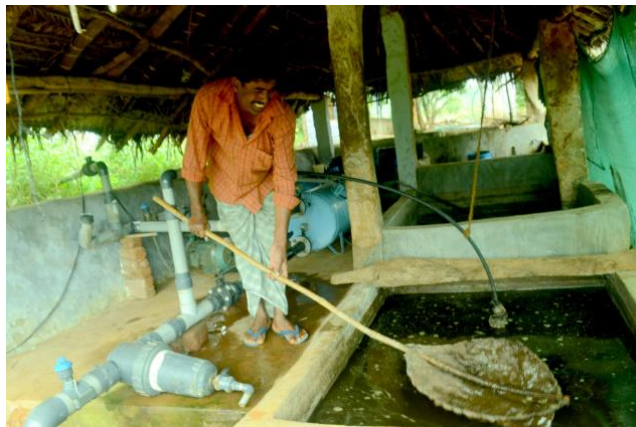


THE HINDU

Innovative technique showcased at national conference

M. J. PRABU



Priced at Rs.20,000 the filtering system can be used for other crops as well

A farmer is comparable to a one man University.

“A single person combines in himself the work of a weatherman, an engineer, a marketing executive, a veterinarian, and above all a statesman endowed with the responsibility of feeding his people, says Mr G. R. Sakthivel an enterprising and innovative farmer from Sathyamangalam, Erode, Tamil Nadu.

A member of the scientific advisory committee of MYRADA-KVK and Erode district organic farmers' federation, Mr. Sakthivel developed a simple yet effective mechanism to filter cattle waste and use the same in sugarcane cultivation.

Four compartments

The four compartment system includes the filtration technique, ensuring that an enriched solution gets collected at the end, mixed with water, and sent by drip irrigation system to the field.

The first section is meant for collection of cow dung and urine mixing. After thorough mixing, the solution is sent to the second compartment for first filtration.

The solid matter is used for biogas production and the upper part of the solution is then allowed to flow into a third compartment where jaggery is added for fermentation. The clear enriched filtrated medium is collected and used for irrigation.

By adopting this technology the farmer can save Rs.27,000 per acre as it reduces labour and fertilizer cost, according to Mr. Sakthivel. This technology aids water holding capacity in the soil and presence of earth worms is considerably increased in the fields.

A believer in organic cultivation, Mr. Sakthivel says that “one of the main reasons that encouraged me to develop this technique was the decreasing quality of soil due to the continuous usage of chemicals for growing crops.”

Cattle resources

“Fertilizers not only affect one's health considerably, but also decrease the quantity of yield. I worked on this innovation to do away with the use of fertilizers, and use available cattle resources for the purpose of soil nourishment.” he says.

Decreased availability of labour also acted as a catalyst in the process of innovation for this farmer.

“The increase in sugarcane yield in the farmers fields are a standing proof for the success of this innovation. From 60 tonnes in the first harvest, the yield increased to 63 tonnes in the second harvest. The crop, now in its third harvest, is expected to yield higher,” says agricultural expert Mr Saravana Kumar. Priced at Rs.20,000 the filtering system can be used for other crops as well.

Successful model

Bannariamman sugar factory at Sathyamangalam area identified this technology as an alternative suitable farming practice and the Sugarcane breeding institute, Coimbatore identified this as a successful model for addressing labour and fertilizer reduction in sugarcane cultivation.

“So far we have not received any complaints about the filtration use but in some places blockages in the drip irrigating tubes have been noticed. But we rectified it by using EM (Effective Microorganism) solution once in three months. The EM solution is also mixed with the end solution to flow in the drip tubes to prevent blockage,” says Dr. K. Alagesan, Program Co-ordinator, Myrada Krishi Vigyan Kendra,

Lot of queries

Till date about 10 farmers in the region and a few from Tirunelveli district are trying this technique in their fields.

“Farmers from Dharmapuri, Madurai and Dindigul are now approaching me to learn the technique. I did not innovate for an award. My greatest achievement would be to inspire as many farmers as I can, to take to organic farming methods. Organic farming is the only way to increase declining yields today,” says the farmer.

This, according to him is the real award. Mr. Sakthivel presented this technology at the 6th National level KVK conference at Jabalpur where nearly 1,000 delegates participated. Contact Mr. G.R.Sakthivel at No. 149, Ganeshapuram, Gettavadi(P.o), Talavadi (Via), Sathyamangalam(T.K), Erode District-638461, Mobile: 94863 16041.

Published: December 8, 2011 01:39 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 01:39 IST

Use pesticides wisely to save bees

The use of inappropriate agrochemicals, high doses of insecticides, absence of essential instructions and legislations for using pesticides are the chief constraints to achieve optimum pollination by the crops.

Different crops

Oilseeds like mustard and sunflower, gourds group of vegetables, pome and stone fruits, cotton, plantations of cardamom and coffee require honeybees for pollination These crops are infested by pest during flowering and farmers apply large quantities of pesticides as they are unaware of hazards to insect pollinators.

Symptoms of poisoning

Bee poisoning could be well perceived by observing a large numbers of bees dead in front of the hives. Immature broods in the combs are also killed due to feeding with poisoned pollens. The queen bee stops egg laying and the population gets dwindled.

The poisoned colonies may be shifted away from the source of poisoning. They may be provided with sugar syrup and pollen substitute because most of the field force of bees must have been killed. The contaminated pollen stored in the combs can be removed by dipping the combs in water and washing by slight shaking.

Do not apply any toxic pesticide unless the crop is heavily infested. And avoid pesticides to a crop in bloom because bees and other pollinating insects visit most of the crops when they are flowering.

Dust formulations are more hazardous than spray. Wettable powders have long residual effect than emulsions.

No direct application

Granules applied in soils are the safest for bees. Direct application of pesticides on the flowers result in harmful effects to honey bees.

