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Swaminathan: document indigenous climate-resilient farming knowledge



M.S.Swaminathan

CHENNAI: Agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan called on Wednesday for documenting indigenous farming knowledge which coped with monsoon vagaries.

In earlier days when there was no irrigation, farmers were prepared for floods and droughts.

The climate-resilient farming was a way of life in those days, and people went in for mixed cropping.

Dr. Swaminathan said a publication could be brought out on procedures adopted by farmers and how effective they were in coping with climate swings, he said.

Addressing a symposium on climate change at the 98th Indian Science Congress at Kattankulathur near here, he pointed out that 127 agro-climatic zones had been identified

in the country based on the cropping and weather factors.

Dr. Swaminathan, who is also chairperson of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, urged that climate risk management research and training centres be set up in each zone. Through the centres, alternative cropping strategies and methods of checking potential adverse conditions should be developed.

Highlighting the need for training people to tackle the climate change impact, he said that through an initiative of the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences, a training programme for local body representatives had been undertaken. So far, three workshops, covering 70 representatives of panchayats in Tamil Nadu, were held. He wanted the area along the Indira Gandhi Canal in Rajasthan declared a special economic zone and suggested that those involved in water bodies' protection through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme be given the water security saviour award.

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Batfish, Razor fish and Frog crab rediscovered

K.S. Sudhi

In the Bay of Bengal after over a century

- PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



The Deep Sea Smoky Batfish seen at left; and the Frog Crab.

KOCHI: Three unique marine organisms, Deep Sea Smoky Batfish, Grooved Razor fish and Frog crab, have been re-recorded from Indian waters after a gap of over a century.

Cruises on board ocean research vessel 'Sagar Sampda' in the Bay of Bengal yielded the species. The specimens were collected off the Andhra Pradesh coast during the cruises held between August and September 2009. It took over a year for the identification and validation of the species, scientists of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute here said.

The Batfish was first described by Alfred William Alcock in 1894 after it was spotted in the Bay of Bengal following surveys conducted on board 'Investigator,' the Royal Indian Marine Survey Ship. The samples were obtained from a depth ranging from 265 metres to 457 metres.

The recent collection of the species came off Tamarapatnam at a depth of 100 metres and after 116 years of its identification, said scientists E. Vivekanandan and R. Jeyabaskaran. Of the nine Bat fish species available worldwide, four have been reported in India. These species mainly feed on molluscs, marine worms, small crustaceans and occasionally small fishes. Batfishes are mostly found in the Indo-West Pacific, South Africa, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, Taiwan and China.

Razor fish, also known as shrimpfish and Pipette feeders, was first reported in India from the Gulf of Mannar by renowned fisheries expert Francis Day in 1878. The rediscovery was from the area off Singarayakonda from a depth of 30 metres. These fish varieties are generally found in coral reefs. The presence of the species in Singarayakonda may be an indication of the possible presence of coral reefs, they said. The species are mostly found in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. So far, only two species are known to science.

Odd bodies

The body of these species — almost transparent and flattened from side to side — is silvery in colour and has a dark lateral band from head to tail. They have long snouts and sharp-edged belly. The fishes, which generally inhabit muddy bottoms, seek refuge among coral branches or the spines of long-spined sea urchins, researchers said.

Unlike other fishes, they swim vertically and in a synchronised manner with its snout pointing downwards. They feed on small benthic invertebrates, mainly crustaceans. Razor fishes are not used as food, but collected by aquarium hobbyists.

The Frog crab was first described by B. Chopra, former director of the Zoological Survey of India, in 1933 based on a single specimen collected from the Andaman Sea in 1898. The recent find of four specimens were from an area off Tamarapatnam at a depth of 100 metres. The rediscovery came after a gap of 120 years. The species got its name from its general appearance and posture. The crab rests on the seabed with its anterior end raised as if resting on the claws. So far, 11 species have been identified, including the three from India, they said.

Exploration

The rediscoveries were, perhaps, due to the exploration of new grounds in the sea. More efforts in this direction may yield several other interesting specimens, said Dr.

Vivekanandan. The rediscoveries also indicated the availability and status of these species in the Indian waters, he added.

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Villagers settle down in dry irrigation tank

Staff Reporter

In protest against delay in arresting 15 persons



Demanding action:Vijaya Achchampaadu villagers settle down in a dry irrigation tank.

TIRUNELVELI: Residents of Vijaya Achchampaadu villagers near Thisaiyanvilai in the district left their village to settle down in a nearby irrigation tank seeking the arrest of 15 persons, who had damaged a digital flex board kept in view of death anniversary of former Chief Minister K. Kamaraj and garlands placed on his statue on October 2.

The protest was withdrawn after eight hours on Wednesday following the talks conducted by two senior police officers.

A rift between Dalits and caste Hindus of the village developed following a kabaddi match between youths of these two groups a few months ago and case under Protection of Civil Rights Act was registered against 13 youths including two students, who were arrested later while 11 others surrendered before the court.

Against this backdrop, the digital flex board erected in connection with death anniversary of Kamaraj was found damaged and the garland put on the leader's statue was ripped apart. Though a police complaint was given immediately after the incident, the case was registered on October 8 against 15 Dalits. However, nobody was arrested.

Condemning the delay in arresting the "culprits" involved in damaging the flex board and registration of case against the caste Hindus under PCR Act, they left their village on Wednesday to settle down inside the Ilangaiyaadi tank on Tiruchendur – Ittamozhi Road and prepared their lunch there.

Peace talks

Additional Superintendent of Police Pugazhenthai, Valliyoor Deputy Superintendent of Police Arumugam and Nanguneri Tahsildar Kathiresan held talks with the villagers, who agreed to give up their stir following the assurance given by the police that direct reconciliatory talks between the caste Hindus and Dalits would be held on a day between January 18 and 22 to facilitate withdrawal of cases filed on the youths of both sides.

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Namakkal egg price soars

M.K. Ananth



Eggs kept at a godown in Namakkal district.

Namakkal: An intensive cold wave in the northern part of the country that has increased the egg intake has triggered the price of egg to Rs. 2.91 in Namakkal on Wednesday, the highest price ever scaled in the egg production hub.

Sources from the National National Egg Co-Ordination Committee (NECC) said that the previous highest price was around 288 and 289 paise about six months ago.

President of the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers Association R. Nalla Thambi said that the consumption of the north Indian States has increased by an average five per cent from the usual 10 to 15 percent to 20 percent of the district's daily production of three crore eggs, since the third week of December.

Noting that Tamil Nadu was no exception to escape the cold wave, he said that the prevailing weather has brought down the production by five percent (more than 15 lakh eggs a day) over the last three weeks.

“Meanwhile, the consumption of the State's local market has also considerably increased, thanks to the exorbitant price hike of vegetables,” he said.

He pointed out that schoolchildren under the State government's Nutritious Meal Scheme account for consumption of 70 lakh eggs a day. Kerala with 40 per cent consumption, north India (20) and export (10) have a major share of the market while the rest is consumed by the State's local market. Foreseeing that the cold wave in the north could extend till February, he felt that there were minimal chances for drastic change in the prices. "It could either stand around the same price or increase by a paisa or two, based on the consumption and production graph," he added.

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More facilities for sericulture farmers

Minimum support price for cocoons assured



DISCUSSION:S. Dhanabalan, Deputy Director, Department of Sericulture, Madurai zone, addressing a programme at Nochiodaipatti near Dindigul on Wednesday.

DINDIGUL: Sericulture farmers would get more facilities, including minimum support price for cocoons and financial and technical assistance for advanced cocoon production soon as the State Government sent proposals to the tune of Rs.11.6 crore under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, said S. Dhanabalan, Deputy Director, Department of Sericulture, Madurai zone.

He was presiding over a sericulture enlightenment programme organised by the Central

Silk Board at Nochiodaipatti near here on Wednesday.

The Centre has plans to offer minimum support price for cocoons. Area-specific programmes for sericulture for every district were also under progress. Offering farm equipment, popularising bio-control measures, subsidy for bio-fertilisers, disinfecting rearing cell and farm mechanisation were some major components of this programme, he added.

About 8,277 acres was under sericulture cultivation engaging 3,820 farmers in nine southern districts. The department had disbursed 14.89 lakh of layings, including 7.45 lakh bivoltine varieties to farmers. Production of cocoon was 4.44 lakh kg in the zone so far, he added.

Efforts were on to revive local reeling industries for utilisation of cocoon production within the district. Dindigul topped in the zone in bivoltine cocoon production, he added.

In his special address, Central Sericulture Research Station Scientist, D. R. Balakrishna said full adoption of standardised technologies, including disinfecting rearing house and pruning, was essential to get better cocoon yield. Wider spacing, removal of weak shoot, drip irrigation and mechanisation were major technologies for mulberry cultivation.

With standardisation of technologies, production of cocoon per 100 layings went up to 1,000 kg from just 60 kg, a decade ago.

Tamil Nadu had been producing 25 per cent of the country's total bivoltine cocoon production. Bivoltine cocoon production was just two per cent one decade ago.

Good quality single a cocoon should weigh two grams. At present, weight of cocoon was one or 1.2 grams only. Low weight cocoons would not fetch better price. Production of good mulberry leaves was essential for better yield. Feeding of mulberry leaf, each weighing around five grams, would help produce two-gram cocoon.

Praising the excellent soil condition and ideal climate at Sanarpatti union, adoption standard technologies would enhance the profit of farmers of this area, he added.

Sericulture Assistant Director, C. Sivasamy said demand for silk yarn was 25,000 tonnes

whereas production was 15,000 tonnes only. Root rotting and labour shortage hit mulberry cultivation, said farmers.

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Farmers urged to take up bamboo cultivation

Special Correspondent

537 acres in Tiruchi district covered

TIRUCHI: Bamboo has been raised in about 537 acres in Tiruchi district after providing training to farmers under the National Bamboo Mission so far, said J.Sekar, Joint Director of Agriculture, here on Wednesday.

