THE HINDU

NEW DELHI, December 23, 2011

Food inflation at four-year low

Food inflation fell sharply to a near four-year low of 1.81 per cent as on December 10, as prices of certain essential vegetables like onion and potato dropped steeply. Experts said that if the low numbers continue for some time it may help the RBI to go for interest rate cuts in its next monetary policy review on January 24.

Published: December 23, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 23, 2011 04:26 IST

Crop insurance yet to find favour with State farmers

G. Sathyamoorthi

Crop insurance, a boon for the farming community, is struggling to make its presence felt in Tamil Nadu.

While compulsory for farmers who have obtained loan, it is optional for other farmers. However, insurance can be done only if the farmer has a bank account.

In the case of many farmers, their jewel loan is shown as crop loan in bank records owing to the lower interest rate of seven per cent (with 1.5% subvention to bank). They face the risk of losing both the jewels and the crop in the event of natural calamity as they are not insured.

While 45 per cent of the farmers in Andhra Pradesh have been covered under the crop insurance scheme, hardly five per cent in Tamil Nadu have so far been enrolled, laments C. Anbarasan, Regional Manager, Agricultural Insurance Company.

“Ironically, Tamil Nadu gives 50 per cent of the premium as subsidy while most other States, except Andaman and Nicobar and Puducherry, do not assist as much,” he says. While his company deposits the entire premium amount in the settlement fund, it is the State and the Central governments who share the settlement.

According to National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) sources, crop insurance has been a problem in Tamil Nadu for quite some time.

As only 33 lakh farmers have been covered under crop insurance during the past one decade in the State, the Agriculture Department termed this a “grey area” at a recent State-level credit seminar organised by the bank, they point out.

Agriculture Department sources told *The Hindu* that of the 80 lakh farmers in the State, more than 90 per cent are small and marginal farmers. “So far only 7.82 lakh farmers in the State have been enrolled under the crop insurance scheme. We should consider this as an improvement considering only about one lakh farmers were covered in 2001”, they add.

NABARD sources say whatever be the enrolment in Tamil Nadu, “it is the contribution of the co-operative banks.” The share of commercial banks has been quite insignificant. The problem lies with both the farmers and the banks.

While several farmers, out of sheer ignorance or indifference, do not bother to seek crop insurance for which the premium is just one per cent of the loan amount, the commercial banks also do not insist on insurance when jewels are pledged because their credit-risk is taken care of. “The same banks do not allow any other loan without insurance,” says a source.

However, commercial bank sources assert that it is because of the settlement policy of the insurance company that farmers are reluctant. In case of complaint of loss of crop, the company goes in for a sampling of the firka level for the verification .Originally it was taluk-level and then block-level which put off many agriculturists from opting for insurance.

Mr. Anbarasan points out that the settlement of claims in Andhra Pradesh is to the tune of Rs.400 crore to Rs.500 crore per annum. In Tamil Nadu, in 2010-11, the total settlement was Rs.209 crore. benefitting ryots in 14 districts. “Of that Rs.190 crore was for farmers in Nagapattinam and Thiruvarur districts.”

- ***“Only 7.82 lakh farmers enrolled under the scheme”***
- ***“Share of commercial banks quite insignificant”***

Published: December 23, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 23, 2011 04:19 IST

Training in preparing novel bakery products at TNAU

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will organise a training in preparing novel bakery products on December 27 and 28 on the university premises.

According to a university release, the training will cover the following aspects: varieties of breads, cakes, and biscuits.

Fees

Those interested can attend the training by paying a fee of Rs. 1,000.

For details, contact Head, Post Harvest Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003 or call 0422-6611340 / 6611268.

Published: December 23, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 23, 2011 04:24 IST

Death of free milch animal, goats causes concern

A.V.Ragunathan

The death of a free milch animal given to a beneficiary at Karaimedu and poor milk yield obtained from certain other animals distributed among the residents of Azhagianatham and Keezh Azhinjipattu near here have caused concern among the villagers and the officials of the Animal Husbandry Department.

The beneficiaries having possession of milch animals with decreasing milk yield are complaining that they could not get proper returns on the money spent on fodder and maintenance of the animals.

At least three goats given freely to the beneficiaries at Ambalpuram near Pinnalur too died recently. These incidents prompted the visit of Additional Director of Animal Husbandry Department Manivannan to these places to study the problems and initiate remedial measures.

Animal Husbandry Department sources told *The Hindu* that the milch animal at Karaimedu died of blood parasite and other animals suffered “milk fever” and these were normal occurrences and nothing was alarming.

Animals kept in fly-ridden areas were bound to suffer “maggot wounds” and with proper treatment these could be cured. The sources said that some of the animals might have suffered the “transport stress” as they had to travel for hundreds of kilometers from far-off destinations in the States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The sources said that certain disgruntled elements who could not get the benefits were indulging in false propaganda, spreading alarm. Since the lists of beneficiaries were prepared in a transparent manner in the respective Gram Sabhas there was no possibility of tampering with the lists.

Moreover, the beneficiaries could not sell the animals for three years nor could they transfer them to others. Above all, they ought to supply the milk to the Aavin. The veterinary doctors were assigned the task of keeping a close watch on these animals and hence, the scheme was free from any shortcomings, the sources added.

Published: December 23, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 23, 2011 04:24 IST

Training course in ornamental fish farming

Staff Reporter

: The National Aquariculture Society will offer a four-day training programme in ornamental fish farming in Kozhikode on December 27.

Talking to reporters here on Thursday, society president P.K. Gireesh said the huge potential of ornamental fish farming was not being tapped effectively owing to various reasons.

Compared to several other Asian countries, including China, the contribution of India in this sector was only nominal in stark contrast to the burgeoning demand in the domestic and international market. Despite being an enterprise which can be managed without any large investment or intensive labour, lack of awareness among people was standing as a major impediment in the growth of this sector, he said.

Mr. Gireesh, however, maintained that hundreds of individuals and households in the State after receiving training from the National Aquariculture Society were successfully engaged in ornamental fish farming during the last 10 years. “Many of them are running their own small- and large-scale farms now,” he said.

He said the four-day training programme of the society would comprise sessions on breeding and feeding of fishes, treatment of different diseases, making of aquariums, setting up of farms and marketing of fishes. Successful farm owners, fish experts and scientists from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and the Fisheries Department will lead the sessions during the programme.

According to Mr. Gireesh, the society will advise and help the participants of the programme in obtaining bank loans for farming with 50 per cent subsidy, even if they do not have own land for the farm. Those who would like to participate in the programme can register their names on ph: 9446301006, 9037582145, 9846427915.