Ground applications of pesticide are safer than aerial application as the danger of drifting is reduced in the former.

Bees are generally active during day time and hence, evening or late evening applications are relatively safe.

Bio pesticides like *Bacillus thuringiensis* and Nuclear *Polyhedrosis* virus are least toxic and can be applied at any time with reasonable safety to honey bees.

J. Jayaraj, S. Manisegaran & K. Vairavan, *Agricultural College and Research Institute Madurai*

Published: December 8, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 04:36 IST

Farm query

Easy to use conoweeder

Is there any conoweeder available that is lightweight and easy to use?

S. Parthiban

Tamil Nadu

Mr. S. Karthikeyan from Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu has developed a easy to use machine that is lightweight and can be easily handled by a single person. It can complete work in 2 to 2.5 hours in an acre and needs only one litre of petrol and can be used continuously for an hour. For details contact Mr. S. Karthikeyan, Om sakthi agri industries, No 9/1 Lal Bahadur Sastri road, Kumbakonam: 612-001, email: karthi_omsakthi@yahoo.co.in, mobile: 09789618131, phone: 0435-2401231.

Published: December 8, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 04:36 IST

Use pesticides wisely to save bees

The use of inappropriate agrochemicals, high doses of insecticides, absence of essential instructions and legislations for using pesticides are the chief constraints to achieve optimum pollination by the crops.

Different crops

Oilseeds like mustard and sunflower, gourds group of vegetables, pome and stone fruits, cotton, plantations of cardamom and coffee require honeybees for pollination These crops are infested by pest during flowering and farmers apply large quantities of pesticides as they are unaware of hazards to insect pollinators.

Symptoms of poisoning

Bee poisoning could be well perceived by observing a large numbers of bees dead in front of the hives. Immature broods in the combs are also killed due to feeding with poisoned pollens. The queen bee stops egg laying and the population gets dwindled.

The poisoned colonies may be shifted away from the source of poisoning. They may be provided with sugar syrup and pollen substitute because most of the field force of bees must have been killed. The contaminated pollen stored in the combs can be removed by dipping the combs in water and washing by slight shaking.

Do not apply any toxic pesticide unless the crop is heavily infested. And avoid pesticides to a crop in bloom because bees and other pollinating insects visit most of the crops when they are flowering.

Dust formulations are more hazardous than spray. Wettable powders have long residual effect than emulsions.

No direct application

Granules applied in soils are the safest for bees. Direct application of pesticides on the flowers result in harmful effects to honey bees.

Ground applications of pesticide are safer than aerial application as the danger of drifting is reduced in the former.

Bees are generally active during day time and hence, evening or late evening applications are relatively safe.

Bio pesticides like *Bacillus thuringiensis* and Nuclear *Polyhedrosis* virus are least toxic and can be applied at any time with reasonable safety to honey bees.

J. Jayaraj, S. Manisegaran & K. Vairavan

Agricultural College and Research Institute Madurai

Published: December 8, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 04:33 IST

State now third in sugar production

S. Rajendran



Karnataka has now emerged as one of the top sugar producing States in the country, after Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

The State's sugar production has shot up to 37.14 lakh tonnes, an increase of 12.25 lakh tonnes in just under a year, according to reports received in the State headquarters about a fortnight ago.

The sugar year commences in October and ends in September. Even sugar recovery has improved dramatically, and Karnataka now stands second, after Maharashtra. Sugar recovery is the yield of sugar for every tonne of sugarcane crushed in factories. The average recovery in the State is now 10.95 per cent. It is 11.50 per cent in Maharashtra and 9.7 per cent in Uttar Pradesh.

Secretary of the State unit of the Farmers Federation of India C. Narasimhappa said that since sugarcane is a cash crop, it was a happy augury that Karnataka had emerged as the third largest sugar producer in the nation. It was only some years ago that the State overtook Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It now has almost 60 sugar factories, a quantum jump over the past decade.

The sugarcane crushing season has just started, and 58 sugar factories have commenced operations. The remaining two are set to begin crushing in a few days. Sugarcane production in the State has increased from 228 lakh tonnes to 339.03 lakh tonnes in just about a year although the area under sugarcane has only marginally increased, indicating that the yield per hectare has increased appreciably.

Prof. Narasimhappa said 25 per cent of the 60 sugar factories were located south of the Tungabhadra river and 75 per cent in northwest and north Karnataka, i.e. north of the Tungabhadra. The factories south of the Tungabhadra have a lower rate of recovery than those on the other side.

It is another matter that the Old Mysore region was once regarded as the sugar bowl of the State, with Mandya being called the sugar city. One of the first sugar mills, Mysore Sugar Company, was located in Mandya.

Sugarcane growers say sugar production can go up further provided the sugar factories pay the growers a reasonable price and in time.

Published: December 8, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 04:33 IST

'Global warming is the challenge of the era'

Special Correspondent

Accent on the need for corporate entities taking the lead in reducing carbon dioxide emission

The issues concerning global warming that confront corporate India and its response and responsibility were discussed threadbare on the first day of the three-day international conference on 'Corporate and Business Response to Climate Change - from Awareness to Adoption' that opened on the premises of Salem Periyar University here on Wednesday.

Issues

Organised by Department of Commerce, the technical conference would delve deep into these issues on climate change that would affect corporate entities.

Presiding over the inaugural function of the conference, Vice-Chancellor K. Muthuchelian said that global warming was the defining challenge of the era.

He asked the business houses to refer to the Kyoto Protocol and take the lead role in reducing carbon dioxide emission.

In his presidential address delivered on the occasion, he reiterated that business had to play an active role in this activity that impacted the state of the environment.

“It is the appropriate time to gather and discuss the impact of corporates and business and assess climate change impact, understand the potential risk to business and the importance of taking action to mitigate those risks to protect the supply chain Mother Nature,” he said.