Inaugurating a seminar on bamboo cultivation for farmers here, Mr.Sekar said bamboo cultivation was being promoted in the district under the National Bamboo Mission in 2008.

Farmers in Thuraiyur, Upilliyapuram, Thottiyam, Musiri, Lalgudi, Manachanallur, Pullampadi, Andhanallur and Tiruverambur taluks have been trained under the programme in raising the crop commercially. Bamboo, he observed, was a part of Indian culture and tradition. It was being used extensively across the country for various products.

The world market for bamboo products was estimated to rise up to US \$20 billion by 2015.

The market for bamboo products in India was also expected to grow exponentially, Mr.Sekar said and appealed to farmers to exploit the potential offered by bamboo cultivation.

T.Chandrasekaran, deputy director, Horticulture, said bamboo was a long term crop which would provide continuous yield up to 60 years. Farmers can start harvesting bamboo from four to six years after planting. More and more value added products were being made out of bamboo, he said.

K.K.Suresh, Head, Department of Silviculture, Forest College and Research Institute, Mettupalayam, elaborated on the bamboo varieties suitable for cultivation in the district. M.Kaliyaperumal, Forestry Extension Officer, Thuhili Subramanian, president, Radio Farmers Forum, and progressive farmers spoke.

Over 150 farmers participated in the seminar. M.Subbiah, Assistant Director, Horticulture, and others spoke.

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Increase in vegetable prices eats into family budget

K. Lakshmi

CHENNAI: The runaway increase in the prices of vegetables over the past few months has put constraints on household budgets.

With the cost of many staple vegetables continuing to soar, residents have begun cutting down on quantity of purchase. The cost of onions, which touched Rs.100 a kg last month, was sold at Rs.70 a kg in retail markets on Tuesday. The price that had dropped to Rs.40 a week ago, has shot up again as the supply to the Koyambedu market has decreased.

S.Chandran, a wholesale trader, said the Koyambedu market received only half the supply of onions from Maharashtra. "We are managing with the supply from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. It will take two months for the prices to stabilise," he said.

Customers are forced to carefully prepare their budget in order to cope with the rising prices. B. Anuradha, a resident of Ayanavaram, said: "The prices of vegetables are shockingly high. Many vegetables such as beans, carrots and tomatoes are priced around Rs.50 a kg. I have to shell out Rs.150 to buy vegetables that we require for three days. That used to be my weekly budget for vegetables until a year ago."

Some customers such as V.Sowmya of Vadapalani have started shopping for vegetables at the Koyambedu wholesale market instead of the neighbouring retail shop. "The vegetables being sold at Koyambedu are relatively cheap. Since the money spent on vegetables has gone up significantly I consciously cut down other expenses," she said.

Wholesale traders at Koyambedu said the cost of vegetables has witnessed a steady increase since last year. On Tuesday, drumsticks were sold at Rs.80 a kg in the wholesale market and Rs.100 a kg in retail shops.

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Training in rearing desi chicken

Special Correspondent

TIRUCHI: About 25 farmers from Vaiyampatti were given hands-on-training in hatching desi chicken eggs through incubators. Rearing desi chicken in specially designed cages is promoted for generating additional revenue in villages.

The training programme was organised by the Training and Research Centre of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), here recently.

The training was imparted by Gomathy Thangam, assistant director of agriculture, Vaiyampatti under ATMA. The trainees were shown hatching techniques and rearing methods in the custom-built hatching units kept at the centre for instructional purpose.

M.Babu, Professor and Head of the Training and Research Centre of the TANUVAS, T.Lurthu Reetha and K.Shibi Thomas, assistant professors, explained in detail about hatching, milling and mixing hominy feed for chicken, disease prevention - especially Ranikhet disease- which affects the non vaccinated desi chickens immensely and economics of desi chicken farming.

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'Protect vegetable crops from severe cold'

Ludhiana: With freezing cold wave sweeping across northern region, vegetable crops may be adversely affected due to cold wave if appropriate measures are not taken, experts said.

Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) on Wednesday asked farmers to cover vegetables with polythene sheet to prevent any damage to crop from severe cold.

"Some sensitive vegetables such as capsicum, chillies, tomato, brinjal need to be covered with polythene sheet to protect from cold," said PAU Senior Extension Specialist (Vegetable Crops) T. S. Dhillon.

He advised farmers that the sheets should be free from holes and should not touch the plants. He added that chillies and tomatoes should be provided the cover in a low tunnel.

Potato and pea crops would be adversely affected if not protected against severe cold.

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Centre puts on hold decontrol of urea prices

Special Correspondent

Committee of Secretaries to look into the issues

Nutrient-based subsidy system favoured Urea constitutes 50 % of fertilizer consumption

NEW DELHI: Reeling under the impact of high inflation and outcry against price rise, the UPA Government on Wednesday decided to put on hold the 'decontrol of urea' prices and

instead decided to assign the job of freeing the 'sensitive fertilizer' to a Committee of Secretaries (CoS) to work out the issue.

Interestingly, the Union Chemical and Fertiliser Minister M. K. Alagiri, who has voiced his concern over the decontrol of urea prices in the past, did not turn up for the meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) chaired by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee.

Among others who attended the meeting included Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Murli Deora and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

Emerging out of the meeting, Fertilizer Secretary S. Behuria said the department would form a CoS to look into nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) for urea. The GoM would now finalise a policy only after receiving the recommendations of the CoS. This is likely to push the reforms of the major fertilizer component to next fiscal.

The government, in April last, had freed potassic and phosphatic fertilizers. However, in relation to urea, including its price and movement, it is still controlled by the government. Urea constitutes almost 50 per cent of the country's fertilizer consumption.

The industry was of the view that the full benefit of the NBS initiative would accrue once urea was brought under the scheme. This would encourage entrepreneurs to invest in the sector and ensure assured supply of fertilizers. Burdened with increasing fiscal deficit and fertilizer subsidy, the Finance Ministry was also reportedly in favour of the introduction of the NBS scheme on urea.

Interestingly, the Fertiliser Ministry was not willing. It feared that decontrol would not be fair for all manufacturing units in the heterogeneous urea industry where production cost differs from one unit to the other depending on plant vintage, feedstock and the level of energy consumption. On the expected lines, given its bent of mind for going ahead with the extension of the NBS scheme on urea, the GoM refrained from discussing the price of urea, which is now fixed at Rs. 5,310 a tonne. The demand for urea was 26.6 million tonnes in 2008-09 and 28.19 million tonnes in 2009-10.

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NABARD releases State credit plan

Special Correspondent

Outlay for 2011-12 fixed at Rs.58,159 crore; 16% rise over previous year



GROWTH PLAN: Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan releases the State Credit Plan at the regional office of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development in Thiruvananthapuram by handing over a copy to State Agriculture Production Commissioner K. Jayakumar on Wednesday. NABARD executive director Prakash Bakshi and chief general manager K.C. Shashidhar look on.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has announced its State Potential Credit Plan of Rs.58,159 crore for 2011-12. The plan released at the State Credit Seminar here on Wednesday has registered a 16 per cent increase over the previous year's plan of Rs.50,122 crore.

This plan was arrived at by aggregating the Potential Linked Credit Plans of all the 14 districts.

A sum of Rs.25,872 crore has been earmarked for the primary sector, agriculture and

allied activities, Rs.4,130 crore for the secondary sector comprising small and micro enterprises and Rs.28,155 crore for the tertiary sector which covers small road transport, tourism, housing, educational loans and such others.

The plan has laid emphasis on adequate credit estimate for crop production, special priority for Kuttanad and kole land in Thrissur and Malappuram, land development, soil and water conservation, farm tourism, financing of traditional industries sector and deepening financial inclusion through joint liability groups, among others.

It has been proposed to ensure 100 per cent coverage of Kisan Credit Cards to all eligible farmers and make KCCs smart and linking to ATMs. Special financial inclusion initiatives in tribal areas have also found priority in the plan.

Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan, who released the plan and the Aralam resettlement project report of the bank, said in his inaugural address that NABARD should not deny refinancing support to the cooperative sector on technical grounds as the cooperative sector functions like a lifeline for farmers in the State.

It should also support micro-financing ventures of Kudumabsree.

He stressed the need for promoting organic farming practices which do not harm the lives of ordinary citizens. A better price structure and value-addition to agriculture produce is imperative to support farmers.

Executive director Prakash Bakshi in his presidential address, said that fragmented land holdings of farmers in the State was a major issue and it should be addressed through functional consolidation.

Steps should be taken to check soil erosion. The bank was relying on joint liability groups for financing. Such informal groups consist of four to 10 persons.

Approaching banks together in groups for farm loans against mutual guarantee was more effective than seeking loans on individual basis. Though there were 30 lakh Kisan Credit Card holders, only 15 lakh cards were active and only three lakh were getting the benefits. This was a matter of concern, he said.

Agriculture Production Commissioner K. Jayakumar stressed the need for hassle-free credit. Institutional and operational changes were needed to make banks more helpful and friendly for the poor, he said.

Chief general manager K.C. Shashidhar welcomed.

Suma Varma, regional director, RBI, Principal Secretary (Finance) A.K. Dubey, Planning Secretary T.R. Meena, SBT managing director P. Pradeep Kumar, SBI chief general manager B.H. Bhasin, Canara Bank general manager T. Sreekanthan and G. Janaki, DGM, NABARD, also spoke.

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State will not introduce GM crops, says VS

Special Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan said here on Wednesday that the State government had taken its policy against introduction of genetically modified (GM) crops in the State after examining the pros and cons.

However, there was scope for further studies on various aspects of the technology and people were free to look into them, the Chief Minister said in reply to questions from the media at his weekly Cabinet briefing.

Mr. Achuthanandan said he had received no complaint against K.G. Bhaskaran, brother of National Human Rights Commission Chairman K.G. Balakrishnan and special government pleader at the Kerala High Court. Action would be taken if any complaint was received. (Mr. Bhaskaran has gone on leave against the background of certain allegations against him.)