Published: December 23, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 23, 2011 04:24 IST

Second crop ruled out in two deltas

Special Correspondent

Modernisation of canals, drains to be expedited through Green Channel facility: Kiran

Deviating from the methodology through which irrigation projects are being implemented at present, Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy has asked officials to opt for non-EPC (engineering procurement construction) if this route is required to complete certain works in a time-bound manner.

This non-EPC system could be used for taking up repairs to the canals in Krishna and Godavari deltas before May-end and make them ready by onset of kharif.

Mr. Reddy, at the same time, conveyed his decision to release funds through Green Channel, a facility created in the Finance Department to keep the entire amount required for a project for a specific period at the disposal of the department concerned, to ensure speedier completion of works.

At a meeting here on Thursday, convened by him and attended by Major Irrigation Minister P. Sudarshan Reddy and six other Ministers belonging to or in-charges of East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts, a decision was taken against allowing second crop in the two deltas lying in these areas in view of poor storage of water in Nagarjunasagar and instead modernise the canals and drains at an estimated cost of Rs. 900 crore.

The Chief Minister instructed the Ministers and S. K. Joshi, principal secretary, Irrigation, to ensure closure of the canals in the deltas by not allowing second crop so that they could be rehabilitated by May-end and readied by next kharif.

Mr. Sudarshan Reddy said estimates for identified works would be finalised in 10 days to call tenders without loss of time.

Another decision was taken to alter components of packages already tendered to include lining works for some canals and exclude the same where not required.

The Chief Minister reassured that there was no dearth of funds for irrigation projects as a huge sum of Rs 100 crore was being released monthly.

- *Canals in Krishna and Godavari deltas to be made ready before onset of kharif*
- *Kiran says Rs. 100 crore being released monthly for irrigation projects*

Published: December 23, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 23, 2011 04:26 IST

Fertilizer dealers told to be prepared for new regime

Special Correspondent

G.V. Subba Reddy, General Manager, Coromondel Fertilisers, asked dealers to be prepared for the new regime of subsidy disbursement in the wake of government planning to reach out to dealers.

Addressing a meeting of dealers as part of the orientation programme here on Thursday, Mr. Reddy said governments are worried about the growing subsidy component on one hand and the uneasiness among farmers on account of rising prices. He pointed out that the subsidy burden on the government rose from Rs. 60 crore when it was introduced in 1975 to Rs 1.10 lakh crore in 2010. Of it, Rs. 75,000 crore was going overseas on the import of rock phosphate and phosphoric acid.

He said the 6,000 crore tonne chemicals were consumed by the agriculture sector every year, which includes 3,000 crore tonne urea, 1.10 crore tonne DAP, 90 lakh tonne complex fertlizer, 60 lakh tonne potash and 30 lakh tonne single super phosphate. Every grain of 60 lakh tonne potash is imported into the country. He predicted that the day of the country switching over to organic fertilizer is not far saying India can not afford to spend such whopping amounts on chemicals.

Mr. Reddy wanted dealers to be prepared for creating a delivery mechanism for organic fertilizer as without them they could be out of business. Even top companies started organic manure divisions keeping in mind the future trends. He clarified that organic manure from the cattle waste contains 13 nutrients while chemical fertilizer does not supply more than two or three. With the supplementation of organic manure, chemical application would be of no use, he said.

Mr. Reddy said though Indian farmers have better awareness, the country failed on the productivity front. In the last 30 years, China jacked up its food grain production from 140 million tonne to 460 million tonne while India could increase from 150 m tonne to 235 million tonne.

K.V. Rama Raju, GM, Organic Fertilisers, P. Bhaskar Reddy, zonal manager, were also present.

Published: December 23, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 23, 2011 04:25 IST

Development of viable alternative to tobacco crop mooted

The three-day national symposium on tobacco, which concluded on Thursday at the Central Tobacco Research Institute, Rajahmundry, has drawn up a road map with recommendations of all the stakeholders (researchers, farmers and traders) who can be involved in diversification of tobacco and popularisation of economically viable alternative crops to tobacco on a sustainable basis. The symposium also recommended improving the input-use-efficiency i.e. fertilizer, irrigation water, agrochemicals and watershed management in rain-fed agro-ecosystems. Reducing the cost of production in alternative crops through farm mechanisation was emphasised by the number of scientists who came from different parts of the country.Prof. T. Ramesh Babu, ANGRAU, Hyderabad in his lecture, discussed the aspects of integrated pest management involving intercrops, crop rotations, bio-control methods, botanical pesticides, and trap crops. He stressed the need for the farmers to develop awareness of the different pest and diseases. S.P. Eswar Reddy, Dean, College of Food Science and Technology, Pulivendula, discussed the importance of tissue culture, transgenic and molecular markers and other biotechnological methods in disease management.Mr. K. Nagarajan, Chairman of Technical Session on Crop Protection, suggested that young scientists should utilise the expertise and views of their peers in formulation of new projects. Dr. V. Krishnamurthy gave a call to scientists to use their creativity to set international standards and to meet the needs of the farming community.Eminent scientists R. Lakshminarayana, V. V. Ramana Rao, N.S. Murthy, S. Sitaramaiah, representatives from trade M. Mani, T. Lakshminarasaiah, officials from Tobacco Board and ISTS members from all parts of the country participated in the deliberations. Scientists in the fields of crop protection and crop chemistry and soil science have displayed their research findings in the form of posters.

- *Cost reduction by using farm mechanisation stressed*

· *Integrated pest management discussed*

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hindustantimes

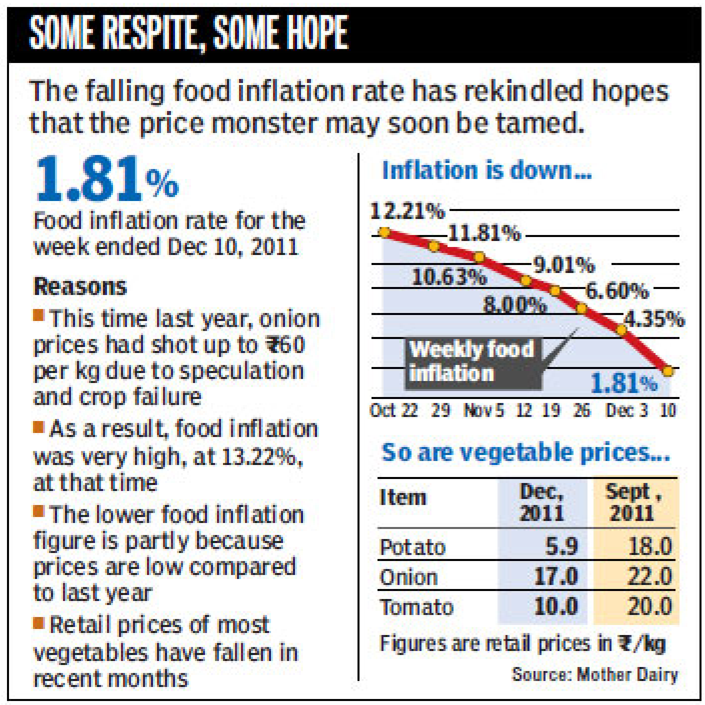
Friday, December 23, 2011

New Delhi, December 22, 2011

First Published: 12:18 IST(22/12/2011)