Dr. Lesley Khun, Faculty of School of Management (Organization Studies), University of Western Sydney, Australia, in her inaugural address said that business firms had become the focus in the climate change debate because of their role as consumers of fossil fuels, emitters of carbon dioxide and manufacturers of products which add to carbon emissions.

D. Sampath Kumar, Editor, The Hindu Business Line, Chennai, identified the differences between ecology, environment and global warming. He outlined media treatment on environmental issues viz., air and noise pollution, bio-diversity, emission and genetically modified foods.

Emissions

He said that with regard to carbon dioxide emissions, there was a significant improvement in reduction by Indian corporates.

He stressed the need for alternate energy resources especially solar and wind energy to play a crucial role in the near future.

S. Sankaran, Chief Scientist, Head Environmental Geophysics Group, CSIR, National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad, Sanjay K. Jain, University of Delhi and Thangapandian, District Environment Officer, also spoke.

A documentary film on environmental issues produced by A. Elangovan, Head, Department of Commerce, Periyar University was screened.

A. Jayakumar proposed vote of thanks.

Nearly 400 delegates drawn from various parts of the country and abroad are taking part in technical sessions at which various issues are to be discussed from an academic standpoint.

University faculty including Vinayagamoorthy, K. Krishnakumar, K. Prabahar Rajkumar, K. Anbalangan, R. Rajendhiran, C. Venkatachalam, Venkatachalapathy and Subramanya Bharathy spoke on the occasion.

Technical conference to delve deep into issues concerning climate change

Published: December 8, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 04:35 IST

Water release till January 15

Special Correspondent

Required quantum of water will be released for the Cauvery delta districts for cultivation depending upon the need till January 15 said S. Asokan, Superintending Engineer of PWD, Thanjavur circle here on Wednesday.

He told *The Hindu*, since rain has stopped in the districts, 10,000 cusecs of water is drawn from Mettur dam now. This water will be used judiciously and released into Cauvery, Vennar systems from the Grand Anaicut.

Published: December 8, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 04:33 IST

Two tonnes of ripened papaya destroyed

D. Radhakrishnan

With the destruction of two tonnes of artificially ripened papaya here on Wednesday an indication of what is in store for traders who violate the Food Safety and Standards Act was provided by officials of the Food Safety Authority.

When the fruits were in the process of being unloaded at the municipal market a team headed by R.V. Ravi of the Authority and Municipal Health Inspector Shivakumar swung into action and carried out a surprise inspection of the fruits.

Published: December 8, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 04:30 IST

Farmers demand increase in MSP for paddy

Staff Correspondent

With the rising cost of cultivation, and a decline in the market prices for the produce, paddy farmers complain that the returns they get are a pittance.

“The cost of paddy cultivation is over Rs. 28,000 per acre while the market price has crashed to around Rs. 1,200 per quintal. At this price, we hardly get anything in return,” bemoans Jairam Reddy, a big farmer in Vannarhalli in Siruguppa taluk.

Downward trend

Devireddy, another farmer, says that when the produce does not fetch a good price in the market, it serves only one purpose — providing employment to agricultural workers. According to them, the cost of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, labour, and rent for hiring harvesters has gone up while the price of paddy in the market is showing a downward trend.

The Government's inaction has only added to their worries.

The 'rice bowl'

Siruguppa taluk is considered the rice bowl of Bellary district with paddy cultivation being the prime occupation. Irrigation is through lift irrigation schemes, with the Tungabhadra and the Vedavathi (popularly known as the Hagari) being the sources. The taluk also has the Tungabhadra reservoir.

During the kharif season, the farmers cultivate 'Sona Masoori', a fine quality rice, which is in demand in the State as well as around the country. The second paddy crop is usually 'Hamsa 64', which requires less water.

While enquiries have revealed that big farmers, have been storing their paddy crop in godowns waiting for a good market price, small and marginal farmers, who have no other alternative, have started selling their crop to repay their debts and meet other commitments. Paddy growers have been demanding that the Government increase the Minimum Support Price for paddy from Rs. 1,030 per quintal to Rs. 1,600 per quintal.

Published: December 8, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: December 8, 2011 04:33 IST

Life is far from rosy for floriculturists

Firoz Rozindar



Last resort: Floriculturists of Chitradurga destroying flowers in an attempt to draw the attention of authorities to their problems.

There seems to be no end in sight to the woes of floriculturists in Chitradurga district as complaints about the low prices they are getting for their flowers have remained unaddressed.

Growers say they are offered very low prices in the retail market by merchants and middlemen, who later sell the flowers at a higher price. Nagaraj, a floriculturist, claimed the payment he gets does not cover even the cost of transportation from the fields to the market.

The merchants not only pay them a poor price, but also do not use the correct weighing machines while purchasing the flowers, the growers here allege.

“Because of this, growers do not get the right price,” Mr. Nagaraj said.

Recently, floriculturists expressed their anger at the merchants, as well as the district administration for not coming to their aid, by destroying their flowers.

Shift to APMC

Their long-pending demand to shift the flower market to the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) yard had not been conceded, they said.

It may be noted that the district administration had reserved space for floriculturists at the APMC yard, but as the area was occupied by cattle-sellers, the floriculturists could not shift there.

G.H. Tippareddy, MLC, who has been calling for the market to be shifted, alleged that middlemen were opposing the move, for fear of losing their commission.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Deputy Commissioner Vipul Bansal said a decision to shift the market would be taken soon.

Haryana launches scheme for increasing vegetable productivity

'Vegetable Initiative for Urban Clusters' started in Gurgaon, 11 districts

Haryana has launched a new scheme to increase vegetable production and productivity and market the produce through farmers' groups dubbed as the 'Vegetable Initiative for Urban Clusters' in Gurgaon and 11 other districts in the State.