Kannur airport shares

The Chief Minister said no decision had been taken on allocation of shares of the

proposed Kannur airport to private applicants.

A substantial portion of the shares were proposed to be issued to small investors. There was no plan to deal with bigwigs, the Chief Minister said.

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Farmers plan protest march

Staff Reporter

Kozhikode: Farmers affiliated to the Indian Farmers' Movement (Infam) will take out a march to the Collectorate here on Friday demanding action to control the menace of wild bear in the hilly areas of the district.

Antony Kozhuvanal, general secretary of Infam, told presspersons here on Wednesday that farmers in the hilly regions, especially Kuttiady, Thamarassery, Thiruvambady and Perambra, were finding it hard to continue their cultivation owing to the uncontrolled menace of wild bear. The digging up of tapioca, yam, colocasia, ginger and plantain by wild bear was causing huge losses to farmers, he said.

Fr. Kozhuvanal alleged that the constant plea of farmers to put up electric fences for controlling the attack of wild animals in the region was cold-shouldered by the government. Several farmers had already quit agriculture unable to bear the frequent crop loss, he said.

Fr. Kozhuvanal said the problem was now spoiling the peace of all farmers who lived close to the forest borders of Kerala. "Farmers are not even in a situation to take their own preventive measures owing to the stringent legal codes for the protection of wild animals, he said.

Infam would also undertake a mass signature campaign for inviting the attention of the government to the issue. A mass petition would be submitted to the State and Union

governments. Expressing solidarity with farmers, the district committee of the Kerala Congress was planning to organise separate protest march to the Thamarassery forest range office on January 26. K. Abraham, State general secretary of the party, said that farmers would go ahead with their hunger strike if the government continued with its apathy towards farmers on the issue.

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Procurement price of milk raised

Special Correspondent

Chennai: The government has increased procurement price of milk.

According to an official release, the price of cow milk will go up by Rs.1.10 a litre and that of buffalo milk, by Rs.2.20. However there will be no change in the price of milk supplied through Aavin.

Since assuming office in 2006, the DMK government hiked the procurement price of cow milk from Rs.10.50 to Rs.12 a litre on March 7, 2007; by Rs.2 on March 10, 2008, and again by Rs.2 on September 1, 2009, the release said.

Similarly, the procurement price of buffalo milk was raised by Rs.1.50 on March 7, 2007; by Rs.4 on March 10, 2008, and Rs.5 on September 1, 2009.

Thus in the past four years, the procurement prices of cow and buffalo milk have been raised by Rs.5.20 and Rs.10.50 respectively, the release added.

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'No plans to raise import duty on edible oils'

Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI: With food inflation at 14.44 per cent, the Centre has no plans to raise the import duty on crude and refined edible oils from the current levels of zero per cent and 7.5 per cent.

Speaking to journalists on the sidelines of a press conference here on Tuesday, a senior government official indicated that there would not be any increase in the import duty of crude and refined edible oils.

The Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) has been demanding an increase in import duty on edible oils to protect domestic processors from imports. With a zero import duty on crude palm oil at present, domestic pricing of oil is directly exposed to price fluctuations in palm and soybean in the global markets.

The retail price of sunflower oil in Delhi has risen to Rs.108 from Rs.72 a kg last year, while Soyaoil has gone up to Rs.77 from Rs.62 a kg last January.

Mustard oil is higher at Rs.77 against Rs. 71 a kg a year ago, while groundnut oil has soared to Rs.121 from Rs.121 a kg in the period under review, according to official data.

The country has to depend on import of edible oils to meet its domestic requirement.

In 2009-10, the country imported 8.82 million tonnes of vegetable oil.

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Early flowering partly due to climate change

Sushil Kumar Verma



According to recent research, native plants in southwestern Ohio, U.S. are flowering significantly earlier, a finding attributed, at least in part, to global warming.

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FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Reviving traditional methods to protect farm livestock

M.J. PRABU

Popularising these methods will revive our culture and local knowledge

-Photo:M. Govarthan



Simple remedies:Punniampurthy, Professor and Head, Ethno-veterinary herbal training unit, Thanjavur, interacting with farmers.

Apart from lands, animals remain a potential source of investment and income generation for small farmers.

“And investments are not risk free. They need to be protected. If a low cost and effective protection can be made available, then naturally farmers tend to use it,” says Dr. N. Punniamurthy, professor and head, Ethno-Veterinary Herbal Training and Research Unit, Veterinary University Training and Research Centre, Thanjavur.

“My aim is to popularise the ethno-veterinary system among small farmers, so that it becomes a part of primary health care.

Help save money

“In fact, by popularising it we will only be reviving our culture and system of traditional medicine. Knowledge about local plants and spices available to treat the animals will help the farmer attend to the animal or bird at the earliest. And in most cases it will also help save him money,” says Dr. Punniamurthy.

There are still many farmers maintaining a few goats, sheep, one or two cattle or some chickens.

If an animal falls sick, these people rely first on their conventional knowledge to treat them. If the problem persists they seek the help of qualified veterinarians.

Common property

The traditional medicinal system does not belong to any single person and is a property of the entire community. “We need not be afraid of people patenting medicines that have come down to us from our forefathers,” seems to be his conviction.

At present Dr. Punniamurthy is engaged in the process of documenting existing medicine, medical practices, and evolving ones based on herbs and locally available materials.

Leads to conservation

“There are so many medicinal plants in a village to make the farmer self-reliant and not wait for the veterinarian. Once ethno-veterinary medicines become popular it leads to conservation of traditional medical knowledge and to conservation of medicinal plants,” he says.

When the farmer starts realizing that a particular herb finds frequent mention in ethno-veterinary medicine literature, he will start cultivating it. Such remedies are important also because the medicines therein do not have toxicity and are easily available.

Decline in knowledge

The introduction of synthetic veterinary medicines resulted in a decline in knowledge base traditional knowledge about the medicinal properties of plants and their potential in treating animal diseases, according to Dr. Punniamurthy.

“Due to excessive use of veterinary pharmaceuticals and a move towards sustainable approaches to livestock production, a growing global need exists today for identification and application of botanicals in veterinary medicinal properties,” he adds.

Dr. Punniamurthy established the research centre to identify, recognise, validate, document, and propagate such traditional remedies.

He sent a proposal to the State Government, which granted Rs. 18 lakh and the Central Government also supported the project by offering Rs. 80 lakh.

Simple and dependable

With the funding, he plans to offer farmers simple, dependable medicines, based on traditional healing systems for animals.

So far he has inspired several thousand farmers in the State to treat their animals.

For more details readers can contact Dr. N. Punniamurthy, Prof and Head, Ethno veterinary herbal training and research unit, Nanjikottai road, Thanjavur- 613-006, phone: 04362-255462, email: murthyvcricri@hotmail.com, mobile: 98424-55833.

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FARM QUERIES

Intercropping onion in cabbage

Can onion be intercropped with cabbage?

Suresh Khanna Aurangabad

Generally farmers grow cabbage and onion separately. But Mr. Davinder Singh from Punjab intercropped cabbage with onion. In this practice, cabbage was transplanted in December and onion was transplanted in the 2nd week of January. Seed rate for cabbage was 375 gms/ha and for onion it was 2 kg/ha. The cabbage was transplanted on both sides of beds of size 2 feet. The difference between consecutive beds was also 2 feet. The onion was transplanted in lines 15 cm apart in between the cabbage lines. He used only 30 kg/ha urea in two split doses of 15 kg each through the drip lines. Only two manual weedings were done in the field. The farmer obtained about 300 tonnes/ha of cabbage and onion crop yield was additional.

For more details contact Davinder Singh, V. P. O. Nakodar, District Jalandhar, Punjab,
Mobile : 098724-40130.

Date:06/01/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/01/06/stories/2011010650671700.htm>

Flower colour

Why are flowers not black in colour?

R.M. MAMDHA Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu

In addition to the answer published last week (December 30) in this column, there are

other factors determining the colour of flowers.

There is a lot of physics and chemistry involved in flowering and colouration of flowers. Visual and chemical stimuli are provided by the flowers to the pollinators like bees. Flowers have to be essentially in colours other than black. Black objects absorb and retain heat. Hence, flowers, if black, will wither soon after sunrise. Essentially the pollen will have to be kept cool during daytime, atleast for 8 hours for viable pollination. Since most of the flowers directly face the sun at least for a few hours, stresses like rise in temperature, photosynthetic oxygen surge and fluid rise due to capillary pressure will adversely affect the texture, composition and longevity of flowers. That is why flowers are not black in colour. It is a natural adaptation.

Dr. S. KRISHNAN

Member, Commission on Ecosystems Management, IUCN

Date:06/01/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/01/06/stories/2011010650991900.htm>

Integrated management of rice leaf folder

Rice leaf folders are widespread and often cause significant yield loss. Outbreaks occur after prolonged drought or heavy use of insecticides.

There are four species of leaf folders occurring in Asia which are closely related to moths and can be distinguished by wing markings.

To form a protective feeding chamber, the larva folds a leaf blade together by attaching the leaf margins by silk strands that shrink upon drying.

The adult moth is yellow brown in colour. When resting, it is in the shape of an equal sided triangle.

Bigger females

As in most species, the male is slightly smaller than the female. Moths may migrate upto several kilometres after reaching adulthood.

Female attracts its mate by secreting a chemical called pheromone. Mating and egg laying occurs during night.

Adults hide among paddy and grass weeds during the day to escape predation by birds and only take short flights when disturbed. Adults are attracted to light at night but are seldom caught in light traps. Heavily damaged leaves become dry and exhibit scorched appearance and the grain yield and quality deteriorates.

