

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:06 IST COIMBATORE,
August 3, 2011

Call for consortium farming to combat fragmentation of holdings



Promoting agriculture: Director General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research S. Ayyappan (third right) taking a look at one of the exhibits at Agri Intex 2011 recently in Coimbatore. Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University P. Murugesha Boopathi (right) is in the picture.

Profits and remuneration in agriculture is becoming less due to fragmentation of farm holdings. This also leads to reduced input efficiency. In this situation, consortium farming approach is the solution to make agriculture profitable, Director General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) S. Ayyappan said here on Sunday.

Speaking at the valediction of Agri Intex, organised here by the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association (CODISSIA) and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Mr. Ayyappan said while in the United States though only 2 per cent were involved in agriculture, it was common for a farmer to have holdings up to 5,000 acres individually. But in the case of India, approximately 140 million people held 130 million acres.

“Because of poor profits and remuneration, farmers are moving away from agriculture. It is not agriculture per say that is driving farmers to suicide, but the scale of holding that is giving poor profits in return. In such a situation, sustainable agriculture should give way to resilient agriculture,” Mr. Ayyappan said.

He urged scientists to transform farming into a more attractive, business-oriented and intelligent activity so that it could not only retain farmers, but also bring in more youth into its fold.

Business partnership

pointing out that any agricultural development process should promote the three Ps, viz., profit, prestige and partnership for business development, for the farmer, Mr. Ayyappan said ICAR was at present promoting agri business in farming in a big way.

This was being done by setting up business incubators under the National Agricultural Innovation Programme.

“The ICAR has so far promoted 10 business development projects and 51 value chains have been formed for the benefit of the farmer. TNAU is in a leading position in this venture,” he said.

Good innovations of local farmers should be promoted at the national level for the larger benefit.

Vice-Chancellor of TNAU P. Murugesu Boopathi said that since the number of small and marginal farmers was very high, it was essential to meet their needs.

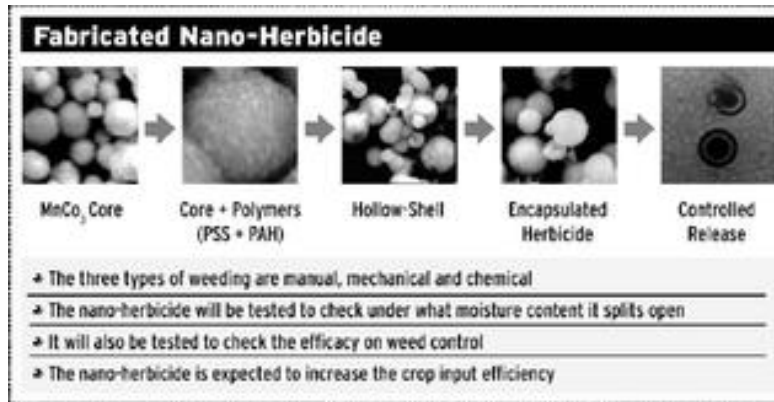
Small machinery

“TNAU will work in association with ICAR to develop and promote small machinery that will suit the land holding size of the small and marginal farmer. Though TNAU has developed many machinery and technology, the percentage of adoption is very less,” the Vice-Chancellor said.

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After nano-fertilizer TNAU tests nano-herbicide in labs

Weeding using nano-herbicides is seen as an economically viable alternative



Now that the nano-fertilizer project of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University is at the stage of proceeding from the laboratory to land-testing, the next focus is on nano-herbicide or the smart herbicide.

The Department of Nano-Science and Technology of the university is lab-testing nano-herbicide that is expected to make chemical weeding efficient.

Conventional herbicides have proved highly effective in controlling weeds without damage to crops or environment.

However, chemical weed management under rain-fed areas depends on the moisture availability during the application of herbicides. Lack of moisture limits the use and efficiency of the application.

Manual labour

According to Head of the Department K.S. Subramanian, there is a major constraint in getting labour for manual removal of weeds.

“It is essential to remove weeds for increasing the yield of any crop. Normally, a mechanical weeder is used. There are different kinds of weeds – broad leaved, grassy and perennial. The most notorious kind is the Cyprus, commonly called ‘korai’. These are very difficult to remove. The tuber of this plant is found both above and below the soil. The tuber that is left out during weeding gives rise to additional growth and becomes a menace under rain-fed conditions,” says Mr. Subramanian.

But realising the advantage of chemical weeding, a project, with C.R. Chinnamuthu as the principal investigator was started in 2007, to make it more efficient with the use of nano-herbicides.

According to Mr. Chinnamuthu, the process involves using encapsulated herbicides that will break open when there is moisture and the herbicide will be released to destroy the weed.

“Nano-size Manganese Carbonate hollow cores are made and coated with water-soluble and bio-degradable polymers. Then a hole is made in the core into which the herbicide is filled. These cores are applied to the soil after sowing. They remain in the soil for a long time and the core cracks open to release the herbicide when there is moisture / rain,” Mr. Chinnamuthu says.

The shell is of 40 to 80 nano metre size and the herbicide is of 16.9 nano metre size. It is being tested in laboratory conditions for resistance to light, temperature and microbes.

Though at a very initial stage, the smart herbicide is being viewed with much expectation.

Once the laboratory testing is complete, it will be experimented on the field to check for release pattern for at least two years.

Mr. Subramanian says that major crops are cultivated under rain-fed conditions. Some are cereals like sorghum and bajra, pulses like groundnut, red gram, black gram and green gram. All these face the threat of weed attack.

The nano-herbicide is expected to increase the yield of these crops considerably by destroying weeds effectively.

It is expected to save many man hours involved in manual weeding.

Since farmers under rain-fed areas are found to be economically weak and unable to invest in weed management, chemical weeding using nano-herbicides is seen as an economically viable alternative.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:09 IST Udhagamandalam, August 3, 2011

TNAU to play bigger role in The Nilgiris



TNAU Board Member K.R. Arjunan (third left) at the Horticulture Research Station in Udhamandalam on Monday.