The districts where the scheme has been launched are Mewat, Rewari, Palwal, Faridabad, Jhajjar, Sonapat, Panipat, Rohtak, Karnal and Kurukshetra, which are predominantly vegetable-growing clusters, in addition to Gurgaon, Haryana Horticulture Department spokesperson said here Wednesday.

Rs.12 crore has been earmarked for this purpose, he said.

The main activities to be taken up under this scheme include the formation of farmers' groups, assistance for growing hybrid and open-pollinated vegetable crops in the open as well as under poly houses and ensuring that all input requirements would be through the farmers' groups or associations.

Under this scheme, the department is launching motorised and non-motorised vegetable carts equipped with cooling technology to increase the shelf-life of vegetables for supply in urban areas. These vending carts will be supplied to local vendors and farmers' interest groups at a 50 per cent subsidy. The balance amount will be financed through banks, who will recover their costs in instalments.

A provision has been made for distribution of 50 mobile vending carts at a rate of 50 per cent subsidy, that is Rs.15,000 each, and five motorised vending carts at a rate of 50 per cent subsidy, that is Rs.50,000 each," he said.

Under this scheme, 250 groups of farmers having clusters of 15-20 members each have already been formed. Two vegetable seedling productions centres -- one at Rohtak and the other at Gurgaon -- are being constructed at an estimated cost of Rs.2.08 crore to supply disease-free hybrid vegetable seedlings to the farmers at a 50 per cent subsidy.

Farmers' associations will also be given assistance for cultivation of open-pollinated and hybrid vegetable crops over 600 and 500 hectares, respectively, he added.

“A baseline survey has been conducted to identify the potential cluster of vegetables on the basis of which farmers shall be encouraged to form groups.

The Horticulture Department has already given wide publicity to this scheme and 250 farmers' groups have already been formed,” he added. - PTI

-
- *Farmers groups to sell produce directly to consumers, manage input requirements*
 - *To grow hybrid, open-pollinated vegetable crops in the open and poly houses*
-

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Thu, Dec 08, 2011 | Updated 09.36AM IST

8 DEC, 2011, 07.54AM IST, JAYASHREE BHOSALE, ET BUREAU

Wholesale onion prices slide in Maharashtra

PUNE: The wholesale onion prices at the major APMCs in Maharashtra have declined by about Rs 2/kg during the last week due to the increased supply of new as well as stored onions. The downward trend in prices is happening despite the Centre lowering the minimum export price (MEP) to \$250/tonne just over a week ago. On November 28, the average onion prices in Lasalgaon, Pimpalgaon and Pune were Rs 900/quintal.

Since then, the prices have come down by more than Rs 2/kg at Lasalgaon mundi as the arrival is gradually picking up. On Wednesday, the average onion price at Lasalgaon was Rs 7/kg. Similarly, at the Pimpalgaon APMC in Nashik district, the prices have decreased by Rs 2/kg during the last one week. The government had consistently discouraged onion exports this year by keeping a very high MEP.

As a result, there was a good stock of stored onions. Farmers had to sell the stored onions at a throw away price due to quality deterioration. Many farmers had lost half of their stored produce due to rotting. RP Gupta, president of the National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF), said: "The government will have to monitor onion prices closely as they have declined even after reducing the MEP to \$250/tonne. If the prices come down further in the second and third weeks of December (at a time when the arrivals increase), the MEP will have to be lowered immediately in order to stabilise the domestic prices."

Coffee output likely to rise 6.7% on good harvest

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai December 08, 2011, 0:33 IST

Coffee output in India is estimated to rise 6.7 per cent this year, due to a favourable climate in major producing states.

Data compiled by the Coffee Board showed the post-blossom crop may yield 322,250 tonnes of output for 2011-12, an increase from the post-harvest final production of 302,000 tonnes last year.

Jawaid Akhtar, chairman, Coffee Board, said carryover moisture from previous rainfalls helped the crop grow. Of the total estimate, Arabica output is likely to be 104,525 tonnes, a rise of 10,385 tonnes or 11 per cent from the previous year. The production of Robusta is estimated at 217,725 tonnes, growth of 4.75 per cent from the previous year.

In the states, the production gain may come mainly from Karnataka, of 69 per cent (13,895 tonnes), followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu and non-traditional areas. In Karnataka, all the three producing districts are expected to show an increase in output.

Well distributed rainfall during last year helped moisture retention for a longer period, helping produce more bearing wood for the crop. Further, the blossom and backing showers are reported to be normal in almost all the growing zones of Karnataka, though certain pockets experienced deficient rainfall. Good weather and crop condition and relatively stable prices encouraged better husbandry practices. The forecast for Karnataka is placed at 82,250 tonnes of Arabica and 145,425 tonnes of Robusta, totaling 227,675 tonnes.

Kerala's coffee zones have also received adequate and timely blossom and backing showers. No adverse effect on crop was reported in the growing districts.

Post-blossom estimates for 2011-12 is placed at 69,125 tonnes, an increase of 5.3 per cent (3,475 tonnes) over the previous year's final estimate. Similarly, Tamil Nadu may show an increase in crop of 1,890 tonnes during the current season, mainly because of the biennial bearing nature of Arabica, as last year was an off-year.

Blossom and backing showers were reported to be normal, resulting in an increase in crop. The post-blossom forecast of Tamil Nadu is placed at 18,540 tonnes, up by 11.3 per cent over last year's 16,650 tonnes.

In the non-traditional areas of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and the northeast, the post-blossom forecast is placed at 6,910 tonnes, against the earlier one 5,920 tonnes. The higher forecast may come mainly from Andhra Pradesh, followed by Orissa.

Akhtar said the consumption of coffee in the non-south regions had grown phenomenally, with that in the northern states rising by 40 per cent. He called for strategic value addition to create more jobs in this sector.