Integrated management

- Use resistant varieties such as TNAU LFR 831311, Cauveri and Akashi.
 - Keep the bunds clear by trimming them and remove the grassy weeds.
 - Avoid use of excessive nitrogenous fertilizers. Set up light traps to attract and kill the moths.
 - Release *Trichogramma chilonis* on 37, 44 and 51 days after transplanting (DAT) thrice followed by three sprays of monocrotophos. 1000 ml / ha on 58,65 and 72 DAT.
 - Spray Neem seed kernel extract 5 per cent at 25 Kg or fenitrothion 50EC 1.0 L or Phasolone 35 EC 1.5 L or Chlorpyrifos 20 EC 1.25 L/ha.
- S. Pasupathy, G. Gajendran & G. Kathiresan**

Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute, Navalur kuttapattu

Tiruchy, Tamil Nadu

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hindustantimes



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi, January 05, 2011

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Inflation to come down to 6-6.5% by March end: PM panel

The Prime Minister's economic panel on Wednesday said inflation, under acute pressure from certain food items, is likely to come down to 7% for December, data for which is yet to be released. Furthermore, the panel expects the rate of inflation to decline to 6-6.5% by the end of this fiscal.

The panel has also said that RBI's decision to further tighten policy rates to tame inflation would depend on price behaviour, especially of food items, in the weeks following December 18, 2010. The Reserve Bank is slated to review monetary policy later this month.

Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council chairman, C Rangarajan told reporters in New Delhi that inflation rate could be considered comfortable only when it comes down to 4%. "We have always thought that inflation rate should remain close to 4%. Therefore, I would regard any inflation above that level as uncomfortable...Inflation is likely to be around 7% by December end and between 6 and 6.5% by March end," Rangarajan said on the sidelines of the Skoch summit.

He said the rate hike by the RBI will depend on the price behaviour during December and January. "We still have three weeks to go. If the inflation rate comes down significantly, then there may not be any need for action but on the other hand, if inflation remains sticky then action will be required," Rangarajan said.

Though overall inflation moderated to 7.75% in November from 8.58% in October, food inflation increased rapidly in the first half of December. From 8.69% during the week ended November 27, food inflation rose to 9.46% for the week ended December 4. It rose further to 12.13% the following week, and shot up to 14.44% for the week ended December 18.

High onion prices, coupled with that of milk, were blamed for high food inflation.

The Reserve Bank last year raised policy rates six times to rein in inflation. However, in its mid-quarterly review in December, RBI refrained from raising these rates, since the system was facing a cash crunch. Instead, the RBI announced measures to inject Rs 48,000 crore into the system.

The central bank has, however, cautioned that its measures should not be interpreted as reversal of a tight monetary stance, since inflation still continues to be major concern.

On the cash crunch, Rangarajan said,"the liquidity situation will improve in this quarter, because of expected rise in government expenditure".

The RBI has blamed the government's high cash balance for creating liquidity shortage in the system. While the Government got additional Rs 70,000 crore from the sale of spectrum for high speed mobile and broadband services over the budget estimates, it has not been spending commensurately.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/646721.aspx>

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Thursday, Jan 6

Max Min
28.5° | 22.6°

Rain: trace

Sunrise: 6:32

Humidity: 79%

Sunset: 17:55

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 1010.0

Tomorrow's Forecast








Cloudy

Friday, Jan 7

Max Min
30° | 22°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Jan 8	Sunday Jan 9	Monday Jan 10	Tuesday Jan 11	Wednesday Jan 12
				
28° 24° Rainy	29° 25° Rainy	28° 25° Rainy	28° 24° Rainy	28° 24° Cloudy

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Farming India

By M.S. Swaminathan

Jan 06 2011

During his visit to India, the US President, Mr Barack Obama, pointed out that India is fortunate to have over half of its total population of 1.2 billion under the age of 30. Out of the 600 million young persons, over 60 per cent live in villages. Most of them are educated. Mahatma Gandhi considered the migration of educated youth from villages to towns and cities as the most serious

form of brain drain adversely affecting rural India's development. He, therefore, stressed that we should take steps to end the divorce between intellect and labour in rural professions.

The National Commission on Farmers stressed the need for attracting and retaining educated youth in farming. The National Policy for Farmers, placed in Parliament in November 2007, includes the following goal of the new policy — “to introduce measures which can help to attract and retain youth in farming and processing of farm products for higher value addition, by making farming intellectually stimulating and economically rewarding”. On the other hand, the pressure of population on land is increasing and the average size of a farm holding is going down to below one hectare. Farmers are getting indebted and the temptation to sell prime farmland for non-farm purposes is growing. Over 45 per cent of farmers interviewed by the National Sample Survey Organisation wanted to quit farming. Under these conditions, how are we going to persuade educated youth, including farm graduates, to stay in villages and take to agriculture as a profession? How can youth earn a decent living in villages and help shape the future of our agriculture? This will require a three-pronged strategy.

- * Improve the productivity and profitability of small holdings through appropriate technologies and market linkages.
- * Enlarge the scope for the growth of agro-processing, agro-industries and agri-business.
- * Promote opportunities for the services sector to expand in a manner that will trigger the technological and economic upgradation of farm operations.

Some years ago, the government of India launched a programme to enable farm graduates to start agri-clinics and agri-business centres. This programme is yet to attract the interest of educated youth to the degree originally expected. It is hence time that the programme is restructured based on the lessons learnt. Ideally, a group of four to five farm graduates, who have specialised in agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, agri-business and home science, could jointly launch an agri-clinic-cum-agri-business centre in every block in the country. Agri-clinics will provide the services needed during the production phase of farming while the agri-business centre will cater to the needs of farm families during the post-harvest phase of agriculture. Thus, farm women and men can be assisted during the entire crop cycle, starting with sowing and extending up to value addition and marketing. The home science graduate can pay particular attention to nutrition and food safety and processing and help a group of farm

women to start a food processing park. The group should also assist farm families to achieve economy and power of scale both during the production and post-harvest phases of farming.

Opportunities for such young entrepreneurs are several. Climate resilient agriculture is another area that needs attention. In dry farming areas, methods of rainwater harvesting and storage and watershed management as well as the improvement of soil physics, chemistry and microbiology, need to be spread widely. The cultivation of fertiliser trees which can enrich soil fertility and help to improve soil carbon sequestration and storage, can be promoted under the Green India Mission as well as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee programme. A few fertiliser trees, a jal kund (water harvesting pond) and a biogas plant in every farm will help to improve enormously the productivity and profitability of dryland farming.

The “yuva kisans” or young farmers can also help women’s self-help groups to manufacture and sell the biological software essential for sustainable agriculture. The Fisheries graduate can promote both inland and marine aquaculture, using low external input sustainable aquaculture (Leisa) techniques. Feed and seed are the important requirements for successful aquaculture and trained youth can promote their production at the local level.

Similar opportunities exist in the fields of animal husbandary. Improved technologies of small-scale poultry and dairy farming can be introduced. Codex alimentarius standards of food safety can be popularised in the case of perishable commodities. For this purpose, the young farmers should establish Gyan Chaupals or Village Knowledge Centres. Such centres will be based on the integrated use of the internet, FM Radio and mobile telephony.

In the service sector designed to meet the demand driven needs of farming families, an important one is soil and water quality testing. Young farmers can organise mobile soil-cum-water quality testing work and go from village to village in the area of their operation and issue soil health and water quality cards to every family. This will help rural families to utilise in an effective manner the nutrient based subsidy introduced by the government from April 1, 2010. Similarly educated youth could help rural communities to organise gene-seed-grain-water banks, thereby linking conservation, cultivation, consumption and commerce in a mutually reinforcing manner.

Young farmers can also operate climate risk management centres, which will help farmers to maximise the benefits of a good monsoon and minimise the impact of unfavourable weather.

Educated youth can help to introduce the benefits of information, space, nuclear, bio- and eco-technologies. Ecotechnology involves the blend of traditional wisdom and frontier technology. This is the pathway to sustainable agriculture and food security and agrarian prosperity. If the youth choose to live in villages and launch the new agriculture movement, based on the application of science and social wisdom, our untapped demographic dividend will become our greatest strength.* M.S. Swaminathan is the chairman of the National Commission on Farmers. He is considered to be the father of India's green revolution.

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/dc-comment/farming-india-558>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Thu, Jan 06, 2011 | Updated 10.38AM IST

6 Jan, 2011, 12.36AM IST, Madhvi Sally & S Sanandakumar,ET Bureau

Revival of cashew nuts demand takes a hit as prices rise

KOCHI/CHANDIGARH: The December chill seems to have caught up with the sentiments in the cashew nut market. The industry's hopes of a revival in demand to coincide with the marriage season have hit a price barrier.

"Retail sales have come down in major north India . markets," said Kannan S Pillai, partner, Anu Cashews. After touching a peak during Diwali, the domestic demand usually goes through a lull period till mid-December. It then recovers slightly to coincide with the marriage season.

But the weak sentiments in the cashew market have been more than compensated by a higher demand for other dry fruits. Sales have seen an upward trend with an extended winter and marriage season in Asia's largest dry fruit wholesale market of Katra Ishwar Bhawan in Old Delhi's Khari Baoli area.

“There is an increase in sales owing to the winter season. The prices have fallen by 5% since Diwali and the current demand is largely by consumers for home consumption,” said Coco Plus Dry Fruits owner Kamal Khanna, who sell dry fruits under the Coco brand across north India.

The Delhi wholesale market accounts for 70% of the Rs 2,000 crore worth dry fruits imported into the country. On Wednesday, almond kernal was fetching Rs 350 a kg, cashew Rs 500 a kg, and walnut with shell Rs 150 a kg. Raisin was at Rs 100 a kg while chilgoza was at Rs 1,200 a kg.

On the NCDEX, almond for March delivery rose to Rs 366.25 per kg driven by an increase in demand in spot markets. NCDEX assistant vice president Siddharth Surana said prices were likely to remain stable with no major upward trend owing to a good crop in Australia and the US. “Compared to other dry fruits, prices of almonds have remained low and we don’t see a short supply in the year ahead. An increase in disposable income and an awareness about good health is leading to an increase in demand for dry fruits,” he said.