Nilgiris-based planter K.R. Arjunan who was recently made a member of the Board of Management of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University(TNAU) by the State Government visited the Horticulture Research Station of the university here on Monday.

He was taken around various sections of the station, including the bio-fertilizer production lab, mushroom spawn production centre, aromatic oil distillation unit and the experimental green houses by the head of the station N. Selvaraj. Mr. Arjunan evinced a keen interest in the Ethnographic Herbal Garden established under the Hill Area Development Programme(HADP) at the Wood House farm of the research station with about 450 varieties of medicinal plants.

He interacted with mushroom growers from various parts of the state who are participating in a training programme at the station.

Later, he told *The Hindu* that he would make optimum use of the opportunity provided to him to consolidate the long standing reputation of the Nilgiris as a premier horticulture district. He added that efforts would also be made to increase the role of the university in the overall development of the district.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:11 IST Bangalore, August 3, 2011

Sowing completed in 42 lakh hectares

A full two months into the monsoon now, sowing has been completed in 42.60 lakh hectares of land, constituting 57 per cent of the targeted area (74.65 lakh hectares) for the kharif season.

According to sources , Sowing of cereals has been completed in 17.94 lakh hectares against the target of 34.90 lakh hectares, while pulses has been taken up in 9.18 lakh hectares against the target of 16.68 lakh hectares.

Oilseeds cover 70.05 lakh hectares and commercial crops have been sown in 3.69 lakh hectares up to August 1.

The target of foodgrain production during the kharif season has been set at 92.2 lakh tonnes. The target for production of foodgrains during 2011-12 (kharif and rabi) has been set at 140 lakh tonnes. However, the monsoon has not been active for the last few days in the State. Nearly 50 per cent of the geographical area of the State has received deficient rainfall during July 23-July 29.

Of the 176 taluks, rainfall was deficient in 63 taluks, scanty in 42, excess in 28, normal in 37. There was no rainfall in six taluks of the State during the week. During the corresponding week of the previous year, 88 taluks received excess rainfall and 33 taluks had normal rainfall, said a report of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics.

Rainfall was excess only in Bangalore Urban, Kolar, Ramanagaram, Bidar, Gulbarga and Yadgir districts. It was normal in Bangalore Rural, Chikkaballapur, Chamarajanagar, Kodagu, Mandya, Bellary, Koppal, Raichur, Belgaum and Bijapur districts.

During the last week of the month, rainfall was deficient in Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Shimoga, Chitradurga, Davangere, Tumkur, Chikmagalur, Hassan, Bagalkot, Dharwad and Gadag, the report said.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:11 IST PIDUGURALLA (GUNTUR DT), August 3, 2011

Farmers lay siege to Guntur market yard

Tension prevailed at the market yard here on Tuesday as hundreds of farmers laid siege to it demanding supply of fertilizer. Police dispersed them by using mild force and foiled stone-pelting just in time.

The farmers were angry that officials of the Marketing and Agriculture Departments kept them waiting for the last five days, but failed to supply fertilizer.

It has been a practice to issue slips containing the names of farmers for the purpose of clearing waiting list, but that was also not done causing them anxiety as agricultural operations have just begun. The police used force and brought the situation under control.

The farmers entered into wordy duels with the police as they were evicted from the yard premises but continued their stir outside forcing the Agriculture Department officials to give an assurance that fertilizer would be supplied in a few days. The situation returned to normal after noon when the farmers left the market yard but only after warning of a widespread agitation.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:11 IST HYDERABAD, August 3, 2011

Coalition opposes GM crop trials in State

The Coalition for GM-Free India has expressed concern over the way field trials for genetically modified crops and seed production were being allowed in the State.

At a national meet here, the Coalition wanted the government to disallow these trials as was done by States like Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Chhattisgarh.

Cautioning against any move to revoke the requirement of State's no objection certificate (NOC) for any GM crop field trials, the Coalition reminded the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) that agriculture was a State subject as per the Constitution and that the Indian regulatory system should uphold this authority.

The GEAC had recently formalised the processes for its field trial authorisation procedures that now require GM crop developers to obtain an NOC from State governments before permission

is given by it. However, the industry is pressurising the GEAC to revoke this clause. "There is absolutely no basis on which the industry bodies like Association of Biotech Led Enterprises (ABLE) should be resisting this new norm. Agriculture is a State subject. What's more, many State governments have been asking right from 1998 for a say in GM crop-related decision-making in the country. The former Environment Minister has been right in conceding this," said Kavitha Kuruganti of the Coalition.

Leaders of the Coalition who participated in the meeting included Pankaj Bhushan of GM-Free Bihar, Saroj Mohanty of Paschim Orissa Krushak Sanghatan, Krishna Prasad of GM-Free Karnataka, and K.Sajaya from Caring Citizens Collective.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:11 IST HYDERABAD, August 3, 2011

Innovative farmers felicitated

Ex-Minister expresses concern over growing research on GM rice

As many as 25 rice farmers who adopted innovations in cultivation and farm machinery were felicitated at the Directorate of Rice Research (DRR) here on Tuesday. With the aim of encouraging farmers who adopted innovative location-specific technologies, an "Innovative Rice Farmers' Meet" was organised by the DRR. The farmers were felicitated among others by former Agriculture Minister V. Sobhanadreeswara Rao and deputy director general, ICAR, S.K. Datta.

Mr. Rao expressed concern over growing research on genetically modified rice and urged ICAR to extend the ban imposed on GM rice research in Basmati growing areas in the North to the South too. Mr. Datta said innovations were also needed in policy-making keeping the farmers' perspective in view.

A publication titled *Rice Innovations 2011* containing the details of the innovations was released at the function.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:11 IST TIRUNELVELI, August 3, 2011

Rise in potash price hits farmers

They need to nourish 'kar' paddy and other crops in Tirunelveli district



ACTIVITY: A farmer applying fertilizer at a paddy field near Palayamkottai. — Photo: A. Shaikmohideen

: Even as farmers are running from pillar to post in search of potash to nourish their 'kar' paddy and other crops, the chemical nutrient, which is in short supply, is being sold at a premium though the officials concerned are very much aware of this practice.