Announcing a three-day India International Coffee Festival to be held between January 18 and 20, 2012, Anil Bhandari, president of India Coffee Trust said, "The festival will be an opportunity for the industry to unveil outstanding coffees and blends, apart from showcasing cutting-edge products and services of every aspect of the industry."

Sugar mills' case put on fast track

Sanjay Jog / Mumbai December 8, 2011, 0:31 IST

Daily hearing on challenge to UP government's state advised price; millers hope for early interim relief.

The Allahabad High Court has agreed to give a daily hearing in the petition filed against the Uttar Pradesh government's methodology in fixing the sugarcane prices to be paid to growers by sugar mills.

The petition was filed by the Indian Sugar Mills Association (Isma) in mid-November, challenging the 20 per cent rise allowed by the state government. The state had fixed the State Advised Price (SAP), the statutory minimum amount to be paid to farmers for cane

procurement, at Rs 240 a quintal for the early variety and Rs 250 a quintal for the late variety — a substantial rise from Rs 205 a quintal and Rs 210 a quintal, respectively, from last year.

“We are of the view that mills in the state will get some interim relief, as granted by the same court in 2006-07. Since the price of sugar in the spot market stands lower than the estimated cost of production, mills will suffer badly if they continue crushing for this season,” said a senior company official.

A similar case was filed in 2006-07, when the state government had raised the SAP to Rs 125 a quintal from Rs 105 a quintal the previous year. The HC in that case had allowed mills to pay a minimum of Rs 110 a quintal.

According to trade sources, many mills have deferred the start of cane crushing, due to the uncertainty on prices.

“With the massive hike in cane prices and general increase in other inputs, our cost of production in UP in 2011-12 is estimated to be Rs 33-34 a kg, while that in Maharashtra is expected at Rs 29-30 a kg. Hence, ex-mill prices should be allowed by the government to stabilise at these levels. Anything less would mean losses to mills and cane price arrears by January 2012 itself,” said Abinash Verma, secretary-general of Isma.

In the past four days, sugar prices have fallen to Rs 2,775 a quintal from Rs 3,000 a quintal. The rise during last week was largely due to the higher cane prices announced in UP and Mahara-shtra, the major producing states. They fell after declaration of a non-levy quota of 1.7 million tonnes announced for December by the central government. This, millers and traders say, is causing panic. They fear a further fall.

Yogesh Pande, founder-president of the Maharashtra Sugar Traders, said sugar was the most controlled commodity, wherein prices of all raw materials, levy sugar and quota for sale in the open market for each month were all decided by the government. “Therefore, there is a case for fixing a minimum assured price for sugar, which will ensure long-term stability in open market prices,” he said.

Overall sugar output in India is estimated this season at 25.5 mt, as against 24.2 mt last year. With an estimated carryover stock of nearly five mt, total supply works out to nearly seven mt

higher than the estimated consumption of 22.5 mt, says Isma.

Natural rubber supply to fall 5.6% this year

George Joseph / Kochi December 08, 2011, 0:36 IST

The latest estimates of demand and supply of natural rubber (NR) by the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC) show the supply would be 5.6 per cent low in 2011 and 3.6 per cent in 2012.

The revised outlook suggests the total supply this year (January-December) will rise to 10.02 million tonnes (mt), up 5.6 per cent, but lower than the six per cent rate previously expected.

Early estimates by ANRPC indicate the price fall had started impacting the supply of the commodity. The global price of RSS-4 grade fell to Rs 174-175 a kg from Rs 185 a kg a month back. The average price in September was Rs 205 a kg. The decreasing trend in price is expected to affect the production of rubber. The total supply from member-countries of the ANRPC, which grew annually at 10.6 per cent in the first quarter and 10.7 per cent in the second, has slowed to 2.5 per cent in Q3, and is expected to do so further to 0.6 per cent in Q4.

ANRPC noted the supply of NR in the last quarter of 2010 was significantly down, and the forecast for the equivalent period in 2011 was only marginally above the reduced figure. The crisis in the euro zone has seriously affected output in most producing countries. ANRPC also estimates a three per cent fall in exports during October-December.

NR production increased five per cent during April-October. Total production increased to 480,700 tonnes as against 457,650 tonnes in the same period of last year. While consumption increased to 551,425 tonnes as against 550,230 tonnes, the gap between production and consumption is likely to touch 150,000 tonnes.



Cold in Himachal brings cheer to fruit growers

WEDNESDAY, 07 DECEMBER 2011 23:02

PNS | SHIMLA

With widespread rains, winter tightened its grip on Himachal Pradesh. The middle and low hills witnessed chilly conditions while it snowed in the higher reaches, the officials of Met department said here.

Rains after a gap of over one-and-a-half months have brought cheer to the fruit growers, mainly those cultivating apples. Cold conditions and snow are important for the crop.

Keylong was the coldest town at a minimum temperature of 1.1 degrees Celsius.

Kalpa in Kinnaur district saw a low of 0.7 degrees, while the temperature was 5.6 degrees in Manali, and 7.1 degrees in Dharamsala, a Met department release said.

Shimla recorded a minimum of 5.6 degrees, a slight fall from Tuesday's 7.2 degrees. The town saw 5.8 mm of rain.

A horticulture expert at Solan-based YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry said that apple, peach, plum, apricot and almond crops have now got some reprieve from the prolonged dry spell.

He said negligible rains or the total lack of it in most fruit-growing areas of the State from October had reduced the moisture content in the soil.

The Met office said clouds would hover across the State till on December 9 with a mild spell of rain or snow in some parts of the State.