The cashew processing industry sees the sharp escalation in price as the main reason for the depressed demand. “The prices are at an all-time high of Rs 9,000 per carton for cashew nuts of lower white piece grade,” said Babu Ommen, proprietor, Alphonso Cashew, adding that the price has touched Rs 9,500 per carton for splits. A carton weighs 22.68 kg.

The prices were at around Rs 6,000 and Rs 7,000 per carton for the two varieties during the same period of the previous year. The record prices this year have affected market sentiments, he pointed out. An important reason for the higher price is the huge increase in costs. Industry spokesmen point out that the cost of raw cashew has seen a major rise in the past one year. “Apart from higher price, we are also facing a severe shortage of raw cashew nuts,” Kannan S Pillai said.

The prices of imported raw cashew have increased to \$1,750 per tonne from \$1,250 per tonne a year ago. Along with this, the wages are also going up in the processing sector. In Tamil Nadu, the wages have seen a 30% increase while in Kerala the expected rise in wages is around 40%. Many units are working below capacity due to the shortage of raw material and labour.

6 Jan, 2011, 12.25AM IST, S Sujatha,ET Bureau

Coffee prices soar on global supply worries

COIMBATORE: Retail coffee prices are now ruling at around Rs 300 per kg and are expected to surge by Rs 50 per kg this month because international markets remain buoyant on supply worries. "Prices are at a 13-year high now. The tight demand-supply position in international markets due to adverse weather conditions in Brazil, India and Indonesia are helping the prices," said a Coffee Board official in Bangalore.

Production has come down in major washed Arabica-producing countries in Central America and Columbia due to changes in weather patterns. These countries contribute 65% of world's washed Arabica production. "Coffee prices are going beyond the reach of the common man today. People are buying in small quantities to cut cost," said a senior executive at Coffee Day Fresh 'n Ground in Tamil Nadu, the largest coffee-consuming state in India.

Institutional buyers are not much worried about the increase in prices because they are concerned more about the soaring vegetable costs. "We use a minimum of 100 kg onions in our kitchen everyday. We are more bothered about the rise in onion prices. At the maximum, we use only 3-4 kg coffee per day. Even though the price increase annoys us, we are ready to forgo the margin," said Coimbatore's four-star premium hotel Residency's executive chef S Ashok Kumar. CP Chandan, partner at Cotha's Coffee, one of the market leaders in Karnataka, said institutional buyers who had moved to cheaper beans have returned to players who sell quality raw material. "Our sales force met with stiff resistance when we increased the prices to

Rs 300 per kg on December 1. But now, most of our regular buyers have come back to us as they could not deliver good taste with cheaper raw materials,” he added.

While roasters have increased powder prices only last month, the post-monsoon drop in production estimate hints at another round of upward revision in January. According to Karnataka Planters' Association data, markets may see a 10% decrease in Arabica production from the estimated 99,500 tonne due to bad weather.

Coffee prices in India are traditionally based on international prices because three-fourths of the production is exported.



Karnataka farmers to get Cuban organic farming experience

January 06, 2011 11:00:21 AM

Kestur Vasuki | Bangalore

After sending groups of farmers to China and Israel, the BJP Government in Karnataka is all set to send organic farmers to Cuba to learn organic farming techniques. The Government is sending 1,000 organic farmer couples to Cuba in March.

This week-long trip is not an excursion for the farmers but all learning about Cuba's success in organic farming. The Government, which is expected to spend around two lakh rupees per couple on this trip, promises to be a learning experience for the State's organic farmers in Cuba. The trip is to get a peek into the organic farming revolution in Cuba.

The trip is organised by the Karnataka Organic Farming Mission, an organisation floated with a Rs 100-crore budget by the State Government.

Talking to The Pioneer, chairman of the Organic Farming Mission AS Anand said the mission was keen to bring to the organic farmers knowledge and experience of Cuba in sustaining an economy through organic farming. He also said he was in touch with the Cuban Ambassador to India, Miguel Angel Ramirez Ramos to make arrangements for the delegation.

He said, "I am happy to announce that the Karnataka Organic Farming Mission is sending 1,000 organic farmer couples from Karnataka to Cuba to study the Cuban organic farming success. We have already discussed the issue with the Cuban Ambassador and he is making all arrangements for the visit of our farmers. Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa is very keen that the organic farming is given full support in the State.

He is also keen that organic farmers learn the Cuban experience. We are sending three teams to the Cuban villages."

Karnataka has over 1,18,000 hectares of land under organic farming, with over 90,000 farmers involved. The BJP Government, as per its election promise, for the first time in the country has set up the Organic Farming Mission to encourage organic farming in the State. Karnataka had sent over 800 farmers to China in 2008- 2009 and around 190 farmers to Israel in 2009-10.

Development single biggest threat to forests

January 06, 2011 11:00:04 AM

PNS | New Delhi

Unfazed by criticism from some of his ministerial colleagues for delaying the green nod for projects in ecologically sensitive areas, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said the "single biggest threat" to the forests in the country is the "developmental threat", while addressing a seminar in FICCI on Wednesday.

In a new turn of event, he was even supported by Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who had been accusing him of blocking projects. Ahluwalia ended up complimenting his “old friend” for raising “consciousness” on green cause.

It was only during last month that Ahluwalia had criticised Ramesh over his policy on mining, saying there should be a “sensible” definition of “no-go” areas and favoured greater transparency in Environment Ministry’s clearances to projects. Ramesh had retorted saying, “This is not Azadpur mandi in which we are discussing go or no-go.”

Speaking in the presence of Nobel laureate Prof Elinor Ostrom, he said he has benefited enormously by reading Ostrom, after becoming Environment Minister. Agreeing with Ostrom, who had earlier said the institutional monoculture syndrome should be avoided, the Minister said there was danger of institutional monoculture when it comes to dealing with the problems of common property resources like forests.

Ramesh described himself as “endangered.” for his aggressive espousal of the green cause, explaining why his name has figured in most of the reported conflicts among Ministers in the UPA Government.

“These are issues that I think are very much in public domain today and explain the reasons why I am present in 9 out of 13 conflicts,” he said.

Business Standard

Thursday, Jan 06, 2011

Low output to make salt costlier

Rutam Vora & Kalpesh Damor / Ahmedabad January 6, 2011, 0:59 IST

Production may be delayed by three months, fall over 35-40 per cent on extended monsoon.

If rising onion prices were not enough, the extended monsoon and excessive winter are set to rub salt on consumers' wounds. With production declining 35-40 per cent, salt prices are set to move upwards. Moreover, production may be delayed by over three months.



The extended monsoon has caused nearly 75 per cent dilution in salt pans. On the other hand, excessive winter has caused slow evaporation of water in these pans, which further delayed the production, an industry source said.

“The salt production in India may dip over 35-40 per cent in the current year. The production was affected mainly due to extended monsoon, which lasted till November, while the excessive winter has slackened the evaporation process in the salt pans. This will delay the salt production by minimum 120 days,” said a top official at Indian Salt Manufacturers’ Association.

On an average, India produces around 18.5-19 million tonnes of salt, which is supplied for three broad usages — edible consumption, industrial demand and export markets. The demand for edible salt is pegged at around 6.5 million tonnes per annum, while industrial demand stands at around 7.5-8 million tonnes. India exports around 2-2.5 million tonnes of salt every year, sources informed.

“Usually, the production starts in October and continues till June. But this year, monsoon extended till November-end, which disrupted production in salt pans. Stocks are low and new stock will take time to come in the market, hence the prices will shoot up in the next few months,” said a manufacturer in Saurashtra.

The rise in salt price would also affect the industries adversely with the commodity being one of the key ingredients for the soda ash industry.

“Prices have already started rising and it is badly affecting our costs as salt is the key ingredient for the soda ash industry. A further downfall in the availability of salt may affect the production of soda ash adversely,” said Sunil Bhatnagar, president (sales and marketing), Gujarat Heavy Chemicals Limited (GHCL). GHCL has a manufacturing capacity of about 2,200 tonnes per day (TPD) and the plant is operating at full capacity at present. However, a possible rise in prices may cause the companies to reduce their soda ash and caustic soda production. Key consumers of industrial salt include some of the majors like Nirma, Tata Chemicals, Saurashtra Chemicals and GHCL.

Meanwhile, experts are of the opinion that the price pressure could be eased by importing larger volume of salt. Industry sources informed that salt imports are allowed duty free under the open general licensing ever since 1997.

But in the wake of recent global climatic disturbances that gripped entire Europe with snow and China with floods, the demand for salt in the international markets has also gone up considerably. India is believed to be getting export enquiries from countries like Japan, China and parts of Europe, other than the traditional buyers like Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh.

Onion prices may remain high till February: Traders

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai January 6, 2011, 0:47 IST

Onion consumers are unlikely to get a respite from high prices until the first fortnight of February, when the new season crop from Pune hits the market.

Supply from Pune, the second largest onion producing district in Maharashtra after Nashik, is crucial and expected to ease the ongoing deficit. Till then, consumers will have to live with high prices, said Ashok Walunj, director of the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) at Vashi, Navi Mumbai. Arrivals from Pune begin generally in the first week of February and gradually pick up in the second week.



Onion developments in Maharashtra are relevant elsewhere, since 75-80 per cent of India's onion supply comes from the state. Onion traded between Rs 30 and 45 per kg today in the Vashi APMC, almost range-bound for the past week. Barring the panic one day in which the price shot up to Rs 60 per kg in the wholesale market, onion has settled around Rs 35 per kg, significantly higher from the Rs 8-10 per kg around the same time last year.

Average arrivals during the first two days of this week were recorded at 100-110 trucks of 10 tonnes each. The basic reason for high prices is inadequate supply in proportion to demand. Despite the poor quality of onion, with hardly a day's shelf life, the commodity's supply failed to meet the rising festival and occasional demand, said a Mumbai-based veteran trader. Unless the demand eases, prices will not come down, he added.