The 'official price' of potash, which was sold at Rs. 230 last year, the price fixed by the Government, has been upwardly revised and fixed this year at Rs.310 for a bag of 50 kg.

Since the fertilizer's price in the international market shoot up in the recent past, farmers have started feeling the pinch due to the short supply.

As far as Tirunelveli district is concerned, the annual requirement of potash for 'kar' season is 7,100 tonnes and for 'pisanam' season, it is 12,480 tonnes.

Though the requirement of potash for July is 3,100 tonnes, the district has so far received 505 tonnes only.

“After the southwest monsoon belied this year, the area covered under paddy has dwindled drastically. Naturally, the requirement for potash has come down. However, farmers cannot get potash for paddy cultivated even on curtailed area. We, the farmers from Pattamadai, Mela Seval and Cheranmahadevi areas, have been forced to buy potash from a Tirunelveli-based fertilizer supplier, who sells it at a premium.

Instead of selling it for Rs.310, it is being sold for Rs.350. But he gives the receipt only for Rs.310 or Rs.300," a farmer from Cheranmahadevi said.

A senior most faculty member from Agriculture College and Research Institute at Killikulam in Tuticorin district too confirmed the farmers' allegation, saying that the official machinery is yet to act firmly against the fertilizer traders, as selling the chemical nutrients at inflated price was the reason behind this problem.

The farmers complain that officials of Department of Agriculture have not taken any action against the erring fertilizer supplier even though the officials were informed about this exorbitant sale.

When 'The Hindu' brought to light the selling of Di-Ammonium Phosphate at an inflated price, the Department of Agriculture initiated action against the erring shops.

"If the officials had taken stringent action against those traders then, potash would have been available in the market at the right price now," the farmers feel.

Joint Director of Agriculture S. Devasahayam said he would look into the issue.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:06 IST COIMBATORE,
August 3, 2011

Dairy farmers seek incentive

Coimbatore District Milk Producers Welfare Association has urged the State Government to provide incentive to the farmers at the rate of 0.50 paise per litre of milk supplied for Deepavali and another 0.50 paise for Pongal festival as the District Milk Producers Union has recorded a profit of Rs.18 crore during the fiscal 2010-2011.

In a memorandum addressed to M.R. Mohan, Managing Director and Commissioner for Dairy, the patrol of the Association S.R. Rajagopal and president K.S. Balachander have said that the announcement of incentive is only on the lines of the incentives given last year.

Procurement price

They also pointed out that the Government had increased the procurement price of milk by Rs. 2.35 per litre and said that the increase in price will be handed over to the dairy unions. Of which, Coimbatore union was entitled to get Rs. 8.50 crore. The union has so far received Rs. 1 crore.

The association urged the Government to release the remaining Rs. 7.50 crore at the earliest.

After the increase in procurement prices, the Milk Producers Co-operative Federation was not giving additional procurement price for milk and other by-products such as milk powder, butter, ghee procured from the unions. This was causing heavy revenue loss for the unions.

Hence the Association urged that the federation provides five per cent excess than the cost of the by-products procured from the unions from February last year.

Modernisation

The association sought modernising the co-operative societies, dairy farms and chilling plants.

It suggested modernisation of the chilling units and installation of Bulk Milk Cooler containers.

It also called for modernisation of the Aavin units in 17 districts.

Of the 17 Aavin units, Coimbatore Union was functioning with a profit of Rs 20 crore and there is a need to make all Aavin unions function profitably.

Veterinarian

Association also pleaded for appointing one veterinary doctor for 20 to 25 village societies and urged the Government to confirm the services of workers in societies and sought salary revision for them.

Given the declining rate of milch cows, association sought bank loans at lower rates of interest to encourage farmers to buy more cows. Similarly, it also sought arrangements for insuring the cattle of the dairy farmers at a lowest premium rate through group insurance by Aavin.

Association sought the attention of the Government to make Aavin achieve the glory and recognition that Amul has achieved.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:06 IST COIMBATORE,
August 3, 2011

Price forecast for Aadipattam crops

To facilitate sowing in the Aadipattam, Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has forecast the price of maize, gingelly and cotton.

Maize cultivation

According to the price that prevailed at Udumalpet Regulated Market in November – December 2010, the price this year is expected to be around Rs. 980 – Rs. 1,150 a quintal. Hence, farmers are advised to take up maize cultivation.

In Tamil Nadu, maize is mainly grown in Perambular, Dindigul, Coimbatore, Salem, Erode, and Virudhunagar districts which together occupy a major share in maize area (2.44 lakh hectares) in the State. Maize from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra also arrives in Tamil Nadu to meet the demand.

According to the 15-year price analysis at the Tirupur market, it is predicted that price of cotton will rule around Rs. 3,000 and Rs. 3,500 a quintal from November 2011 to March 2012. There is no likelihood of price increase in the next four to six months. Hence, farmers are asked to reduce area under cotton cultivation.

Cotton

In Tamil Nadu, the price of cotton is higher in June – August, but this year the price is declining. Power cuts, water pollution, strike by mills, and stagnant demand have made the price to decline. Area under cotton in the State is estimated to remain the same (1.30 lakh hectares) and production will be around five lakh bales. The crop is sown in August and harvested in January – February. The price decline last season was steep.

According to the price that was studied at the Sivagiri Regulated Market, it is forecast that during harvest of red gingelly, the price will be around Rs. 46 to Rs. 50 a kg in October – December 2011. If the crop is affected by rain during harvest, it may further reduce to Rs. 38 to Rs. 40 a kg. Based on the price forecast, farmers may go in for gingelly cultivation.

Gingelly

In Tamil Nadu, gingelly crop is usually grown in two seasons, during Thaipattam and Aadipattam. In 2009-10, area under gingelly crop was about 0.63 lakh hectares. Production of gingelly during 2009-10 was 0.29 lakh tonnes compared to 0.32 lakh tonnes during 2008-09. Erode, Villupuram, Thanjavur, Karur, Cuddalore, Tuticorin and Salem are the major gingelly growing areas in Tamil Nadu.