THE HINDU Business Line

Cotton cultivation in new areas dragging yield

M.R. Subramani

'Some farmers don't have the experience to grow the fibre crop'

ACREAGE AND YIELD*												
State	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12	
	Area	Yield	Area	Yield	Area	Yield	Area	Yield	Area	Yield	Area	Yield
Punjab	6.07	672	6.04	563	5.77	566	5.11	474	5.3	513	5.60	516
Haryana	5.3	481	4.83	578	4.56	527	5.07	495	4.95	484	6.05	450
Rajasthan	3.5	437	3.66	415	3.02	422	4.44	421	3.35	457	5.30	481
Gujarat	73.9	733	74.72	777	73.54	650	76.25	635	76.33	665	70.73	647
Maharashtra	31.07	274	31.95	330	31.42	335	35.03	306	39.73	355	40.95	353
Madhya Pradesh	6.39	505	6.3	540	6.25	490	6.11	417	6.53	445	7.05	433
Andhra Pradesh	9.72	630	11.33	690	13.99	644	14.75	599	17.76	505	18.54	504
Karnataka	3.78	270	4.03	337	4.08	375	4.55	336	5.34	312	5.49	434
Tamil Nadu	1.00	890	0.99	687	1.09	780	1.04	817	1.3	687	1.21	732
Orissa	0.71	739	0.76	224	0.84	405	0.54	315	0.75	439	1.02	333
All-India	91.44	521	94.14	554	94.06	524	103.80	486	110.61	476	121.91	496

*Area in lakh hectares; yield in kg lint/hectare
Source: Cotton Corporation of India

Chennai, Dec. 7:

Cotton yield in the country seems to be on a downswing in the last three years, despite production set to scale a new peak this season that began in October.

The yield per hectare hit a record 554 kg in 2007-08. Since then, it has been dropping, touching 486 kg/hectare in 2009-10 before rising to 496 kg/hectare last season. This season, too, the yield is expected to be around the same level.

What are the reasons for the fall in yield? Is it because the Bt strains and hybrids, that account for nearly 95 per cent of the total area under cotton, are losing their strength?

Cotton research scientists have a different take on the drop in yield.

“In the last two years, cotton has been grown in new areas where it has never been grown before. It is fine to reach 100 lakh hectares, but it is not desirable to reach 200 lakh hectares,” said Dr C.D. Mayee, President of Indian Society for Cotton Improvement.

Area under cotton has touched a record 121.91 lakh hectares (lh) this year. When the yield hit a record 554 kg/hectare in 2007-08, the area under cotton was 94.14 lh.

“The problem with growing cotton in non-traditional areas is that the productivity is low,” said Dr Mayee.

Scientists point out to Maharashtra as an example of more new areas coming under cotton.

“Some farmers in Maharashtra have taken to cotton farming without the requisite experience. It is one of the reasons for some committing suicide,” said a Maharashtra official.

Since January, 704 farmers have reportedly committed suicide in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

“Growing cotton in areas where it has never been sown is a problem since it could be rain-fed. This year, rainfall has been erratic and it has affected cotton,” said the official.

Area under cotton in Maharashtra has increased 40.95 lh this year, up 25 per cent in the last three years.

Similarly, the area in Gujarat has increased nearly 20 per cent during the same period to 30.23 lh this year.

Gujarat's yield this year is projected at 647 kg/hectare against a peak of 772 kg/hectare registered in 2007-08 with total area under the fibre then being 24.22 lh.

Same is the case with States such as Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, though the picture is different in Rajasthan and Karnataka (See Table).

Fighting pests

With farmers shifting to Bollgard II that is supposed to be superior to Bollgard I in yield as well as fighting pests, scientists' view may not be off the mark.

Though over half a dozen pests, including sucking pests, leaf curl virus and jassids, are creating problems in cotton, their influence on production is minimum.

“Pests problems exist in cotton but they are not at levels that threaten production” said Ms Sandhya Kranti in a presentation at the Global Cotton Research Conference in Mumbai last month. Scientists also rule out any effect of Bt cotton on the soil and thereby leading to drop in yield.

Bt cotton accounts for 56 per cent of the total area under the crop in Gujarat, while it is 98 per cent in Andhra Pradesh.

It is over 90 per cent in Punjab, Haryana and Maharashtra.

The GM variety makes up 75 per cent and 65 per cent of the total area in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, respectively.

Yields rebound

A scrutiny of data shows that yield in Punjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu rebounding, while dropping in other States.

According to Dr Zahoor Ahmad of Four Brothers Seed Corporation in Pakistan, cotton yield has almost doubled with the introduction of Bt cotton in the last two years. "Drop in yield is not due to Bt cotton," he said.

The problem with the yield is that pulses and soyabean farmers have gone in for cotton.

The growing conditions are different for these crops and that's why the yield is dropping, according to research scientists.

mrsbramani@thehindu.co.in

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

Volume hits 4-week low at Coonoor tea auction

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, Dec. 7:

A volume of 14.23 lakh kg will be offered at sale no: 49 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions to be held tomorrow and Friday, reveals an analysis of brokers' listing.

It is the lowest volume of the last four weeks. It is as much as 3.08 lakh kg less than last week's offer but 1.23 lakh kg more than the offer this time last year.

Of the 14.23 lakh kg on offer, 10.34 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 3.89 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 13.25 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.98 lakh kg, orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 0.53 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 9.81 lakh kg, CTC.

Among the dusts, only 0.45 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 3.44 lakh kg, CTC.

In the 14.23 lakh kg, fresh teas account for 11.75 lakh kg. As much as 2.48 lakh kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

Spot rubber gains a tad

Aravindan

Kottayam, Dec. 7:

Domestic rubber prices made moderate gains on Wednesday. In spot, the prices firmed up in tune with the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

According to observers, sellers stayed back on higher expectations as the market rose above the Rs 200-mark once again. In the international scene, natural rubber was seen rising tracking the gains in crude oil and on assumptions that China might initiate purchases ahead of their New Year which falls on January 2012. Sheet rubber improved to Rs 205 (202) a kg, according to traders. The grade closed firm at Rs 204 (201.50) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to Rubber Board.