Last Updated: 02:02 IST(23/12/2011)

Veggies get cheaper, food inflation drops to 4-yr low



The food inflation rate fell steeply to a 46-month-low of 1.81% during the week ended December 10, continuing the dramatic fall from 11.43% in mid-October as fresh arrivals of seasonal vegetables bolstered supplies and pushed down prices.Onion prices during the week fell to about 50% of last year's levels, when the vegetable's price had skyrocketed to record levels.Since the food inflation rate tracks the difference in food prices in comparable weeks over two years (example: 50th week of this year vs 50th week of last year), the difference in onion prices magnified the fall in the rate.Prices of vegetables dropped during the week compared to last year bringing down overall food inflation, although protein-rich items such as pulses, milk, egg, meat continued to grow a fast clip. India's macro-economic managers were cautious in responding to the latest price data, which had prompted the RBI to signal pause in its interest rate hiking cycle.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/785582.aspx

By PTI

22 Dec 2011 01:49:57 PM IST

Food inflation plunges to 4-year low of 1.81%

NEW DELHI: Food inflation fell sharply to a near four-year low of 1.81 per cent for the week ended December 10 as prices of essential items like vegetables, onion, potato and wheat declined.

This is the lowest rate of food inflation since the week ended February 9, 2008, when it stood at 2.26 per cent.

Food inflation, as measured by Wholesale Price Index (WPI), was 4.35 per cent in the previous week. It had stood at 13.22 per cent in the corresponding week of 2010.

According to the official data released on thursday, onion became cheaper by 49.38 per cent year-on-year during the week under review, while potato prices were down by 34.39 per cent.

Prices of wheat also fell by 4.21 per cent.

Overall, vegetables became cheaper by 26.37 per cent.

Experts feel the sharp fall in food inflation numbers, which was in double-digit till the first week of November, comes as a big relief to both the government and the Reserve Bank who have been battling high prices for over two years.

However, other food products grew more expensive on an annual basis, led by protein-based

items.
Pulses became 14.22 per cent costlier during the week under review, while milk grew dearer by 11.19 per cent and eggs, meat and fish by 9.25 per cent.
Fruits also became 8.89 per cent more expensive on an annual basis, while cereal prices were up by 1.68 per cent.
Inflation in the overall primary articles category stood at 3.78 per cent during the week ended December 10, as against 5.48 per cent in the previous week. Primary articles have over 20 per cent weight in the wholesale price index.
Inflation in the non-food segment, which includes fibres and oilseeds, was recorded at 1.37 per cent during the week under review, as against 2.12 per cent in the week ended December 3.
Fuel and power inflation stood at 15.24 per cent during the week ended December 10, same as in the previous week.
Headline inflation, which also factors in manufactured items, has been above the 9 per cent-mark since December, 2010. It stood at 9.11 per cent in November this year.
The RBI has hiked interest rates 13 times since March, 2010, to tame demand and curb inflation.
In its second quarterly review of the monetary policy last month, the central bank had said it expects inflation to remain elevated till December on account of the demand-supply mismatch before moderating to 7 per cent by March, 2012.

22 Dec 2011 03:05:54 AM IST

Kuttanad farmers to submit memorandum to CM

ALAPPUZHA: A meeting of the farmers in the C Block in Kuttanad has decided to submit a memorandum to Chief Minister Oommen Chandy regarding the paddy loss owing to the collapse of the outer bund in Kuttanad.
The meeting held at Kainakary on Wednesday observed that the failure in the construction of the outer bund using the ‘pile and slab’ method was the main reason for the mishap.
Padasekhara Samiti secretary Suresh Kumar presided over the meeting.
Suresh said: “In the beginning of the bund construction, the farmers had pointed out the drawbacks in the construction. But the contractors and the officials neglected the plea of the farmers. Every year, we would strengthen the bund made of clay before the farming season. This time we thought that the ‘pile and slab bund’ will protect the paddyfield from water. But the

method of construction destroyed our hard work."

The Agricultural Department has submitted a report to the ministry, principal agricultural officer Nalinakumar said.

"We have estimated the loss at Rs 30,000 an acre. During the initial stages of the collapse, the water logged in the 640-acre C Block. Later, the minor bunds in Puthenarayiram, Moolayarayiram and D Block collapsed and the cultivation in 2,400 acres was submerged," Nalinakumar said.

A sub-committee appointed by the District Congress Committee to study the failure in the implementation of the Kuttanad package is planning to submit a report to the Chief Minister.

The report pinpoints the failure in the construction of the bund. The slabs did not penetrate deep into the mud and that was the reason for the collapse of the bund, DCC president A A Shukkoor said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Rs 8,650 crore subsidy for crop loans

Tweet

TNN | Dec 23, 2011, 05.42AM IST

NEW DELHI: The government on Thursday extended the interest subsidy on loans for farmers, a move which comes ahead of the polls in key states such as Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. The move is expected to cost the government Rs 8,649 crore every year, sources said.

The government had announced its intention to provide 3% interest subsidy on loans up to Rs 3 lakh to help farmers who have been grappling with uncertainties and lack of relief from high interest rates.

The move was also a follow-up to the Rs 70,000 crore debt relief and waiver scheme of 2008 as the government was seen to be discouraging repayment. Through the incentive available to farmers who pay up on time, the government was trying to answer its critics who had termed the massive loan waiver programme as a pre-election sop.

The government had announced in the budget that it aims to raise the additional interest subvention from 2% to 3% to those farmers who their crop loans on time. The draft cabinet note was approved and the government also favours inclusion of post harvest loans. It had sought the opinion of the department of economic affairs on the issue.

The decision comes at a time when the government is faced with a tough fiscal situation. It has already said that meeting the fiscal deficit target of 4.6% of gross domestic product set for 2011-12 would be tough.

23 DEC, 2011, 06.48AM IST, ET BUREAU

Satellite map shows sugar acreage up 3%

PUNE: A satellite mapping of sugarcane acreage carried out for the first time across India shows an increase of 3% over the government estimate. The data shows acreage to be the same in Uttar Pradesh and higher by 3% in Maharashtra as compared to the figures projected by the ministry of agriculture for the two states.