For details, contact N. Ajjan, Director, Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies, TNAU, Coimbatore – 641003; or call 0422-2431405.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:11 IST THANJAVUR,
August 3, 2011

Target to bring 40,000 hectares under kuruvai

Kuruvai transplantation has been completed in 30,193 hectares in the district till Tuesday with use of SRI method in 19,112 ha.

According to Balasubramanian, Joint Director of Agriculture, the transplantation would continue till August 15. "We hope to cover 40,000 hectares this year," he said.

There is a stock of 1,210 tonnes of all varieties of samba seeds of which 42 tonnes have been distributed to farmers.

There are 626 tonnes of CR 1009 variety of samba seed, 87 tonnes of CO-43, 187 tonnes of ADT 38, 246 tonnes of ADT 39, 42 tonnes of ADTADT46, three tonnes CoR 50 and 19 tonnes of BPT 5204 variety. There is a stock of 20,675 tonnes of fertilisers.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:11 IST ALAPPUZHA,
August 3, 2011

Plan to increase area under paddy cultivation in Alappuzha

Rs.15.35 crore allotted for paddy development schemes



A boost to farm sector: Ambitious plans are being drawn up to increase the paddy acreage in Alappuzha. A scene from the ongoing second round of cultivation at a paddy field in Kuttanad. — Photo: Dennis Marcus Mathew

Buoyed by a financial assistance of Rs.15.35 crore received from the State government for developing paddy cultivation this year, the district agriculture wing has chalked out an ambitious plan, incorporating various paddy development schemes, to help paddy farmers here.

According to agriculture officials, Rs.543.8 lakh of the total sum received will be spent under the sustained paddy cultivation development scheme. The scheme envisages to increase the total paddy acreage in the district, to enhance and encourage mechanisation, to support group farming initiatives, to bring more fallow land under cultivation, to take forward the Food Security Mission and to initiate various farmer-friendly steps, including setting up of revolving funds, credit systems and formation of labour groups.

The acreage that saw cultivation during the 'puncha' season this year was about 26,000 hectares. About 9,000 hectares had the second round of cultivation, which is on at present. Group farming councils will get machinery and other equipment at subsidised rates, at the rate of Rs.1,500 per hectare, to sustain the cultivation on this acreage. Rs.525 lakh had been set aside for 35,000 hectares.

Another 200 hectares, mostly fallow land, is expected to be added to this, for which Rs.10 lakh has been kept aside while group farming initiatives on fallow land will be given Rs.10,000 per hectare. This is expected to see cultivation begin on another 20 hectares, for which Rs.2 lakh

has been kept aside. The 20-hectare proposal will be part of the State Food Security Mission, under which the district had received Rs.27 lakh for this year's activities.

From the remaining Rs.25 lakh, Rs.5,000 each per hectare will be disbursed to encourage paddy cultivation in about 500 hectares in areas other than the water-logged belt of Kuttanad.

A subsidy of Rs.2,500 per hectare will be given to the farmers to take up fish, vegetable and sesame seed cultivation on fields where the second round of cultivation has not been done. Rs.8.75 lakh has been set aside for this.

Block panchayats will be given Rs.41 lakh each to set up revolving funds, to form labour groups and a credit system, apart from encouraging mechanisation.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:11 IST Thrissur, August 3, 2011

Harithasree to boost vegetable production

KAU to take up cultivation on its campuses

With an objective to boost vegetable production, Kerala Agricultural University has launched an intensive cultivation campaign — Harithasree — on its various campuses across the State.

The programme, which envisages setting up of model vegetable gardens by utilising the land available on the campuses of KAU, is being implemented at 30 centres of the university.

The university had recently launched 'Falasree' — a programme to promote Agro- forestry.

The projects were initiated on the directive of Minister for Agriculture K. P. Mohanan, who on a recent visit to the university suggested optimum utilisation of land available on various campuses, the KAU sources said.

KAU Vice-Chancellor K.R. Viswambharan said that the programme would serve multiple objectives such as fallow land utilisation, seed production, augmentation of revenue and demonstration of latest technologies developed by KAU.

A task force, led by T.E. George, Professor and Head of the Department of Olericulture, would monitor the programme. Apart from all major vegetables of commercial value, underexploited vegetables, winter vegetables, perennial vegetables, tuber crops and traditional banana varieties will be cultivated extensively under the project, according to the KAU sources.

Quality seeds and seedlings of high yielding varieties produced by the university stations would be used for the cultivation.

Integrated pest and disease management techniques would be followed, with emphasis on pesticide free (organic) production, KAU sources said.

The KAU is also planning to organise training programmes on 'Commercial Vegetable Production' and 'Organic Vegetable Cultivation' to train unemployed youth, housewives and farmer groups.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:09 IST ELURU, August 3, 2011

Workshop on oil palm cultivation

A two-day workshop on oil palm cultivation will be held at Horticulture University at Venkataramannagudem in West Godavari district from Wednesday. Rani Kumudini, Commissioner, Horticulture department, will inaugurate the programme. Oil palm growers and officials and scientists representing the Horticulture department and the Horticulture university will attend.

Published: August 3, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: August 3, 2011 04:12 IST NELLORE, August 3, 2011

'Power plants will affect farming'

A delegation comprising of TDP, CPI (M) and Lok Satta party met Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jayanti Natarajan at New Delhi on Tuesday, and explained the ill-effects of power projects coming up along the sea coast in Sri Potti Sriramulu Nellore district.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, former minister and TDP district president said the delegation explained that the government had given clearance for power generation units with a capacity of 16.500 mega watts and six power plants had already started construction.

Health problems

About 1 lakh metric tones of ash is expected to come out of the power plants every day and the heat and high power electric wires will cause severe health problems to mankind and cattle in about 10 mandals in the district.

Farming will be affected in the district causing severe loss to the farmers, they said.

