

THE HINDU Business Line

Fertiliser companies bet on water-soluble nutrients for higher efficiency

Market seen to quadruple in 4-5 years



New Delhi, July 31:

Price and supply volatilities in urea, di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) and muriate of potash (MOP) is driving fertiliser firms to think beyond these traditional commodity nutrients and focus more on high-value, low-volume products.

One segment drawing companies' attention is water-soluble fertilisers (WSF). These are nutrients administered to plants in liquid form, unlike urea, DAP or MOP that are applied as solid granules, prills or crystals. Although the latter can also be made into solutions, they are not 100 per cent water-soluble and leave behind sediments that do not get utilised by the plant.

Dr G. Ravi Prasad, President (Marketing) of Coromandel International Ltd (CIL), reckons the Indian market for WSFs currently at 50,000 tonnes or worth around Rs 400 crore, which could

quadruple in the next 4-5 years. "My own company is marketing 10,000 tonnes, which may go up to 35,000 tonnes two years from now," he claimed.

WSFs cover products of various N:P:K:S (nitrogen:phosphorous:potassium:sulphur) compositions like 19:19:19:0, potassium nitrate (13:0:45:0), sulphate of potash (0:0:50:18), urea phosphate (17:44:0:0), mono ammonium phosphate (11:61:0:0) and mono potassium phosphate (0:52:34:0).

Company plans

CIL hopes to commission, by October, a 15,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) unit for manufacturing 19:19:19:0 WSF at Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh through a 50:50 joint venture with SQM of Chile. It also imports potassium nitrate from the \$1.8 billion Santiago-based company, which controls half of the estimated 1.5 million tonne global market for this specialty plant nutrient.

Zuari Industries Ltd (ZIL), Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (Iffco), Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilisers (RCF) and Nagarjuna Fertilisers & Chemicals (NFCL) are the other major players seeking to expand their WSF portfolio.

"In 2010-11, we sold 8,000 tonnes. Our target for this fiscal is 11,000 tonnes and 20,000 tonnes in 2012-13," said Mr Suresh Krishnan, Managing Director of ZIL, which has a 50:50 venture with Israel's Rotem Amfert Negev to produce 24,000 tpa of 19:19:19:0 at Baramati, Maharashtra. RCF has its own 19:19:19:0 manufacturing facility with a smaller 3,000 tpa capacity.

Iffco's 16,500 tpa WSF plant at Kandla in Gujarat makes urea phosphate. In 2010-11, the first year of commercialization, it produced 2,385 tonnes, with 15,000 tonnes targeted for this fiscal. "We are looking at manufacturing another WSF, 18:18:18:0, once the product gets the Central Fertiliser Committee's approval," Mr Arabinda Roy, Marketing Director of Iffco, told *Business Line*.

NFCL currently sells over 9,000 tonnes of WSFs by importing its requirements from Haifa Chemicals of Israel.

The main impediment to WSF sales is prices. They range from Rs 60-65 a kg for urea phosphate and sulphate of potash to Rs 78-80 for 19:19:19:0 and Rs 100 for potassium nitrate , as opposed to Rs 5.36 a kg for urea, Rs 12 for DAP and Rs 6.30 for MOP.

Value for money?

What, however, works in the favour of WSFs is their nutrient use efficiency. MOP has 60 per cent potassium content, of which only 45-50 per cent gets used by the plant. Potassium nitrate, by contrast, contains 45 per cent potassium and 13 per cent nitrate. But the uptake of these nutrients through this fertiliser, of which one kg is dissolved in 100 litres water and administered through drip irrigation or as foliar spray, is 90-95 per cent.

“From a 50-kg bag of MOP, not even 15 kg of potassium actually gets absorbed. The farmer can, instead, opt for five 2-kg sprays of potassium nitrate and obtain better results, as the nutrients are delivered directly to the root zone or through the leaves,” Dr Prasad pointed out.

But then, a bag of MOP costs only Rs 315, compared with Rs 1,000 for 10 kg of potassium nitrate. “The problem can be partially addressed by extending nutrient-based subsidy to WSFs (currently not given). For potassium nitrate alone, this will lower the price by Rs 16 a kg,” he added.

The other big driver for WSF consumption is soaring global prices and supply shortfalls in commodity fertilisers. “Till recently, DAP and MOP were freely available and our farmers did not know the value of nutrient use efficiency. This is slowly changing. I see them interested in our trails showing the huge yield gains in onion, ginger, garlic, potato or turmeric, resulting from foliar application of WSFs at critical stages,” noted Mr Roy.