The satellite-based survey has been jointly carried out by Indian Sugar Mills Association and National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories to reduce the deficiencies involved in the manual estimation of acreage. The Union government has provisioned satellite crop surveys under its 'Fasal' (forecasting of agriculture outputs through satellite, agrometeorology and land-based observations) programme.

According to the satellite data, acreage for 2011-12 has been estimated at 51.82 lakh hectare. This is higher than the estimates made manually by the sugar industry at 50.79 lakh hectare, by the ministry of agriculture at 50.93 lakh hectare and the ministry of food and public distribution at 50.25 lakh hectare.

The area estimated for the 2011-12 season through satellite mapping at 51.82 lakh hectare is 2.38 lakh hectare higher than the actual area of 49.44 lakh hectare last year. This is an increase of 4.8%. Acreage is projected to be about 22.52 lakh hectare and 9.92 lakh hectare in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra respectively by the ministry of agriculture.

Food inflation falls to 4-year low of 1.81%

Agencies Posted online: Thu Dec 22 2011, 13:59 hrs

New Delhi : Food inflation fell sharply to a near four-year low of 1.81 per cent for the week ended December 10 as prices of essential items like vegetables, onion, potato and wheat declined.

This is the lowest rate of food inflation since the week ended February 9, 2008, when it stood at 2.26 per cent.

Food inflation, as measured by Wholesale Price Index (WPI), was 4.35 per cent in the previous week. It had stood at 13.22 per cent in the corresponding week of 2010.

According to the official data released today, onion became cheaper by 49.38 per cent year-on-year during the week under review, while potato prices were down by 34.39 per cent. Prices of wheat also fell by 4.21 per cent.

Overall, vegetables became cheaper by 26.37 per cent.

Experts feel the sharp fall in food inflation numbers, which was in double-digit till the first week of November, comes as a big relief to both the government and the Reserve Bank who have been battling high prices for over two years.

However, other food products grew more expensive on an annual basis, led by protein-based items.

Pulses became 14.22 per cent costlier during the week under review, while milk grew dearer by 11.19 per cent and eggs, meat and fish by 9.25 per cent.

Fruits also became 8.89 per cent more expensive on an annual basis, while cereal prices were up by 1.68 per cent.

Inflation in the overall primary articles category stood at 3.78 per cent during the week ended December 10, as against 5.48 per cent in the previous week. Primary articles have over 20 per cent weight in the wholesale price index.

Inflation in the non-food segment, which includes fibres and oilseeds, was recorded at 1.37 per cent during the week under review, as against 2.12 per cent in the week ended December 3.

Fuel and power inflation stood at 15.24 per cent during the week ended December 10, same as in the previous week.

Headline inflation, which also factors in manufactured items, has been above the 9 per cent-mark since December, 2010. It stood at 9.11 per cent in November this year.

The RBI has hiked interest rates 13 times since March, 2010, to tame demand and curb inflation.

In its second quarterly review of the monetary policy last month, the central bank had said it expects inflation to remain elevated till December on account of the demand-supply mismatch before moderating to 7 per cent by March, 2012.

the pioneer

Food inflation falls to 1.81% due to steep fall in onion, potato prices

THURSDAY, 22 DECEMBER 2011 22:37

PNS | NEW DELHI

In a major relief to the common man, food inflation fell sharply to a near four-year low of 1.81 per cent as on December 10 as prices of certain essential items like onion and potato dropped steeply.

The figure is the lowest since the week ended February 9, 2008, when it stood at 2.26 per cent. According to data released on Thursday, onion became cheaper by 49.38 per cent year-on-year during the week under review, while potato prices were down by 34.39 per cent. Prices of wheat also fell by 4.21 per cent.

Overall, vegetables became cheaper by 26.37 per cent. Experts said the moderation in food inflation numbers, which was in double-digit in early November, is on account of good kharif harvest as well as a high base, suggested by the over 13 per cent rate of price rise of food items in the corresponding period of 2010.

“There is the strong base effect, on top of a normal monsoon and good harvest. I believe the moderate rate will continue for at least a month or two and we can expect its impact in the December headling inflation numbers also,” Crisil Chief Economist D K Joshi said.

“In such a scenario, the RBI may go for a rate cut in the first quarter of 2012,” he added.

Market watchers said that if the low numbers continue for some time it may help the RBI to go for interest rate cuts in its next monetary policy review on January 24. Food inflation was 4.35 per cent in the previous week ended December 3.

The central bank in its mid-quarter review on December 16 had kept the key rates unchanged. While inflation in vegetables and wheat segments eased during the reporting week, prices of protein-rich items such as egg, milk and pulses have continued to remain high.

Pulses became costlier by 14.22 per cent during the week under review, while milk grew dearer by 11.19 per cent and eggs, meat and fish by 9.25 per cent.

“Both the high base and good production is responsible for moderation in food inflation numbers. However, it is too early to say if this will sustain. We should wait and watch till at least early February before coming to a firm conclusion,” Deloitte Haskin & Sells Director Anis Chakravarty said.

He said the RBI is likely to closely watch the situation for some time before going ahead with rate cuts.

Hooda to inaugurate workshop on innovative agri techniques

THURSDAY, 22 DECEMBER 2011 23:45
PIONEER

Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda will inaugurate a two-day workshop on innovative agriculture techniques, which is being organised by CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar on the occasion of Kisan Diwas on December 23.
Dr KS Khokhar, Vice Chancellor of the University said Union State Minister for Agriculture Harish Rawat would preside over the inaugural function and Haryana Agriculture Minister Paramvir Singh would be the distinguished guest on this occasion.

Three-day short-term course at HP

A three-day long short-term course on 'Disaster Management for the College Teachers' was organised by Academic Staff College of Himachal Pradesh University (HPU). About 54 participants drawn from different colleges of the State were present in the workshop; most of them are from Biology, Zoology, Chemistry, Geography, Languages and Social Sciences faculty members.

HPU Vice-Chancellor Prof ADN Bajpai, while delivering his valedictory address in the course, called for proper coordination between nature, environment and human beings for healthy and congenial environment for the sustainable development of the mankind. camp in Guru Gobind Singh College

NSS unit of Sri Guru Gobind Singh College, Sector26, has organised a seven-day camp in the campus from December 16 to 22. During these seven days student volunteers and non-student volunteers of the college organised various activities related to social scenario of the society and visited various sections of the society under the supervision of programme officers.

Students also visited and interacted with children of special cell of Bhawan Vidyalaya, Sector 27, and visually impaired children at Blind Home Sector 26 and tried to learn the way of life and education scenario of these children.