Impact study

TDP MLAs Balli Durga Prasad, Beeda Mastan Rao, Kurugondla Ramakrishna and Parasa Venkata Ratnam, CPI (M) district secretary T. Dasada Ramaiah, Lok Satta district president N. Sreehari urged the Environment Minister to stop construction of the projects and order for a comprehensive environment impact study in the region.

The minister responded positively and assured to discuss the matter with the officials concerned, said Mr. Chandramohan Reddy.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Aug 3

Max Min

33.7° | 26.8°

Rain: TRACE

Sunrise: 5:54

Humidity: 89%

Sunset: 18:35

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Thursday, Aug 4

Max Min

35° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Aug 5

Aug 6

Aug 7

Aug 8

Aug 9



32° | 27°

33° | 26°

34° | 26°

33° | 27°

33° | 28°

Rainy

Rainy

Rainy

Rainy

Rainy

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Wed, Aug 03, 2011 | Updated 11.00AM IST

2 Aug, 2011, 09.44PM IST, PTI

Sugar stock may go up 17 per cent: KV Thomas

NEW DELHI: The closing stock of sugar for the current season ending September is expected to remain higher by up to 17% to nearly 6 million tonne on bumper domestic production, the

government said on Tuesday.

The closing stock of sugar is estimated at 5.49-5.99 million tonne (mt) as on September 30, 2011 as compared with 5.12 mt at the end of 2009-10 (October-September), food minister KV Thomas said.

Sugar production of India, the world's second largest producer and biggest consumer, is estimated to increase to 24.2 mt in the 2010-11 season as against 18.8 mt in the previous year.



Hike in price of dairy products burns a hole in pockets

August 03, 2011 12:17:33 AM

Deepak Kumar Jha | New Delhi

Remember the allegory from the Amir Khan starrer blockbuster 3 Idiots: *'Khaley Beta Nahi to Kuch Dino Mein Paneer Soonar Key Yahan Milegi'*. Whatever Manmohanomics may suggest, the existing shelf prices of various essential commodities, including the only ubiquitous delicacy for vegetarians, *paneer*, is heading north.

The minimum price of paneer in local market is Rs 180-Rs 190 per kg and at a 'better' shopping place, it is even being sold at the similar price of a kilo of mutton at Rs 240-260 per kg. Last year, though not cheap, paneer was sold at Rs 90-Rs 120 per kg depending on quality. By the end of this year, according to the *paneer* traders, prices may touch Rs 300 per kg during the festival and wedding season in northern India.

"The prices of milk products depends on the prices of milk and its availability. There has been a sharp increase in prices of not only *paneer*, but also *khoya* and *mawa*. This steep increase

accounts for various factors. There may be a marginal increase in the milk prices every few months, but simultaneously, availability of milk is also decreasing, at least in the Delhi NCR area. Naturally, milk production during summer and post summer decreases as cattle do not milch too much. The prices cannot be contained anymore and milk and milk products may become dearer,” said Hari Chand Verma, chairman, Delhi Khoya/Mawa Marketing Committee, Delhi.

The sudden spurt of over Rs 70-80 per kg in the prices of paneer has hit many households. “This is unbelievable. In two months, prices have gone up steeply. *Paneer* is a main item for vegetarians, as chicken, mutton and fish are for non-vegetarians. We have *paneer* as a staple diet. But now we will have to meet the family demand of *paneer*-based food once a fortnight,” said Ankita Mehrotra, a resident of Alaknanda in south Delhi area. Over the year, pulses and cereals, too, have recorded an over 100 per cent price hike.

For instance, *moong dal*, which was already a costly cereal in December 2006 at Rs 46.50 per kg, kept on increasing till it reached Rs 89 per kg at KB stores and about Rs 95-100 a kg a retail markets in the beginning of this year.

The price became steady in the later half of this month, yet is still too exorbitant at Rs 64 per kg now and almost Rs 70 per kg in the open market. *Arhar Dal*, was sold between Rs 30-36 in December 2006, kept spiraling till the beginning of this year. Commonly used *haldi* and *dhania*, which were Rs 8.50 (per 200 gms) and Rs 9.50 (per 200 gms) four years ago, now are priced at an incredible Rs 49 (per 200 gms) and Rs 20 (per 200 gms), respectively.

Pawar to clear air on Seed Bill

August 03, 2011 12:15:00 AM

Annapurna Jha | New Delhi

In view of the reservations of various political parties about the Seed Bill, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar will hold a meeting with some MPs to dispel their apprehensions that the Bill is against farmers' interest.

The Opposition, including BJP, Left, JD(U) and SP, are against the long pending Bill as they feel that it would benefit multinational organisations while the price of seeds for Indian peasants will increase.

“Pawar will meet seven to eight MPs, including CPI (M) leader Sitaram Yechury, BJP leader SS Ahluwalia, SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav, on Wednesday afternoon explaining to them that the Seed Bill and the Pesticide Bill would help in increasing food production through introduction of high yielding hybrid varieties of seeds,” MoS for Agriculture and Parliamentary Affairs Harish Rawat told The Pioneer.

Pawar is likely to explain that if not given remunerative prices, no private company will make huge investments in research for developing these seeds. He will also try to clear their apprehension about the registration method of these seed companies, he said.

CPI leader D Raja, who had earlier met Pawar with a delegation of Andhra Pradesh Government to convey their reservations on the contentious Bill, said the need for multi-layer testing was another issue.

Since India is a diverse country with various types of climate and a seed developed for a particular agronomic condition may not be successful in other areas so testing in varied regions before releasing the seed is necessary, he said.

Besides, in case of crop failure by use of such seeds who will take the responsibility and what provisions are made to compensate farmers, he wondered. Farmers are already up in arms against the Bill which covers even the genetically modified seeds like Bt Cotton.

Forest Department to make tribals aware of fertiliser benefits

August 03, 2011 12:17:46 AM

Staff Reporter | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Forest department will make the tribal aware about the fertilisers. Tribal will be told that organic fertilisers are better than the chemical fertilisers. The department will work to promote the trend of organic fertilisers and productivity of minor forest products.

State Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur researched both the fertilisers for a long time. Now the institute wishes to benefit the tribal from this research, so that they get maximum profit from the production of forest products. State Forest Research Institute has organised a workshop on the said topic at Forest Rest house, Bhopal on Tuesday.

During the programme, the experts undertook the necessary process for taking the research to the ground level.

Ranger, Foresters, Forest guards and member of Forest Committee participated in the workshop. They were taught to use the organic fertilisers for the production of forest products.

Director of the Institution CP Rai, while addressing the workshop stated, "The chemical fertilizer is in trend just because of its availability and economic price. On the other hand, an organic fertiliser is comparatively expensive and rarely found." The price of organic fertiliser will go down if its usage increases which will make it trendy and the workshop is trying for the same, he added.

Senior Scientist of the Institution Archana Sharma stated, "The fertility of soil increases by organic fertilisers whereas it decreases with chemical fertilisers. The growth of plants also increases with the help of organic fertilisers. Organic fertilisers use the phosphorus of soil, which is beneficial for the plants. Tribal farmers can earn good profit with the production of forest products like Tikhur, Chitrak, Baiyandi, Ratawari and Bel."

Forest Minister Sartaj Singh inaugurated the workshop. Principal Chief Conservator of Forest Ramesh Kumar Dave was also present during the programme.

Centre extends crop insurance deadline

August 02, 2011 11:35:41 PM

Pioneer News Service | Bhubaneswar

Considering the request of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the Central Government on Monday allowed extension of the last date of filing of crop insurance forms for the current Kharif season that had expired on July 30.

According to official sources, with the revised schedule, the loanee farmers can now submit their premiums for crop insurance under the National Crop Insurance Scheme on or before September 30. The non-loanee farmers have been given extension till August 16 to file their premiums.

With the spectre of severe drought looming large in at least 11 districts of the State following scanty and scattered rainfall, the farmers in western Odisha districts were up in arms demanding extension of the deadline for filing of crop insurance forms.

Business Standard

Wednesday, Aug 03, 2011

'Zeroing' by US affecting shrimp exports

George Joseph / Kochi August 03, 2011, 0:20 IST

The Indian seafood export sector may face a serious setback on the anti-dumping duty on shrimp due to the soft-peddalling of the Union government with the World Trade Organization (WTO). In a recent judgment, WTO ruled that the US was violating global trade rules by using the 'zeroing' method to impose anti-dumping duty on shrimp from Vietnam.

Zeroing is a framework for calculating duties on goods sold at less than their price in the exporter's home market. Vietnam had got rid off the duty since August 2004. Earlier countries like Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, EU, Japan, Mexico, South Korea and Thailand had also won their zeroing cases at the WTO. China launched its case this February. But India has not seriously proceeded with the case till date. Hence the country's seafood export sector is reeling under pressure in exporting to the US. According to the order of the US Department of Commerce (US DoC) in March, Indian exporters have to pay an average duty of 1.69 per cent.

The Indian export sector finds it very tough as most of its rivals have got rid of the duty. The decision by a three-member panel of WTO, latest in a series of zeroing, has been found illegal under the WTO agreement. The panel said the US "has acted inconsistently with provisions of the Anti-Dumping Agreement and GATT and it should bring its calculation method into line with the two agreements". The seafood export sector had requested the government several times to pursue WTO proceedings against the US method applied in calculating anti-dumping duty. But the government is not serious in pursuing the proceedings.

Sugar bodies to go for satellite-based crop estimation

Ajay Modi / New Delhi August 03, 2011, 0:17 IST



For the first time, the Indian Sugar Mills Association (Isma), along with the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCSF), is working to gather data on sugarcane acreage and yield with the help of satellite mapping. The process will start for the standing sugarcane crop

which will be crushed in the new season beginning October. The two apex sugar bodies will do this every year from now.

In the past, the government output estimates have shown high divergence from the actual output, thereby affected the industry's profitability. Isma and NFCSF have invited proposals from about a dozen such agencies in the country and are in the process of selecting one. They plan to hire an agency with remote-sensing background to gather acreage mapping with satellite images that can be compared and analysed with the field data collected from various sugar mills.

"We are trying to supplement the current estimation system with technology-based assessment of the sugarcane acreage through satellite mapping. This will help the industry to know production data and request the government to take timely policy decisions. All the member mills have agreed to cooperate in the process," said Abinash Verma, director general, Isma.

Both the apex sugar industry associations have decided to develop a model which is technologically viable for any kind of ground estimation on the sugarcane acreage and yield estimates. The associations will also in future explore the possibility of selling the database to trading houses and international agencies.

The industry associations have felt a need for conducting satellite surveys along with field visits to get the accurate estimates on crop. In the past, satellite-based crop assessment has been tried by some state governments, individual mills and trading houses.

At present, the union agriculture ministry and food ministry compile data on sugarcane production. However, none of the two is backed by technology. While the agriculture ministry relies on data from state agriculture departments, the food ministry depends on feedback from state sugarcane commissioners. Interestingly, at times there is a striking disparity in estimates of both the ministries as well.

Cotton exports eligibility criteria may go



The new cotton registration policy, which will be announced by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) this week, may do away with the eligibility criteria.

Cotton exports were allowed under the open general license (OGL) last week because of adequate stock and a fall in prices. The decision will be valid for the current season from October to September. Officials said when cotton exports have been allowed under OGL, there was no use for an eligibility criteria. "Now, we want to know who is exporting and how much," they added.

The new guidelines will require the exporters to submit documentary proof of shipments. Officials said the guidelines will, however, continue to have the penal clause in case the licensee fails to export cotton after registration. The pre-conditions for eligibility to export cotton was challenged by 9-10 exporters in court. During the hearing of a petition, the Bombay High Court had ordered DGFT to extend the quota allocation process to August 8, which otherwise got over on July 15. DGFT challenged the high court order in the Supreme Court.