When quizzed about the impact of the recent export ban, the trader said, "Last year's stock was exhausted in November itself due to massive exports during the post-monsoon season. But barring a negligible quantity to Colombo, exports almost halted in October due to skyrocketing prices. Since then, no shipment was taking place. Hence, there is no vivid impact of the export ban."

The crop was heavily damaged in Nashik due to unseasonal rainfall. Supply from Gujarat and the south was also hit severely because of high moisture content, resulting in massive spoilage. But the rainfall really benefited the crop in Pune, which on maturity will bridge the supply-demand gap, said Walunj. The release of 200 tonnes of imported Pakistani onion, held at the Navi Mumbai port, will not ease supply adequately, said Ajit Shah, president of the Indo Agro Produce Exports Chambers of Commerce.

Meanwhile, sentiment is likely to become more worrisome in the next fortnight, when the demand for Pongal emerges from the South. Generally, onion demand doubles four to five days ahead of Pongal. If last year's trend continues, prices will see another jump next week, said a Nashik-based trader.

According to agriculture ministry sources, India's onion output is likely to dip by over 12 per cent to 10.5 million tonnes in the 2010-11 crop year. Traders, however, estimate a further decline in production due to very poor yield.

Sown area dips 15% in Karnataka

Mahesh Kulkarni / Bangalore January 6, 2011, 0:46 IST

The area under rabi crops in Karnataka has declined 15 per cent to three million hectares from 3.52 million hectares last year. This is below the normal level of 3.39 million hectares and mainly due to a shift towards pulses, especially redgram and cotton, during the kharif season by farmers in northern parts of the state. The production of foodgrain this season is expected to be normal due to a more-than-normal north-east monsoon during October-December. During the period, the state recorded 271.3 mm rainfall, 57 per cent more than the normal level of 172 mm.



The soil moisture is adequate. However, massive rain during November as a result of the Jal cyclone in many parts of the state damaged crops over almost 200,000 hectares. Paddy and maize were among the damaged crops.

“In 2009-10, the state saw a drop in area and production in the kharif season due to less monsoon rain and the rabi season was better than kharif. This year, it's the reverse, with bountiful rain in the kharif season leading to record sowing. The rabi sowing has been lower. But overall we can expect record foodgrain production this year at 12.37 million tones as there has been no problem of seed or fertilizer availability throughout the year,” an agriculture department official said.

So far, the best year for Karnataka has been 2007-08, when the output touched 12.04 million tonnes.

The state agriculture department has set a target of producing 12.37 million tonnes, an increase of 16 per cent over the 10.65 million tonnes produced in 2009-10. The target for rabi and summer is 3.65 million tonnes. Rabi accounts for 20 per cent of the state's foodgrain production.

Jowar has been sown over one million hectares and bengalgram over a record one million hectares as against the target of 886,000 hectares. Wheat has seen normal sowing, while the area under sunflower has dropped to 200,000 hectares. Cotton has been sown over 116,000 hectares.

With implementation of the accelerated pulses programme in major growing districts of Gulbarga, Bidar, Bijapur and Koppal, the area under under pulses has gone up over 1.3 million hectares. Sowing of bengalgram, horsegram and cowpea was more than normal in most growing regions. The total area under pulses has touched 2.8 million hectares during both kharif and rabi put together.

In oilseeds, the state witnessed a reduction in area under cultivation. Sunflower is the major loser. As against the target of 1.1 million hectares for both kharif and rabi seasons, sowing was done on about 400,000 hectares owing to the shift towards pulses.

Among cash crops, sugarcane and cotton are the big gainers. The plantation of cane has reached record levels.

Punjab, Haryana expect rich wheat harvest

Vijay C Roy & Vikas Sharma / Chandigarh January 6, 2011, 0:42 IST

Extreme cold favourable for the crop.

The ongoing cold wave and December rain have delighted farmers of Punjab and Haryana by brightening the chances of a bumper wheat crop. Agriculture officials say extreme cold is good for the crop.



The wheat acreage in Punjab would remain about the same as last year's 3.52 million hectares. But, production will be more. The agriculture department is expecting 15.4 million tonnes this year, as compared to 15.2 mt last year. The average yield last year was 43.07 quintals per hectare; they now expect 44 quintals per ha.

Officials say the total targeted area under wheat this rabi season is 3.5 m ha, slightly less than last year's 3.52 m ha, as the government is encouraging farmers to diversify. Around 90 per cent of the sown area during rabi is under wheat; the rest is under oilseeds, pulses, barley, etc.

As for Haryana, as against 10.5 mt wheat last year, the target is 11.46 mt. With good monsoon, agriculture officials said they expected yield to touch 46.50 qtl per hectare, compared to 42 qtls per ha last year. Haryana is the second-largest contributor of wheat to the central pool and the area under wheat is estimated to have touched 2.475 m ha, as against the target of 2.465 m ha. Last year, the sown area was 2.492 m ha.

Farm officials said rains that hit the state last month brightened crop prospects and helped farmers cut irrigation costs. They said farmers saved water in at least one cycle of irrigation, a collective saving of at least Rs 150-225 crore.

Farm officials said the area under mustard this year in Haryana touched 550,000 hectares, as against 513,000 ha last year.

The output is estimated at 1.05 mt, as against 849,000 tonnes last year. Severe winter and fog is dangerous for mustard as chances of fungal attack rise when the night temperature dips. However, the rain, resulting in an increase in the night temperature, has lowered chances of a fungal attack.

Punjab grows far less; it's estimated sown area for both mustard and rapeseed is about 36,000 ha. Apart from these two, no other major crop is sown this season.

Coconut oil prices rise 6% in a week on supply crunch

George Joseph / Kochi January 06, 2011, 0:00 IST

The prices of coconut oil are inching towards the historic mark of Rs 10,000 a quintal as the south Indian market is facing supply crunch of the commodity as well as copra.

According to leading wholesale traders the retail price of coconut oil had already crossed Rs 100 a kg and the wholesale price is likely to cross Rs 10,000 a quintal mark within the next couple of weeks. The wholesale price at present is Rs 9,000 a quintal, which was Rs 8,500 a quintal a week before.

There is acute shortage of copra in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the major producing states of the country and the demand is on a rise, especially from leading FMCG makers like Marico and Ayurvedic oil manufacturers.

Leading FMCG companies are in queue in copra producing hubs in Malabar region of Kerala, offering Rs 7,000 a quintal. Still, they are unable to keep their inventory steady as the supply is very limited in Malappuram, Kozhikode and Kannur districts of Kerala. The Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA) quoted Rs 6,150-6,200 a quintal, but millers and big corporates are not getting copra even at a price of Rs 6,900 -7,000 a quintal.

Thalath Mehmood, former president of COMA said the highest price for oil was Rs 7,460 a quintal in 2005. Since then the market was moving in a range of Rs 5,000-6,000 a quintal. The price decreased sharply in 2006-2009, hence coconut farmers neglected the crop and shifted to other highly remunerative crops like rubber, coco, nutmeg and fish farming. Due to this coconut production in Kerala dipped 50 per cent in the last five years and lead to serious shortage for coconut.

Coconut production in Kerala would pick up in February only, till then the prices of coconut, copra and oil will be high. The lean season in Tamil Nadu also aggravated the supply crisis and the production in this state would pick up by April-May only.

At Kankayam, India's largest copra and coconut oil market, the price of good quality oil peaked to Rs 9,000 a quintal. Leading Kochi-based dealers told that there is good demand for coconut from abroad, especially West Asia and Bangladesh. For export purpose, coconut oil is in good demand as coconut-based cosmetic products are popular in West Asia, Europe and the US. So there is a huge demand-supply mismatch for all coconut-based products.

Also, prices of alternative edible oils like palm oil, sunflower oil are also high at present. Price of palm oil which is mainly used for edible purposes in south India increased to Rs 75 a kg. Prices of sunflower oil and gingelly oil are also in the upper circuit, hence shifting from coconut oil to other edible oils is unattractive.

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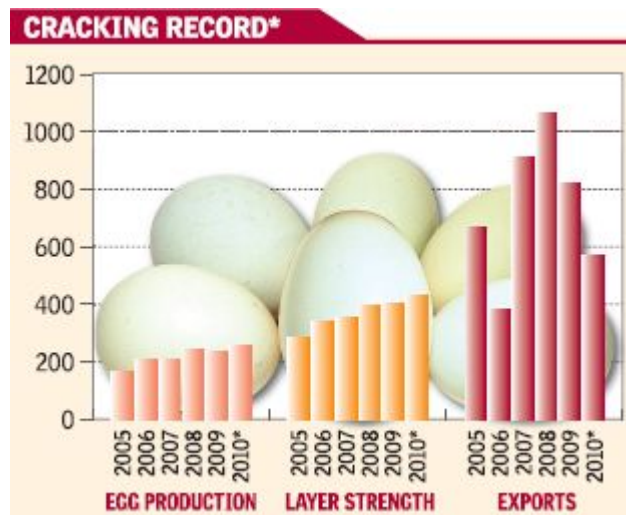
Thursday, January 06, 2011

Date:06/01/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651711800.htm>

Back Egg prices on the boil due to cold weather, demand

Rates rise to record Rs 2.91 as vegetables turn dearer.



Gayathri G.

Chennai, Jan. 5

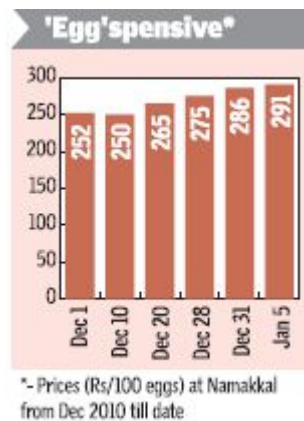
Egg prices spiked to a record Rs 2.91 a piece on Wednesday (surpassing the Rs 2.90 a piece it touched on Nov 8, 2010) to touch a 25-year high on account of sudden spurt in domestic demand.