Business Standard

Friday, Dec 23, 2011

Pulses production likely to dip 5-7pc in 2011-12: IPGA

Press Trust Of India / Kolkata December 23, 2011, 0:17 IST

Pulses production during the current fiscal is expected to decline by 5-7 per cent over 2010-11 due to lack of adequate rain, India Pulses and Grain Association (IPGA) said here today.

"Domestic production of pulses in India is likely to drop by 5-7 per cent as per our estimates, compared to 18.3 million tonne production in 2010-11, due to lack of adequate rain in certain pockets of crop," IPGA Vice-President Bimal Kothari said. He was speaking to reporters to announce the country's first global pulses conclave in Mumbai between February 15-17, 2012.

The association, however, did not expect any major impact on prices during the year and estimated import will be 3 million tonnes, same as last year.

IPGA said this projections were of their own despite government estimate for pulses in India during the fiscal pegged at close to 18 million tonnes.

"The prices are likely to stay stable," IPGA member and pulses importer Dharmendra Vijaywargi said.

Prices of pulses have eased between 30-50 per cent depending on varities from their peak of 2008-09.

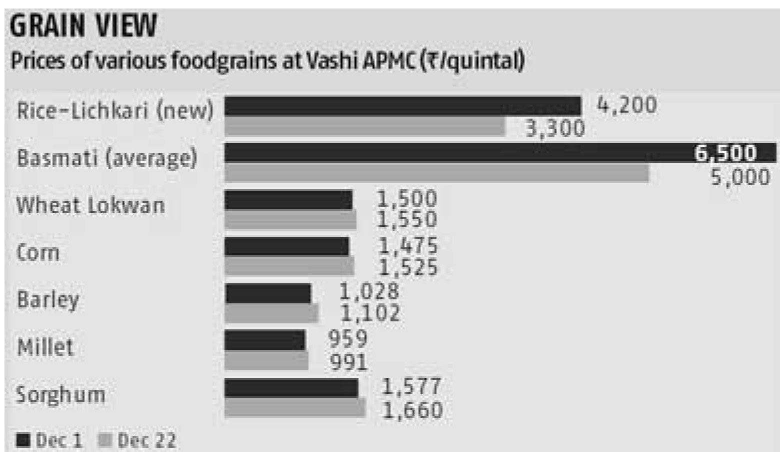
IPGA belived Food Security Bill will encourage the government to focus on pulses production apart from food grains. "Government polices should encourage in pulses production as productivity in India is far below than the global average," IPGA officials said.

High supply pulls rice prices down

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai December 23, 2011, 0:08 IST

Decline 20 per cent this month; higher minimum support price restrains fall in other foodgrains.

An increased supply through kharif crop harvesting has pulled the prices of rice down almost 20 per cent in December. Other foodgrains, including wheat, corn and sorghum, held up on a high minimum support price (MSP), coupled with supply shortage.



The price of the benchmark Lichkari variety of non-basmati rice fell between Rs 800 and Rs 900 to trade between Rs 3,200 and Rs 3,300 a quintal on December 22, while the normal basmati variety plunged by Rs 1,500 a quintal. Among other foodgrains, wheat (Lokwan) shot up by a marginal Rs 50 a quintal, while millet and sorghum rose by Rs 32 and Rs 82 a quintal, respectively.

“We have witnessed consecutive bumper years for both wheat and rice. On the back of this, the government is holding healthy stocks. At present, the supply is higher than demand, as farmers have continuously been releasing rice into the market, causing a supply glut. Therefore, rice stockists in the market, who procure the commodity at lower prices, have been the buyers. On the other hand, wheat has been maintaining a high price due to high MSP and lean-season sowing demand," said V K Chaturvedi, managing director of Usher Agro, a BSE-listed foodgrain processing company.

Even as the harvesting, milling and storing season of paddy for individual farmers and stockists continues, the public sector Food Corporation of India (FCI) reported a stock of 20.36 million tonnes of rice and 31.43 million tonnes of wheat in its central pool as on October 1 — a significant decline from 22.71 mt and 33.62 mt, respectively, on September 1. The total stock of coarse grains declined to 89,000 tonnes on October 1 from 93,000 tonnes a month ago.

This being the harvesting and procurement season for rice, its stock jumped to 26.08 million tonnes on November 1 and further to 27.06 million tonnes on December 1. But, the inventory of wheat plunged to 29.67 million tonnes on November 1 and further to 27.66 million tonnes on December 1.

"This means, the government continuously released stock, not only through its public distribution system (PDS) but also through open-market sale. Today, the price of India's non-basmati rice in the overseas market is ruling 10-15 per cent lower," Chaturvedi added.

A report released by Care Ratings showed that the overall kharif foodgrain production was estimated to increase by 3.1 per cent, as forecast by the ministry of agriculture in its first advance estimates. The present rabi progress in terms of land under cultivation suggests the output level would be stable, and not increase significantly, unless there is a substantial improvement in yield per hectare. The target production for the rabi crop is set to stand at about 119 mt of foodgrains, taking the total crop production target to 245 mt of foodgrains for 2011-12.

Compared to last year, there has been a decline of around five per cent in the area under cultivation for all crops. A shortfall in cultivation has been witnessed in wheat and jowar, the two major rabi crops.

With food price inflation starting its descent on the back of a good kharif harvest, the rabi prospects are important, as these account for 50 per cent of the foodgrain production and 33 per cent of the oilseed output. So far, around 75 per cent of the normal area under cultivation has been covered, which paints a good picture of the prospects for the year.

“The government has already announced an MSP of Rs 1,285 a quintal for wheat, an increase of Rs 700 for gram and Rs 650 a quintal for mustard, which will exert pressure on wholesale prices. With the threat of not meeting the fiscal deficit target looming before the government, the question remains if the higher food subsidy on account of wheat procurement would be offset by lower procurement,” said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, Care Ratings.

Sharad Maru, president, Grain Rice & Oilseeds Merchant Assoc-iation, however, termed the movement in prices of agri commodities a pure demand-supply arithmetic. He urged the government to remove curbs and open exports to fetch higher prices in the global market.

Rice exporters expect better margins on strong dollar

Vikas Sharma / Chandigarh December 23, 2011, 0:10 IST

With higher production and a strong dollar, rice expo-rters are expecting better profit margins this season. However, the benefits due to a fall in the rupee will be marginal, as many exporters had hedged positions when the rupee was around 48 to the dollar.

Exporters maintain profitability would be even better if the minimum export price (MEP) of basmati was lowered from the current $900 a tonne.

“It would help exporters move forward with contracts signed in October and November,” said Vijay Setia, president, Rice Exporters Association, who believes if the MEP was lowered, it could help basmati exports reach 2.5 million tonnes.