DGFT had said cotton exports quota will be granted only if an entity had exported cotton in either of the previous two cotton years (2008-09 and 2009-10), and allocation will be done on pro-rata basis.

In October last year, the Centre had set a ceiling for cotton exports at 55 lakh bales (170 kg each) to protect the domestic textiles industry in the face of rising raw material prices. An additional 10 lakh bales were permitted for export in June, after prices had corrected sharply.

Prices had fallen to about 31,000 a candy (356 kg), from the peak of 62,500 per candy in March-end. At present, cotton is trading at 32,500 a candy. The restrictions on cotton yarn were removed on April 1, after manufacturers found themselves saddled with big inventories following curbs on exports.

Coconut oil spurts to Rs 100/kg on Onam demand



Kochi, Aug. 2:

Coconut oil prices are inching back to Rs 100 levels in the Kerala market even as Tamil Nadu prices are trailing by just couple of rupees lower at Rs 98.

“It is mainly the Onam demand that is spurring market to the new highs,” Mr Prakash B. Rao, Member of the Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), said.

As prices have spurted, upcountry demand has begun to languish. However, the demand from corporates has been steady as the offtake for coconut oil-based hair oils and other cosmetic products has resumed.

The demand from Kerala remains high as most of the marketing companies are buying and packing coconut oil for the retail market, into one-and-half litre pouches for sale during the Onam season.

However, there is some concern among Kerala traders that the price of palm kernel oil and palm oil is far lower than that of coconut oil. Palm kernel oil was quoting at Rs 80, while palm oil at Rs 60.

The wide price difference between palm oil and coconut oil, as much as Rs 40 a kg, is likely to prove an incentive for adulteration, they warned.

Despite the onset of fair weather over Kerala during last week, there is virtually no physical production and conversion of copra into coconut oil in the State.

But like every year, there is bound to be increased availability of coconut oil on account of excess stocking by traders and marketers for Onam. With demand from Kerala poised to wane after Onam, coconut oil prices are also expected to dip.

The post-Onam festival demand for *Dasara* and *Diwali* are mainly for edible copra and not for coconut oil and would impact the market only marginally. But the industrial demand is likely to be sustained as the demand for coconut oil-based hair oil and cosmetic products will be strong until the onset of the winter months.

Coconut production from Andhra Pradesh is also not expected to be very substantive this year as large number coconut trees along the coast were damaged due to a cyclonic storm last year, which also wrecked havoc in the major coconut trading coastal township of Ambajipeta.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 3, 2011)

Higher unit value realisation buoys seafood exports

Export share of vannamei shrimp seen doubling to 35% this year



Kochi, Aug. 2:

Aided by a sharp jump in unit value realisation, technological upgradation, value addition and tapping of unexplored resources, seafood exports are poised to touch \$4.7 billion by 2013-14 from the \$2.84 billion last year. However, increase in unit value realisation is seen driving the

rise primarily, Mr Anwar Hashim, President of the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI), said.

New markets are emerging with increasing purchasing power from South-East Asia, Africa and West Asia over and above traditional markets such as the US, Japan and Europe. As global economic development is bringing greater prosperity and changing demand patterns to new homes, demand for high value seafood products is emerging from across the world.

As far as India is concerned, much of the growth is expected to come from increased production and exports of vannamei, which is a smaller and cheaper variety of shrimp.

Vannamei exports are expected to double from 12-15 per cent of the total shrimp exports of last year to 30-35 per cent this year, Mr Hashim said. While much of the growth in the coming years is expected to come from shrimp exports, the spurt in unit value realisation from other seafood items is also expected to contribute to the value growth. Citing an example, sources in the trade said the unit value realisation from ribbon fish exports has grown 2-3 times in the past couple of years.

Major new markets emerging for seafood exports are from South Africa, West Asia and South-East Asia. The new destinations have also brought new items into the export basket with live and frozen fish and live crabs exports holding sway to destinations such as South-East Asia.

A study conducted by the Assocham has pointed out that export of marine products from India has increased to a record 8.07 lakh tonnes in 2010-11, an increase of 18.96 per cent in quantity, 27.64 per cent in rupee terms and 33.17 per cent in dollar realisation over the previous year. Higher productivity of black tiger shrimp and increased squid landings are also attributed for the growth.

It has the potential to rise even faster in view of the growing demand from the EU, the US, South-East Asia, China and Japan, the study titled "Seafood Markets in India by 2014" said. The catch from the seas can increase if the current fleet of 70,000 fish-catching vessels with a capacity of less than two tonnes is increased to nine tonnes along with the introduction of the latest remote sensing equipment.

There was also suggestion that the Marine Products Exports Development Authority should be financially strengthened through central allocations so that seafood exporters can get adequate fiscal assistance. States such as Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Gujarat and Orissa have huge potential which needs to be harnessed in a manner that can enhance India's export potential further, the study pointed out.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 3, 2011)

Festival demand lifts edible oils



Mumbai, Aug. 2:

Imported edible oils rose on Tuesday on higher demand for the festivals coming up from next week. Local demand, however, was muted.

Cotton refined oil, following a firm cotton market, extended gains by Rs 2 for 10 kg. Soya refined rose by Re 1 and rapeseed oil by Rs 5 on higher quotes by producers even as arrivals increased at producing centres.

Groundnut oil, sunflower oil and palmolein ruled steady in a dull market. Local refiners raised prices of palmolein and soya oil marginally by Re 1 and Rs 2, expecting better demand.

The market ruled steady as there was no new demand, said Mr Santosh Shethia, a broker. Supplies may be squeezed if local demand goes up until new stocks are imported after August 10. Resellers offered palmolein at Rs 555-556 in Mumbai.

Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 560, soya oil at Rs 644 and sunflower oil at Rs 700. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 557, soya refined oil at Rs 640 and sunflower oil at Rs 700. Allana offered palmolein at Rs 560. In Rajkot and Saurashtra, groundnut oil gained Rs 10 at Rs 1,485 for a *telia* tin and at Rs 965 for loose (10 kg).