The price hike is attributed to a confluence of factors – intense cold weather in the North on the back of continuous rains, drop in production and the rising input costs.

Egg prices are unlikely to come down as the poultry feed prices have surged 30-50 per cent in the past two years. The cost of production of an egg works out to Rs 2.35 and farmers get somewhere around Rs 2.46.

Factors

Mr R. Nallathambi, Chairman, Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers' Association, told Business Line , “Since the Sabarimala season is coming to a close, we see a demand in the South. Besides, eggs usually become expensive in winter and with the abnormally low temperature seen in the North, consumption has picked up.”



And there is a drop in production owing to incessant rains. “Continuous rains have hit the production. Out of 3 crore eggs produced daily here, there is a shortage of 15 lakh eggs,” said a poultry owner in Namakkal, India's 'egg'-land. While supply has decreased, demand for eggs is consistent and has even increased as a substitute for other more expensive sources of protein such as fish.

“More and more people are now going in for eggs as prices of vegetables have soared to

Rs 50 and more for a kg. Egg prices in Delhi and Kolkata are ruling at Rs 3.37 and Rs 3.20 a piece respectively. Rain has resulted in vegetable shortage and the prices of eggs are on the rise as it is seen as the only balanced diet at a lower price. Moreover, transportation to Bihar and other States is an issue due to fog and hence prices gain in the North,” Mr N. Senthilkumar, General Manager – Farm Products, Coimbatore-based Suguna Poultry Farms Ltd.

Exports

On the export front too, the industry paints a rosy picture by setting its sights on neighbouring Sri Lanka. Mr P. Selvaraj, Chairman, National Egg Coordination Committee (Namakkal Zone), told Business Line, “We started test supplying eggs and day-old chicks by mid-December.

So far we have exported four containers (18 lakh) to Sri Lanka.” Earlier in December, the island nation decided to import up to 2,000 tonnes of chicken from India to meet shortages ahead of Christmas holiday season. Sri Lanka produces about 9,800 tonnes a month but there is a demand-supply gap of a million one-day old chicks and the Indian trade hopes to cash in on this mismatch.

On the contrary, broiler rates are on the decrease owing to over production and a glut-like situation.

NECC has been maintaining prices of its layer birds at Rs 33/kg level since Christmas while the Broiler Coordination Committee has slashed the cull bird prices to Rs 46/kg from Rs 52 then.

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[Back](#) Stirring up sugar prices

The decisions on futures trading and scrapping of duty exemption could disturb the

demand-supply balance and push up sugar prices.

The Government is fighting a losing battle in trying to contain food inflation which remains stubbornly high; ironically, some of the recent policy actions may actually result in a further increase in the prices of certain essential food items. Sugar is a prime example. Based on the preliminary estimates of cane output and projections of sugar production for 2010-11, the Government allowed export of five lakh tonnes of the sweetener, in addition to about 11 lakh tonnes towards meeting the pending export obligation. This surely was a welcome step to ease the possible inventory overhang and help bring about a fairly decent demand-supply balance in the domestic sugar market.

However, two other recent decisions could prove counterproductive and may actually contribute to a rise in domestic sugar prices, especially when the prices of several other essential food products are at elevated levels. One is that futures trading in sugar has been allowed. This is sure to attract a flow of speculative capital into the sugar market. Speculative funds do exert a disproportionately larger impact on prices in a market that is finely balanced. We have seen it happen already. Sugar prices have gone up by a good 10 per cent in recent weeks, to over Rs 3,000 a quintal. With the supply outlook for the season still hazy, even a small fall in sugar production can propel open market rates higher. Instead of futures trading, an ideal measure for the season would have been delivery-based forward contracts. The second, and more disturbing, decision is to allow the Customs duty exemption granted to imported sugar to lapse after December 31. In other words, if sugar is imported now, it will attract the usual Customs duty of 65 per cent ad valorem. There is little logic in reviving the Customs tariff on imported sugar. We need to keep the duty-free import window open to ensure that prices remain on a leash. A combination of unchecked derivatives trading and closure of the duty-free import option will pose a huge upside risk to domestic sugar prices. Globally, too, sugar market prices are at record highs. Even a small hint that India may be forced to import sugar will push prices to astronomical levels.

Instead of tinkering with trade and tariff policies, the Government's attention must turn to the next season. If we want our sugar market to remain reasonably insulated from volatile

global conditions and be largely self-reliant, there is no escape from ensuring sugarcane acreage of at least 50 lakh hectares for 2011-12 and cane output of well over 300 million tonnes. If this is not realised, sugar can turn bitter in 2011. Meanwhile, all the big talk of sugar decontrol heard several months ago seem to have evaporated into thin air. The sector is crying for reforms and the industry needs consolidation and modernisation. The restrictive policy environment offers little incentive for fresh investment.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651761900.htm>

Back **Belgaum sugar mills to sell power to local units**

. – K. K. Mustafah



To power up: Workers loading sugarcane onto a truck at Dharwad road in Kadabagatti

Anil Urs

Hubli, Jan. 5

An effort is being made to sell power produced by Belgaum sugar mills to local industries.

The Belgaum district in-charge Minister, Mr Umesh V Katti, has initiated the proposal with the Belgaum Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).

According to the proposal, Ugar Sugar Works in Ugar Khurd, Belgaum, Vishwanath Sugars in Bellad Bagewadi in Hukkeri Taluk, Belgaum, Sankeshwar Sugar Factory, Belgaum and Samirwadi Sugar Mill in Mudhol Taluk, Bagalkot have agreed to sell power to Belgaum-based industries.

At present, these sugar mills sell power to Maharashtra.

According to the BCCI estimate, total power needs of Belgaum-based industries is around 120-150 MW.

The four sugar mills combined have agreed to sell power in excess of 200 MW.

Chamber meet

Confirming the development, Mr Jaideep Siddannavar, President of BCCI, said, “Minister's proposal is being taken up for discussion at the chamber's industry meeting on Friday.”

“Once the BCCI firms up the proposal, the Minister is expected to take up the issue with State Government and work out a mechanism of buying power from sugar mills directly or through State-owned power supplying company – Hescom,” he added.

Dharwad-Belgaum rail link

The BCCI is also to take up Dharwad-Belgaum direct rail-link via Kittur for discussion at the chamber meeting.

The direct rail link parallel to the National Highway 4 is expected to reduce the distances between two cities and the travel time.

The rail-link issue has been brought to the notice of the Union Minister of State for Railways, Mr K.H. Muniyappa. The Union Minister has told the BCCI that it can be taken up on the condition that the State Government shares 50 per cent of the project cost.

On learning the Union Minister's assurance, Mr Katti has briefed the Chief Minister, Mr B.S. Yeddyurappa, on the urgency of rail-link. The Chief Minister is said to have assured that the proposal will get featured in the forthcoming state budget.

According to the BCCI President, “The survey for laying the rail line between Dharwad and Belgaum via Kittur has already been undertaken. Currently, the railway between these two cities runs via Londa Junction on the border of Goa. As a result the train takes almost

three hours to cover a distance of about 70 km between these two cities.”

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Back S. India tea output drags in Nov; exports down

C.J. Punnathara

Kochi, Jan. 5

Tea production dropped 13.23 million kg (mkg) to 907.65 mkg during January-November 2010, despite an uptick in production from North Indian plantations. November witnessed an increase in production from North India, while South Indian plantations lagged behind.

Rains, disease

The prime cause for the shortfall in tea production was the slippages in North Indian production during the earlier part of the year. Unseasonal rains and persistent disease attacks had brought down production from North Indian plantations by 15.64 mkg to 682.71 mkg. Some of this shortfall was made up by a spurt in South Indian production during the first 11 months of 2010.

But the growth trends in South India seem to have been arrested during November which witnessed a fall by 3.27 mkg to 23.10 mkg even while North Indian production recovered and posted an increase of 6.66 mkg to 70.82 mkg.

It was not just rain that brought down South Indian tea production but also low sunshine and overcast conditions that prevailed in tea growing areas in the region, sources in the United Planters Association of Southern India (UPASI) said. Despite an early head-start and an increase in production, the year is expected to end neutral for South Indian plantations, at around the same level as last year, the UPASI sources said.

Recovery begins

Tea prices, which had fallen sharply during the four month April-July period, have begun to

recover. The fall was primarily due to substantial growth in production during the period and global erosion in tea prices, sources at the UPASI said. However, prices have begun to make a recovery during the last couple of months and the trend is expected to continue. But prices are still ruling Rs 14-15 a kg lower than last year.

Export demand

The recovery in prices has helped the export sector where demand is beginning to re-emerge. However, tea exports were lower in volume and value for November as well as during January-November 2010. While export volumes fell to 124.55 mkg (132.92 mkg) during January-November 2010, unit value realisation fell to Rs 131.89 a kg as against Rs 144.88 a kg last year. While north Indian prices have been able to recoup some of the losses made during the early part of the year, South Indian prices remained below the levels of last year.

Despite adverse global conditions during the early part of the year, things have begun to look up at the fag end of 2010. The future seems bright in the New Year on the back of renewed export demand, price recovery and good domestic demand, sources in the trade said.

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Back Decision on urea decontrol deferred; GoM refers issue to secretaries' panel



Mr Pranab Mukherjee

Our Bureau

New Delhi, Jan 5

The Centre has deferred a decision on decontrol of urea prices and bringing the country's most widely-consumed fertiliser under the nutrient based subsidy (NBS) regime.

Panel

A Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by the Finance Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, which met here on Wednesday, decided to refer the issue to a Committee of Secretaries.

The panel, which would be constituted in the next couple of days, would examine the proposal in detail and submit its report to the GoM, which will then presumably take a final call.