The December series increased to Rs 206.10 (204.54) on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) bounced back to Rs 177.60 (175.26) a kg at Bangkok. The December futures for RSS 3 firmed up to ₹268.4 (Rs 178.04) from ₹272 during the day session and then to ₹272 (Rs 180.41) a kg in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 205 (202); RSS-5: 200 (198); ungraded: 195 (192); ISNR 20: 190 (187) and latex 60 per cent: 110 (110).

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

Special grant of Rs 200/tonne for sugarcane farmers

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, Dec. 7:

Here's some sweet news for sugarcane farmers in Andhra Pradesh. The State Government has announced a special grant of Rs 200 a tonne of cane for farmers under nine cooperative sugar factories.

Mr N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, has sanctioned Rs 50 crore for this purpose.

Talking to sugarcane farmers here on Wednesday at his office, he said the Government was working on a comprehensive five-year package for the sugarcane sector. "We are in the

process of getting inputs from experts in the industry. This plan will help all stakeholders. It would assign specific roles for factory management, the Government and farmers,” he said.

CO-GENERATION

“The Government would encourage factories to go for co-generation, chemical production and other value added products to enhance value for factories and farmers. “I have so far sanctioned Rs 96 crore for the industry after I assumed the charge,” he said.

He said the Government would increase the capacity of bulk milk cooling units in Chittoor district as procurement by Indira Kranthi Patham (or the World Bank funded Velugu scheme) members to 5 lakh litres from the present 3 lakh litres.

kurmanath@thehindu.co.in

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

Coffee Board projects lower exports this season

Our Bureau

New Delhi, Dec. 7:

Coffee exports for the current financial year may fall to 2.4-2.5 lakh tonnes from 2.94 lakh tonnes in the previous year, said Coffee Board Chairman, Mr Jawaid Akhtar.

The projected decline of 15-18 per cent is mainly on account of sluggish demand from the financial crisis hit Europe, a key destination for about two thirds of Indian exports.

“Last year was an exceptional year for exports and it is difficult to achieve that this year,” Mr Akhtar told reporters on the sidelines of launch of India International Coffee Festival, 2012. The Board has renewed its initiatives to boost exports to Japan and South Korea, sensing a huge potential in the Asian nations, Mr Akhtar said.

Exports for the April-December period have grown by 17 per cent to 2.30 lakh tonnes as against 1.97 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period previous year.

The Coffee Board has estimated the 2011-12 crop size at 3.21 lakh tonnes as against 3.012 lakh tonnes in the previous year, primarily led by a 10 per cent increase in the Arabica variety, Mr Akhtar.

Arabica production is expected to be 1.04 lakh tonnes in 2011-12 as against 94,000 tonnes in the previous year. The Robusta output is projected to grow by 5 per cent to 2.17 lakh tonnes as against 2.07 lakh tonnes in the previous year.

The crop this year is backed by good rains across the main growing regions of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Besides, the expansion of crop in non-traditional areas of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa is adding up to the output, he said.

vishwa@thehindu.co.in

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

Arrivals from other States drag coconut oil

C.J. Punnathara



Kochi Dec. 7:

Coconut oil prices eased in Tamil Nadu and Kerala on account of increased arrivals of raw coconut and copra from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. There is hardly any consumptive demand for coconut oil from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and the surplus production is flowing into Tamil Nadu for conversion into copra and coconut oil.

There is virtual panic in the market as there are no takers for the high arrivals, Mr Prakash B. Rao, Vice-President of the Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), said. And sellers from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are desperate to sell their stock and exit the market. This has led to sellers outnumbering buyers in coconut oil market, especially in Tamil Nadu markets.

Seeing the surfeit arrivals, big corporate buyers are also increasingly keeping away from the market, watching as the prices fall, sources in the trade said. Coconut oil prices have fallen to

Rs 75 a kg in Tamil Nadu's wholesale markets, while it quoted at Rs 80 a kg in Kerala. Correspondingly, copra prices have fallen to Rs 52 in Tamil Nadu and Rs 54 in Kerala's wholesale market.

However, sources in the trade said that prices are unlikely to maintain the lows, as even the current prices are likely to stimulate demand. Secondly, the arrivals from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are a seasonal one-off phenomenon that is not likely to last. Also, the case of coconut oil price-fall is in sharp contrast with the rest of the market where edible oil prices have begun to look up.

Prices of competing edible oils such as palm oil have spurted smartly from Rs 58 to Rs 64 a kg in wholesale markets even as palm kernel oil prices rallied to Rs 70 a kg. Given the price surge in competing edible oils and the imminent throttling of supply channels, sources said that coconut oil price recovery could be imminent any moment.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

Chana futures seen firm despite carryover stocks

Our Correspondent



Indore, Dec. 7:

Chana (kanta) remained range-bound on subdued demand in local *mandis* at Rs 3,300-3,325 a quintal on Wednesday even as futures rose on speculation on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange. Chana (desi) sold at Rs 3,225 a quintal.

Chana futures are unlikely to fall substantially in the near future despite carryover stocks, said Mr Sanjay Agrawal, a chana trader.

Chana dal (average) was unchanged at Rs 4,000-4,025 (Rs 3,950-3,975), chana dal (medium) rose to Rs 4,100-4,125, and chana dal (bold) fetched Rs 4,225-4,250 (Rs 4,175-4,200).

. In local *mandis*, dollar chana (best quality) was firm at Rs 7,800-8,100 a quintal, with about 700-800 bags being offloaded. Masoor was firm on buying support, with masoor (bold) being quoted at Rs 2,825-2,850 (Rs 2,800-2,825) and masoor (medium) at Rs 2,550. Masoor dal was unchanged, with masoor dal (average) at Rs 3,150-3,175, masoor dal (medium) at Rs 3,275-3,300 and masoor dal (bold) at Rs 3,400-3,425.