September contract for crude palm oil on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed at MYR3,121 (MYR3,128), October at MYR3,113 (MYR3,121) and November MYR3,109 (MYR3,120) a tonne. August contract for soya oil on National Board of Trade in Indore closed lower at Rs 663.80 (Rs 665.20) and September dipped to Rs 661 (Rs 662.20).

Mumbai Commodity Exchange spot prices (Rs/10 kg): Groundnut oil 965 (965), soya refined oil 643 (642), sunflower exp. ref. 655 (655), sunflower ref. 710 (710), rapeseed ref. oil 700 (695), rapeseed expeller ref. 670 (665), cotton ref. oil 669 (667) and palmolein 556 (556).

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 3, 2011)

Cardamom slips on heavy arrivals

Kochi, Aug. 2:

Cardamom prices fell last week on heavy arrivals, with supply outstripping demand at auctions in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Arrivals this season have been heavy with 1,600 tonnes arriving in July against 195 tonnes July last year. This mismatch has pulled down prices, said market sources in Bodinayakannur and Kumily.

Due to favourable weather conditions, the output in the first round of picking — which is ending soon — was very high. A similar situation is likely in the coming two rounds also, they claimed.

They told *Business Line* that even they could come to the conjecture that production during the current season might cross 15,000 tonnes, the highest in history.

This shows the sharp rise in output due to good climatic conditions and good farm management practices undertaken by growers last year when the prices were ruling at the highest ever levels, they said.

The average prices during April-July 2009, 2010 and 2011 were Rs 692, Rs 1,350 and Rs 725 a kg respectively.

Arrivals each week these days stood at above 350 tonnes. However, there has been nearly matching demand from overseas and upcountry markets, which has helped prices from falling sharply so far, they said.

Already more than 100 tonnes of the material were bought by exporters last week. Similarly, upcountry buyers were also covering.

Exports during the current fiscal from April-June have shown a substantial increase to 590 tonnes valued at Rs 58.19 crore at the unit value realisation of Rs 986.29 a kg from 185 tonnes valued at Rs 21.17 crore at unit value of Rs 1,144.50 a kg in the same period last year, official sources said.

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Turmeric hit by lack of orders from N. India



Erode, Aug. 2:

Spot turmeric price decreased by Rs 200 a quintal on Tuesday on lack of demand, especially from bulk buyers in North India.

“Even the hybrid variety decreased by about Rs 500 a quintal due to want of demand for the crop. Prices have fallen as north Indian merchants have not placed any bulk orders in the past week,” said Mr R.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

While north Indian buyers are avoiding new orders because of falling prices, bulk buyers are purchasing to meet the demand of local spices factories, he said.

Farmers, he said, refused to sell their produce at such low prices. Only half of the more than 6,000 bags that arrived for sale were sold on Tuesday. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety decreased by Rs 270 a quintal and the hybrid variety by Rs 467 a quintal. At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society also, prices fell by Rs 100 a quintal.

But the root variety has remained unchanged for the past month at Rs 5,000-6,000 a quintal. A fifth of arrivals were of the root variety, of which around half were sold. A few bags of quality produce that arrived at the Regulated Marketing Committee fetched higher prices.

In the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,089-6,536 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 4,911-6,036.

Salem Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 6,574-7,169 and the root variety Rs 5,814-6,504. Out of the 1,516 bags that arrived, 398 were sold.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 3, 2011)

Lower offtake pounds dara wheat



Karnal, Aug. 2:

Poor demand dragged prices of dara wheat, used by flour mills, down, while desi wheat remained unchanged, on Tuesday.

After witnessing a good uptrend last week, dara wheat eased by Rs 10 and settled at Rs 1,120-1,125 a quintal.

Mr Sewa Ram, a wheat trader, told *Business Line* that traders were expecting dara to continue its uptrend, but due to a sharp decline in the sales of flour, small atta chakki owners bought only limited quantities and that led to the prices dropping.

Earlier, traders were expecting the market to touch around Rs 1,180 in the first week of August, but it is unlikely to see any major uptrend and may continue to rule around current levels for the next few days, he added

Around 500 quintals of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and the stocks were directly offloaded at the mills. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,120-1,125 while it traded at Rs1,130 a quintal in the retail market. On the other hand, *desi* wheat varieties remained almost unchanged on account of limited trading. Tohfa variety quoted at Rs 2,125 a quintal, Maruti at Rs 1,780, Lal Quila at Rs 2,000, and Kangan at Rs 2,010.

Flour Prices

Flour prices dropped by Rs 20 to Rs 1,160 for a 90-kg bag. Similarly, chokar prices went down by Rs 15 and sold at Rs 480 for a 49-kg bag.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 3, 2011)

Ban sought on GM paddy research

Hyderabad, Aug. 2:

A senior farmers' leader and former Agriculture Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Mr Vadde Sobhanadreeswara Rao, has asked the ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) to ban research on genetically modified (GM) paddy.

GM in paddy might impact business prospects for Indian rice in global markets. Voicing concern that GM paddy traits could contaminate natural varieties, he sought a ban on research in GM paddy as imposed in basmati areas in the North.

“Basmati farmers in the North were successful in stopping GM trials. Any contamination of basmati could diminish demand in global markets. There is a huge demand for rice grown in the South too. The farmers here might lose this advantage if natural varieties are contaminated,” he warned.

He was addressing the 'Innovative Rice Farmers' meet at Directorate of Rice Research (DRR) here on Tuesday. Dr Swapan K Datta and Dr K D Kokate, Deputy Director-Generals of ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research), felicitated 26 farmers, including women, from across the country for their innovations that promised to reduce drudgery for farmers and increase productivity.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Datta felt that innovations were also needed in policy making, factoring in the needs of farmers. Dr Kokate, DDG (Extension) expressed concern over crop holiday in Andhra Pradesh. On one hand, the country registered record farm output and, on the other, farmers in the State had decided not to grow kharif crop. “Farmers need to get remunerative prices. We have to discuss and find solutions to their problems,” he said.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 3, 2011)