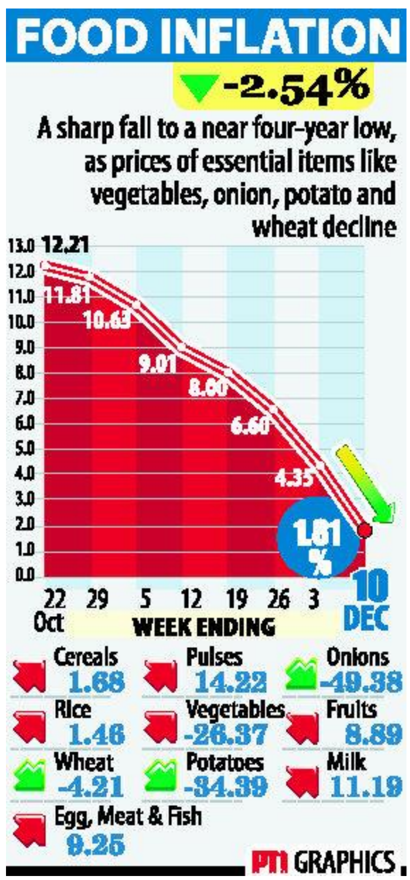
Credit rating agency, Crisil, in a recently published report, said the increasing share of India in the global rice trade and favourable exchange rates may boost export this year.

The report maintains that expectation of a bumper rice crop in India in 2011-12 (October 1-September 30), lifting of the ban on non-basmati rice exports and a weak production outlook for most rice-exporting countries may drive a sharp increase in India’s share in the global rice trade. Healthy export opportunities, low paddy prices and a favourable exchange rate would lead to improved profitability for rice millers in 2011-12.

Raghumit Sodhi, proprietor, GRD Group Trade and Investment, an exporter of basmati rice, said the rising dollar had given ‘windfall’ gain to exporters. He believes it would be temporary. Exporters say they expect profitability to increase but the growth may be in single digits.

THE HINDU Business Line

Food inflation dips to 1.81%, near 4-year low



New Delhi, Dec. 22:

Food inflation eased sharply to 1.81 per cent in the week ended December 10, from the previous week's annual rise of 4.35 per cent, largely on account of the high base effect of the previous year. The continuing slide in vegetables and cereals too contributed to the dip in the year-on-year food inflation rate.

Inflation in non-food items too came down sharply, even as fuels held steady, Government data showed on Thursday.

The latest estimate, according to analysts, is the lowest food inflation estimate since the week ended February 9, 2008, when it was recorded at 2.26 per cent. The dip happened despite a sharp surge in the year-on-year inflation in pulses and other protein-based food items.

On a sequential basis, the food articles group index declined 0.5 per cent during the latest week. Food inflation stood at a high 13.22 per cent in the corresponding week of 2010.

According to the official data, onions were down over 49 per cent year-on-year during the week under review, while potatoes fell by over 34 per cent. Wheat prices also came down by 4.21 per cent. Overall, vegetables were cheaper by 26.37 per cent.

Most other food items, however, surged on an annual basis, led by protein-based items. Pulses were up over 14 per cent during the week under review, while milk was up 11 per cent and eggs, meat and fish by over 9 per cent. Fruits were also up nearly nine per cent on an annual basis.

Inflation in the primary articles group stood at 3.78 per cent during the week ended December 10, against 5.48 per cent in the previous week. Primary articles have an over 20 per cent weight in the WPI. Inflation in the non-food segment, which includes fibres and oilseeds, was recorded at 1.37 per cent during the week under review, against 2.12 per cent in the previous reported week.

The fuel and power inflation was steady at 15.24 per cent during the latest week. The country's headline inflation has stayed above nine per cent for a year, despite 13 rate increases by the RBI since March 2010.

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Jeera perks up on export enquiries

Rajkot, Dec. 22:

Export enquiries on the heels of higher quotes by competing nations such as Syria and Turkey drove jeera futures higher on Thursday.

However, spot prices remained unchanged on limited demand.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), jeera January contracts increased by Rs 233 to Rs 14,670 a quintal, with an open interest of 13,122 lots.

NCDEX February contract gained by Rs 234 to Rs 14,984, with an open interest of 10,494 lots.

According to a report from Angel Commodities, prices are expected to trade higher owing to reports of fresh enquiries from overseas buyers and demand from local stockists.

According to the Gujarat Agriculture Ministry, the area under jeera till December 19stood at 2.64 lakh hectares (lh), up 20 per cent as compared with last year.

Carryover stocks of jeera are expected to be around 9-10 lakh bags compared with 4-5 lakh bags last year.

In Unjha, jeer (rough quality) was offered at Rs 1,500-1,600 for 20 kg, foreign quality at Rs 2,500-2,600, NCDEX quality at Rs 2,730-2,820 for 20 kg.

Arrivals stood at 2,000-2,500 bags and 4,000 bags were traded. At Rajkot APMC, jeera traded between Rs 1,950 and Rs 2,651 for 20 kg.

In the international market, Syrian and Turkey jeera were offered at $3,300 and $2,900 a tonne (f.o.b) respectively while Indian cumin seed quoted at $2,900 a tonne (c&f) in Singapore.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 23, 2011)

Pulses may turn costlier on drop in output, imports

Our Bureau

Kolkata, Dec. 22:

Prices of pulses in the country may move up by 10-20 per cent over the next 2-3 months on account of a drop in production and imports this year.

An estimated 5 per cent decline in rabi crop coupled with the 10 per cent decline in the kharif pulses is set to bring down the total production by about 7 per cent, Mr Bimal Kothari, Vice-President, India Pulses and Grains Association (IPGA), said.

The production is likely to be 17 million tonnes in the crop year 2011-12, against initial estimates of 18.5 million tonnes. Rabi crop accounts for almost 60-70 per cent of the total production of pulses in the country, while kharif crop accounts for the rest 35-40 per cent.

DECLINE IN KHARIF

"There has been a 10 per cent decline in kharif production this year on account of adverse weather conditions in some parts of the country. Another 5 per cent drop is expected in the rabi production (the harvesting for which will begin in the second week of January) thereby taking the total drop in production to about 7-8 per cent," Mr Kothari told newspersons.

He was here to promote the IPGA-organised Global Pulses Conclave 2012 to be held in Mumbai in February. The country consumes about 21 million tonnes of pulses in a year.

The shortfall in production is offset by imports to the tune of about 3 million tonnes. With the rupee having depreciated by almost 20 per cent since August this year, importers might be discouraged to import pulses thereby creating a demand-supply mismatch.

"The drop in production coupled with the lower imports will lead to the jacking up of prices," said Mr Anurag Tulshan, member of the association.

The low yield of pulses production was the key issue confronting the industry at present.