But these are still early days and “we need to really work with farmers to convince them about WSFs and other specialty nutrients,” admitted Mr Krishnan.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 1, 2011)

'Agriculture should be made an attractive proposition'

Coimbatore, July 31:

“Agriculture should be made an attractive and exciting proposition. Gone are the days of sustainable agriculture. We are more concerned about resilient farming today,” ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) Director-General, Dr S. Ayyappan. said.

He was here at the valedictory function of the 11th edition of Agri Intex 2011 organised jointly by the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association (Codissia) and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Annual expo

Hailing the farm varsity for bagging the Best Institution Award for 2011 by ICAR, he urged the fair participants to showcase their products during the annual expo at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.

Speaking about ICAR's agri incubator initiatives, he said, “We have promoted 10 business development projects.

Fifty-one value chains have been put in place and it is one of its kind in the world, covering the entire value chain from seed to market.”

He said ICAR was collecting data which signalled that people were returning to agriculture.

“Though labour paucity is an issue in agriculture, youngsters today are looking for exciting, interesting and challenging jobs. Use of ICT tools in agriculture is now driving more people into this space, as these youngsters are bored writing software programmes.”

Farmer suicide

When asked why the suicide numbers were on the rise among farmers if agriculture was considered a profitable proposition, Dr Ayyappan said ‘it is not farming, but the scale of holding that is not remunerative.

Around 140 million people hold 130 million acres in our country (roughly). The holdings are highly fragmented and input-use efficiency is completely disorganised.”

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Select grades firm up at Kochi tea auction

Kochi, July 31:

Select grades firmed up at the Kochi Tea Auction which had 12, 12,500 kg of dust and 3, 52,500 kg of leaf tea on offer. Good liquoring tea grades remained firm to dearer at the CTC dust auction, especially the finer grades. Medium grades were irregular while the grainy types were steady to firm. AVT, Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation and Tata Global continued to be active on good liquoring grades along with loose tea traders. Tata Global was more interested in bolder grades. Exporters operated in medium and plain grades. Hindustan Unilever was not present. Upcountry demand remained subdued. The orthodox dust auction was irregular and remained subdued with some withdrawals. Bulk of the offerings was absorbed by exporters and interstate buyers.

Leaf Auction

Most high grown varieties were steady to firm and sometimes dearer at the orthodox leaf auction. Other grades quoted lower with some withdrawals. Medium teas with good colouration sold at last week's levels. Exporters to CIS countries and other destinations lent fair amount of support. Exporters to Tunisia operated at lower price limits. Hindustan Unilever did not participate. Upcountry buyers operated on whole leaf grades and fannings. High priced teas tended to ease at the CTC leaf auction while medium and lower grades moved up in value. Internal buyers and exporters were active at the CTC leaf auction while HUL remained selective.

Top Prices

Pasuparai SFD fetched the top price at the dust auction at Rs 130 followed by Pasuparai FD at Rs 124, Injipara SFD and Injipara SRD at Rs 123. At the leaf auction Pascoe's green tea fetched the top price at Rs 291 followed by Havukal BOPF at Rs 220, Chamraj OP at Rs 196 and Chamraj FOP at Rs195.

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Tea offerings at N. Indian auctions rise

Kolkata, July 31:

Last week at Sale 30, the total offerings (packages) at three North Indian auction centres at Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri were 4,14,631 as compared with 2,75,120 in the corresponding sale of last year, according to J Thomas & Company Pvt Ltd., the tea auctioneers.

The offerings at Kolkata were 1,95,690 (CTC/Dust 1,51,509, Orthodox 36,820 and Darjeeling 7,461) as compared with 1,07,608 (CTC/Dust 70,504, Orthodox 31,843 and Darjeeling 5261) in the corresponding sale of last year. The offerings at Guwahati and Siliguri were 1,28,190 (95,909) and 90,751 (71,603) respectively. Assam CTC teas sold at easier rates. Selected good Dooars were barely steady while the remainder tended easier. There was fair support from Tata Global and Hindustan Unilever. Western India dealers were active at lower levels for the liquoring sorts. There was good support from local and other internal sections. Exporters operated on bolder broken and grainy fannings.

Selected tippy Orthodox offerings sold well, while the remainder were irregularly easier. Plain categories saw some withdrawals.

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Nearly 23% Coonoor tea unsold

Coonoor, July 31:

As there were no takers for 22.5 per cent of the year's highest offer of 17.60 lakh kg offered for Sale No: 30 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions despite shedding prices by Rs 3 a kg, teas worth Rs 2.26 crore remained unsold. Orthodox leaf market was easier by Rs 3-4 a kg and even then, many invoices suffered withdrawal. Better liquoring CTC leaf market was irregular while better mediums eased Rs 2-4. However, cleaner, smaller, blacker types gained up to Rs 7. Orthodox dust market was down up to Rs 5.

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