Tur was unchanged despite subdued demand, with Tur (Maharashtra) at 3,550 and tur (Nimari) at Rs 2,300-2,600. Tur dal was unchanged, too, with tur dal (full) quoting at Rs 5,500-5,600.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

New export contracts keep rice steady

Our Correspondent



Karnal, Dec. 7:

The rice market ruled steady with prices remaining unchanged in the domestic market on Wednesday.

Mr Tara Chand Sharma, Proprietor of Tara Chand and Sons, told *Business Line* that a few new export contracts of Pusa-1121 and pure basmati rice for exports kept prices firm, while non-basmati varieties managed to maintain their previous levels.

Following some payments and qualities issues, very few export contracts of aromatic varieties have been signed till date, he added.

New export contracts of Pusa-1121 (sela) have been signed at the levels of Rs 3,350 a quintal, while the contracts of pure basmati were around Rs 3,750 a quintal, said Mr Sharma. Pusa-1121 (steam) ruled around Rs 4,300 a quintal, while Pusa-1121 (sela) was at Rs 3,440 a quintal. Among the brokens of Pusa-1121, Tibar sold at Rs 3,100, Dubar at Rs 2,850, while Mongra was trading at Rs 2,150 a quintal. Pure basmati (raw) sold at Rs 4,500 a quintal, while basmati (sela) sold around Rs 3,500 a quintal. Sharbati (steam) quoted around Rs 2,900, while the Sharbati (Sela) was between Rs 2,750 and Rs 2,800 a quintal. PR-11 (sela) sold at Rs 2,100-2,250 a quintal, while PR-11 (raw) quoted at Rs 1,900-2,200 a quintal. Permal (sela) sold at Rs 1,800-1,970 a quintal, while Permal (raw) was around Rs 1,900-1,950 a quintal.

Paddy Arrivals

Around 40,000 bags of paddy varieties arrived at the Karnal grain market terminal. Around 10,000 bags of PR arrived and sold at Rs 1,000-1,050. About 5,000 bags of DB variety arrived and sold at Rs 1,350-1,500, while 2,000 bags of Sugandha-999 arrived and sold for Rs 1,350-1,400. Around 15,000 bags of Pusa-1121 arrived and sold at Rs 1,600-1,780 a quintal, while around 5,000 bags of pure basmati arrived and sold at Rs 1,750-1,780 a quintal.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

Fears of further fall pound sugar

Our Correspondent



Mumbai, Dec. 7:

Sugar prices extended their fall on Wednesday with buyers staying off on fears of further drop in prices. In Uttar Pradesh (central), sugar produced last season that ended in September was quoted at Rs 2,955 a quintal against Rs 2,980 in the previous session. Sugar produced this season was down at Rs 3,060 (Rs 3,070). "There is just normal demand. Some transactions are taking place but in general, buyers are keeping off fearing there could be further fall," said a trading source.

In Maharashtra, prices on the Vashi wholesale spot market dropped — S-grade by Rs 10-15 and M-grade by Rs 20-25. Price ruled weak under more selling pressure. Tender rates lost Rs 10-15. Despite month beginning, local demand was at usual level. Naka rates declined Rs 10–20 a quintal tracking weak sentiment at upper level. Sources said despite higher demand, the under tone was weak due to expectation that the demand may ease from next week.

At Vashi market, on Tuesday evening, 18-20 mills sold about 50,000–55,000 bags in the range of Rs 2,900-2,980 (Rs 2,905-2,990) for S-grade and Rs 2,990-3,050 (Rs 3,000-3,050) for M-grade. Arrivals in Vashi market were higher 54-55 truckloads and local dispatches were around 52-53 truckloads.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates : S-grade — Rs 3,036-3,171 (Rs 3,052-3,181); and M-grade — Rs 3,151-3,261 (Rs 3,180-3,271).

Naka delivery rates : S-grade — Rs 3,000-3,030 (Rs 3,000-3,040); and M-grade — Rs 3,100-3,150 (Rs 3,100-3,170).

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)

Turmeric declines on flooding inflow

Our Correspondent



Erode, Dec. 7:

Spot turmeric prices dropped by Rs 300 a quintal on Wednesday on heavy arrivals and lack of demand.

“Due to arrival of 15,000 plus bags of turmeric, prices fell. Further, there was no demand from north Indian merchants. Sales were moderate,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants' Association.

He said usually during December, only 4,000-5,000 bags will arrive to the market. But in contrast, over 15,000 bags arrived for sale, three times higher than normal.

Most of the turmeric farmers are ready to accept loss, as the new crop will arrive by this month-end or January beginning.

Turmeric growers said they are having over 11 lakh (roughly 1.10 lakh tonnes) bags of turmeric with them. They expected that at least one lakh bags would be sold before the end of January and are ready to keep remaining 10 lakh bags of turmeric (one lakh tonnes) with them till 2013.

They said they are ready to keep such a huge stock for two years, as they earned good profit the last year. At the Erode turmeric Merchants' Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,109-4,295 a quintal, the root variety Rs 3,009- 3,969.

Salem Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 4,398-4,899, the root variety Rs 4,011-4,399. Of 4,052 bags that arrived, 829 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,769-4,456, the root variety Rs 3,569-4,189. All the 354 bags that arrived for sales were sold. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,849-4,222, the root variety Rs 3,699-4,229. Of 1,585 bags kept for sales, 1,341 were sold. At the Regulated Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,899-4,230, the root variety Rs 3,809-4,189. About 1,574 bags of turmeric were sold as against the arrival of 1,894.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 8, 2011)