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Milk output rebounds; sours returns for farmers

Harish Damodaran & Vishwanath Kulkarni

Consumers unlikely to benefit from drop in prices

New Delhi, Dec. 22:

After potato and onion growers, it is now the turn of milk producers to experience declining price realisations on account of rebound in production as well as a post-festive slump in demand.

Since Diwali, landed prices of raw milk, containing 6.5 per cent fat and 8.5 per cent solids-not-fat (SNF), in most dairies in the North have fallen from around Rs 30 to Rs 24 a litre.

Even cooperative unions such as Mehsana affiliated to the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) are apparently paying farmers now only Rs 420 for every kg of fat against Rs 450 till two months ago.

For standing full-cream milk with 6 per cent fat and 9 per cent SNF content, it translates into a reduction from Rs 29.95 a litre to Rs 27.95.

DRY PHASE

According to industry sources, much of this has to do with the rebound in milk procurement, following a ‘dry' 2010-11 that saw prices surge both at the producer and consumer end. GCMMF's member unions paid an average of Rs 400 for a kg of milk fat in 2010-11 compared with Rs 337, Rs 298 and Rs 284 in the preceding three fiscals.

The rebound, in turn, is said to reflect a stabilisation of the reproductive-cum-lactation cycle of animals from the drought-induced disruptions of 2009.

Although the drought *per se* happened in 2009-10, its effects were felt the following year, when the earlier fodder deprivation led to delayed calving of pregnant animals.

This is normal, considering that in droughts, farmers tend to accord higher feeding priority to animals already in-milk or about to lactate.

HIGHER PROCUREMENT

That dry period is now over and which is why we are seeing more milk coming in. Moreover, price increases in the last 2-3 years have also incentivised farmers to invest more in their animals.

With good monsoon in 2010 and 2011 helping to improve overall fodder availability and rein-in cattle feed prices, it is all adding up to higher milk procurement by dairies, the sources said. GCMMF unions are currently procuring around 133 lakh litres a day (LLPD) of milk, including 117 LLPD from Gujarat alone.

Last year, at this time, they were collecting only 108 LLPD, of which 104 LLPD were from Gujarat.

Even Hatsun Agro Product Ltd, the country's largest private sector dairy, has reported a 10 per cent increase in procurement over last year.

NO PRICE CUT

The benefits of increased procurement and lower milk prices may, however, not benefit consumers.

Neither GCMMF nor other liquid milk marketers such as Mother Dairy appear to be in any mood to reduce prices at the retail end. Even prices of products such as milk powder or ghee have not fallen as much as raw milk.

Skimmed milk powder, which was quoting at Rs 185 a kg three months back, has softened to Rs 165, much less than the Rs 6/litre decline in raw milk cost.

Ghee prices have, likewise, gone down marginally from Rs 250 to Rs 240 a kg.

It is not a good thing if lower realisation for farmers is not benefitting consumers. It would be even worse if sustained low prices force farmers to send their animals to the slaughter house. The right thing for the Government to do now is to lift the ban on milk power and casein exports, the sources said.

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Soya oil slips on sluggish offtake

Our Correspondent

Indore, Dec. 22:

Soya oil ruled sluggish on weak buying support in the domestic market and decline in dollar even as Malaysian palm oil futures closed higher.

Soya refined in the physical market ruled at Rs 640-645 for 10 kg. However, even at the current rate, buying support remains slack. By and large a majority of trading in soya refined oil was witnessed at Rs 642-643. Soya solvent also traded lower in the spot at Rs 610-614 for 10 kg (Rs 615-620). With decline in demand at the higher rate, resellers made profit booking in soya oil at Rs 637-638 for 10 kg.

On the NBOT, soya refined January closed lower at Rs 678.50 for 10 kg. Similarly on the NCDEX, soya oil futures traded lower on slack demand with January contracts closing Rs 2.70 lower at Rs 679.30 for 10 kg, while February contracts closed Rs 4.30 lower at Rs 680.60 for 10 kg.

Plant deliveries in soyabean also declined on weak demand at Rs 2,370-2,405 a quintal (Rs 2,370-2,425). January and February contracts on the NCDEX closed at Rs 2,395 a quintal (down Rs 21) and Rs 2,415(down Rs 29.50).

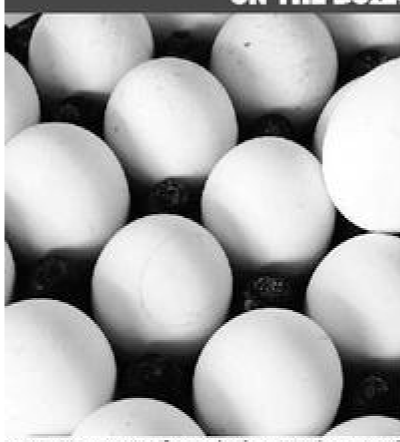
Soyameal ruled steady on slack export demand with its prices on the court remained stable at Rs 17,900 a quintal.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 23, 2011)

Cold wave heats up egg prices to record

Gayathri G

ON THE BOIL#



January	283.48
February	225.21
March	224.29
April	217.67
May	226.61
June	258.30
July	250.42
August	242.48
September	254.67
October	265.42
November	292.50
December*	290.27

- Average price of eggs (Rs/100 eggs) at Namakkal
* - till Dec. 22

Chennai, Dec. 22:

Egg prices increased to a record Rs 3.13 a piece on Thursday as the severe cold wave gripping North India has pushed up consumption. The previous record price was Rs 3.02 registered in January.

After keeping price flat for almost a fortnight, the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), Namakkal zone hiked the price of egg by 19 paise on Thursday from last week's Rs 2.94.

Mr P. Selvaraj, Zonal Chairman of the NECC - Tamil Nadu, told *Business Line* that the cold wave in North India is the main reason for the price hike as the seasonal market attracted an average 25 lakh eggs a day of Namakkal's average daily production of 2.75 crore eggs. Consumption of eggs usually goes up in the winter.

Prices in the South are still the lowest in the country with rates in Bangalore ruling at Rs 3.00, while they are quoted at Rs 3.01 at Mysore and Hyderabad and Rs 3.20 in Chennai compared with production hubs in the North such as Mumbai (Rs 3.28), Kolkata (Rs 3.58) and Delhi (Rs 3.48).

Consistent demand

A spokesperson of Coimbatore-based Suguna Poultry Farms ltd said that there is consistent demand for eggs as more people are opting to go in for poultry products instead of pricey vegetables. Rain has resulted in a vegetable shortage and eggs are gaining since it is seen as the only balanced diet at a lower price.

Industry sources – going by the Met Department's prediction that the cold wave could extend for few more days – said possibilities of a drop in price are remote.

NECC's prices for layer birds has also been raised by Rs 2 at Rs 43, while the Broiler Coordination Committee has retained the rates of cull birds at Rs 50/kg.

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Groundnut oil up; palmolein down

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Dec. 22:

In the absence of ready demand, prices of most edible oils declined on Thursday. Malaysian palm oil futures rose for the second consecutive day but did not impact domestic markets as local refineries had reduced the rates for palmolein and soya oil by Rs 3-5 at the start of the day.

In the spot market, palmolein declined by Rs 2, rapeseed oil by Rs 5, cotton oil by Rs 4, and sunflower expeller refined oil by Rs 10. Sunflower refined oil ruled steady. Groundnut oil rose further by Rs 10, tracking firm reports from producing centres.

Stockists have covered some 450-500 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 580-582, directly from a refinery for forward delivery.

Resellers were offering palmolein at Rs 578-580. Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 580-582 for December-January delivery, and super palmolein at Rs 600. Ruchi was quoting palmolein at Rs 581, soya refined oil at Rs 663 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 701 for January. Allana's palmolein was Rs 582 for December 31. Mewah was quoting palmolein at Rs 582 for December and super palmolein, at Rs 600. In Saurashtra, Rajkot cotton oil was up Rs 615-616 (610-612). Groundnut oil was Rs 1,500 (1,500) for *Telia* tin and Rs 975 (980) for loose — 10 kg.

Malaysia's BMD CPO's January contracts settled higher at MYR 3,095 (3,074), February MYR 3,100 (3,075) a tonne.

Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 980 (970); soya refined oil 660 (660); sunflower exp. ref. 650 (660); sunflower ref. 710 (710); rapeseed ref. oil 770 (775); rapeseed expeller ref. 740 (745); cotton ref. oil 628 (632); and palmolein 581 (583).

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Selling pressure drags Maharashtra sugar

Mumbai, Dec. 22:

Resale selling pressure dragged sugar prices in Maharashtra but sellers refusal to sell at lower prices perked up rates for the commodity in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday.

In Maharashtra, prices at the naka level dipped by Rs 25-40 for M-grade and by Rs 15 for S-grade. In central Uttar Pradesh, sugar produced last season that ended in Septmerb was quoted at Rs 2,860-70 a quintal, while the one produce this year was quoted at Rs 2,950.

“Demand is emerging in Uttar Pradesh. By tomorrow, we could see more pick up in demand,” said a trading source.

In Maharashtra, producers are not very keen to sell at lower prices and held back stocks, leading to firmness of Rs 10 in mill tender rates. Routine volumes also contributed to the steady sentiment.

There is a lower chance of high volatility till month-end as supply from mills is sufficient, said market sources.

A wholesaler said national level demand-supply scenario is very normal, ruling out sudden volatility. With the sufficient free sale quota for the month, buyers are keeping away from inventory buying and on the other side, producers are continuing to sell to avoid building up of stocks. He further said that despite the Government having allowed 10 lakh tones sugar exports last month, very few release orders have been issued so far due to weak global market. The government will consider more sugar exports after the mills exhaust the quota.

Weak international market and possible exports from Pakistan are seen to trigger stiff competition. On Thursday, there was talk of Pakistan permitting exports of 8 lakh tonnes in 2011-2012 on hopes of higher production.

At the Vashi market on Wednesday, about 20-22 mills offered tenders and sold about 60,000-65,000 bags in the range of Rs 2,800-2,860 (Rs 2,790-2850) for S-grade and Rs 2,870-2,960 (Rs 2,850-2,960) for M-grade.

Arrivals at the Vashi market were at 50-52 truckloads and local dispatches were around 49-50 truckloads. Domestic freight rates were steady.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade ruled at Rs 2,941-3,020 (Rs 2,944-3,015) and M-grade at Rs 3,006- 3,102 (Rs 3,001-3,122).

***Naka* delivery rates**: S-grade Rs 2,885-2,920 (Rs 2,900 - 2,930) and M-grade Rs 2,975-3,020 (Rs 3,000-3,060).

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 23, 2011)

Bulk buying for masala firms lifts turmeric

Our Correspondent

Erode, Dec. 22:

Spot turmeric prices increased by Rs 200 a quintal on Thursday as bulk buyers purchased to fulfil local orders.

“The bulk buyers have purchased good number of turmeric bags to fulfil their local orders; consequently the prices were up by Rs 200 a quintal. Traders have received good orders from the local turmeric powder merchants and also from masala makers . So, traders quoted higher prices,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Mr Ravishankar said local traders placed some orders for turmeric for Pongal, and 7-odd bags were sold on Thursday against arrivals of 13,000-odd bags. So far, he said, no fresh Number 8 variety turmeric has arrived for sale, but traders are expecting the Mysore crop to arrive next week, which will not impact prices as the Mysore variety usually fetches a lower rate due to its quality.

On Thursday, very fine variety hybrid Salem (hyrid) crop prices were up by Rs 450 a quintal. All the 500-odd bags of the variety were sold.

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Salem Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 4,755-5,499 and the root variety Rs 4,064-4,359. Totally, 3,235 bags arrived for sale and 920 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,239-4,279, and the root variety at Rs 3,126-4,094. All the 230 bags kept for sale got sold.

. At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,772-4,330, the root variety Rs 3,786-4,139. Some 1,872 bags of turmeric were sold against the arrival of 1,989.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 23, 2011)

Wheat dara rules firm on steady demand

Our Correspondent

Karnal, Dec. 22:

After witnessing a rally in the last 10 days, dara wheat prices ruled firm, while desi wheat continued to rule flat on Thursday.

With demand being steady for the dara variety at present, prices are range-bound, said Mr Subhash Chander, a wheat trader.

In the physical market, around 65 tonnes of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh. Dara at the Karnal Grain Market Terminal was quoted at Rs 1,130-1,140 a quintal, mill delivery was at Rs 1,160-1,170 while delivery at chakki was at Rs 1,175-1,180. Dara wheat prices have increased Rs 30-35 a quintal over the last 10 days.

Similarly desi wheat ruled flat. Samrat was quoted at Rs 1,880-1,885, Tohfa 2,040-2,050 while Red Rose was trading at Rs 2,200 a quintal.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for January delivery decreased by Rs 2 to Rs 1,182 a quintal; it had touched a high at Rs 1,185 earlier on Thursday. Wheat for February delivery decreased Rs 4 to Rs 1,212.

Despite a steady trend in wheat, flour prices increased marginally Rs 5 and sold at Rs 1,165-1,175 for a 90-kg bag. On the other hand, Chokar prices continued to rule flat and sold at Rs 650-655 for a 49-kg bag.

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