“It is a politically-sensitive issue, especially in view of forthcoming assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam. The Centre is also wary about decontrol in the context of the current spiralling food inflation. The setting up of a secretaries' panel is basically one way of buying time for the moment”, sources told Business Line.

Expectations

According to them, it may not be realistic to expect even a hike – let alone decontrol – in urea prices till the next kharif planting season, by which time the crucial assembly polls would be over and food prices, too, would hopefully cool with the arrival of a bumper rabi crop.

The latest move will, however, disappoint the industry, which is seeking a hike of 20 per cent or so in retail prices of urea and 10 per cent for other fertilisers. Although non-urea fertilisers have been decontrolled since this fiscal, the industry believes it is not possible for companies to raise their prices, unless there is similar flexibility vis-à-vis urea.

Prices

The maximum retail price (MRP) of urea is currently fixed at Rs 5,310 a tonne, whereas companies are selling di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) at Rs 9,950 and muriate of potash (MOP) at Rs 4,455. During 2010-11, the country is expected to consume 27 million tonnes

(mt) of urea, 11 mt of DAP, five mt of MOP and 10 mt of various complex fertilisers. The industry argues that if urea prices are not raised sufficiently, farmers would further increase its consumption at the expense of others, worsening the already deteriorating soil nutrient imbalance.

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M&M, UAS Dharwad sign pact for farm technology

Dharwad, Jan 5

Tractor major Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad (UASD) for facilitating 'innovative farming technology development and dissemination'.

The MoU was signed today in Dharwad by Dr R R Hanchinal, Vice-Chancellor, UAS Dharwad, and Mr Sudhir Shah, General Manager of M&M.

Dr Hanchinal said: "University will work with M&M in the field of soil and irrigation water testing facilities, technology interface through the Internet, setting up productivity demo farms, agri-counselling facilities, seeds and crop care products."

The Vice-Chancellor also requested M&M to set up a chair in the university which would further stream line the activities for the betterment of farming community.

Mr Shah said the company is committed to bring in farm prosperity, especially for the small and marginal farmers, and is also focused on ensuring food security for the country.

As part of MoU, the company has agreed to provide a 'Mahindra Samridhi Grant' of Rs 10 lakh a year to UAS Dharwad.

Research activities

"The grant will be provided for scientists and post graduate students to undertake research in various areas such as seed technology, soil and water conservation, farm

mechanisation as well as for crops such as rice, sugarcane, potato, cotton, soyabean, wheat, corn and pulses,” he added.

For Mahindra Samridhi, UAS is to offer subject matter specialists for dissemination of innovative farming technology through Mahindra Samridhi.

In addition, the university through a team of crop experts would also train M&M and its channel partners' executive to enhance competency on predominant kharif and rabi crops.

Fellowships

According to Dr M.B. Chetti, Dean, College of Agriculture, UAS Dharwad, who was instrumental in co-ordinating with the company, about 28 students both undergraduate and post-graduate students from Dharwad and Bijapur campus would benefit in the way of fellowships for pursuing the studies.

The company would also support research and outreach activities for the benefit of farmers.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651581700.htm>

Back Profit booking cools edible oils



Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Jan. 5

Edible oils continued to rule weak for the third consecutive day with most declining further by Rs 5/10 kg.

In the absence of fresh local demand, profit booking by speculators, resale selling pressure and weak global market cooled down the market sentiment. Volumes continued at low level. In Mumbai, groundnut oil, soya refined oil and rapeseed oil declined by Rs 5, and palmolein by Rs 2. Cotton refined and sunflower oil were steady. In Gujarat, groundnut oil declined further by Rs 20 a tin on higher arrivals and thin demand. Indore NBOT soya oil futures also declined, tracking sharp fall in Malaysian palm oil.

A wholesale trader said that in the absence of fresh demand on the ready market, the volume was restricted to about 120-150 tonnes of palmolein in resale in the range of Rs 582 -585 for 10 kg, for ready, weekly and forward delivery. Refineries were quoting higher rates. Stockists are already have sufficient stocks and pending contracts, arresting their fresh buying.

Higher arrivals of groundnut in Gujarat and soyabean in Madhya Pradesh weighed on the sentiment. In Rajkot, Saurashtra groundnut oil price declined to Rs 1,185 (Rs 1,205) a tin and Rs 765 (Rs 780) for 10 kg loose. Malaysian crude palm oil (CPO) futures fell sharply as investors booked profits, after prices hit a fresh 34-month high on Tuesday. It dropped the most in three weeks after it became more expensive than soyabean oil for the first time in more than three years, increasing the appeal of the rival oil for use in food and fuels. Malaysia's CPO January contracts closed at MYR 3,828 (3,907) and February at MYR 3,830 (3,913). Indore NBOT soya oil January contracts ended at Rs 626.90 (Rs 632.10) and February was at Rs 641.30 (Rs 642.60). Mumbai commodity exchange spot rate (Rs/10kg): Groundnut oil 775 (780), soya refined oil 610 (615), sunflower expeller refined 665 (660), sunflower refined 720 (720), rapeseed refined 638 (643), rapeseed expeller refined 608 (613), cotton refined 595 (595) and palmolein 585 (587).

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651601700.htm>

Back Sluggish demand reins in spot chana



Indore, Jan. 5

Sluggish demand in pulses and decline in chana futures dragged spot prices of chana, which was quoted Rs 25-Rs 30 lower at Rs 2,340-Rs 2,350 a quintal. Chana futures continued to edge lower on Wednesday with its January and February contracts on the NCDEX being quoted at Rs 36 and Rs 13 lower at Rs 2,522 and Rs 2,541 respectively.

On the other hand, dollar chana or chickpea gained Rs 50 on slightly improved domestic demand. In the spot, better quality of dollar chana was quoted at Rs 4,400-Rs 4,750 a quintal with about 1,500 bags arriving in Indore mandis on Wednesday. Poor quality of dollar chana was quoted as low as Rs 4,000 a quintal. In the container, 42-44 count dollar chana was quoted at Rs 4,900 a quintal. Among the pulse seeds, masoor continued to rally high on improved demand and weak arrival of the indigenous variety. On Wednesday, it was quoted at Rs 3,300 a quintal. Prices of other pulse seeds remained steady on subdued demand with moong quoted at Rs 3,500-Rs 4,050 a quintal, urad at Rs 3,800-Rs 4,200, and tur quoted at Rs 3,600-Rs 3,625 a quintal respectively. Among pulses, chana dal declined by Rs 25, while masoor dal perked up by Rs 100. In the spot, chana dal (bold) quoted at Rs 3,000-Rs 3,025, chana dal (medium) at Rs 2,900-Rs 2,925 and chana dal (average) quoted at Rs 2,775-Rs 2,800 a quintal. Masoor dal gained Rs 25 on improved demand and weak arrival. In the spot, masoor dal (bold) Rs 4,000-Rs 4,025, masoor dal (medium) quoted at Rs 3,800-Rs 3,825 and masoor dal (average) quoted at Rs 3,675-Rs 3,700 a quintal.

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Back Sugar down on weak mill tender rates



Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Jan. 5

Spot sugar prices at the Vashi wholesale market declined by Rs 10-12 on cues from weak mill tender rates and selling pressure in naka delivery rates. Naka and mill tender rates dropped Rs 25-30 a quintal in the absence of fresh demand and under pressure from mills to offload the current month's allotment of quota in time. Mr Jagdish Rawal of B. Bhogilal and Co said: "Higher quota of 17 lakh tonnes for the current month and less than expected demand from local and upcountry buyers because of cold weather condition almost in all parts of country, mounted pressure on mills to maintain balance between production, sale of quota within time and dispatches to avoid increase in inventory. Most of the mills tender are kept open due to unexpected weak demand from stockists and traders. Sugar futures dropped Rs 100 a quintal on the national level commodity exchanges."

"On Tuesday about 12-13 mills came with the tender offer and sold about 45,000-50,000 bags in the range of Rs 2,830-2,860 for S-grade and Rs 2,870-2,985 a quintal for M-grade. Neighbouring States buying was almost nil. Freight rates were steady. Arrivals in the market were about 44-45 truckloads (100 bags each) and despatch was about 43-44 truckloads" he said.

According to the Bombay Sugar Merchants Association, spot sugar rate for S-grade was

Rs 2,956-3,006 (Rs 2,961-3,010) and M-grade Rs 2,980-3,061 (Rs 2,998-3,061). Naka delivery rates were Rs 2,910-2,950 (Rs 2930-2,960) for S-grade and Rs 2,940-2,980 (Rs 2,970-3,000) for M-grade.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651591700.htm>

Back Castor prices up in spot, down in futures



Our Correspondent

Rajkot, Jan. 5

The castor market witnessed a mixed trend with prices rising in the spot market, while dropping in the futures market. On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange (RCX), market participants booked profit to drag prices down. On the RCX, the March contract rose to the day's high of Rs 3,720 a quintal and closed at Rs 3,669, a drop Rs 18 a quintal. The RCX

spot prices increased by Rs 39.50 to Rs 4,015/quintal.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), castor February contracts decreased by Rs 26.50 to Rs 3,914, with an open interest of 5,190 lots.

A senior member of RCX and past president, Mr Harilal Chaganlal, said, "Today's market dropped since market participant booked profit after sharp rise in the past few days. Moreover, other oilseeds and edible oil markets' downfall also had an impact on castor."

He said: "The market will come down more during the coming weeks as there will be a selling pressure."

On the other hand, spot price has continued to increase as arrivals are still low. Some traders reported that castor crop had been damaged in the untimely rain in November and that is why arrivals were below expectations. Currently, in Gujarat about 25,000-30,000 bags of castor arrive in the market every day and it has increased this week. Last week, it was about 20,000 bags a day.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651571700.htm>

Back Slack trading keeps rice flat



Our Correspondent

Karnal, Jan. 5

Prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice continued to rule flat as there was not much activity in the market.

On Wednesday, Pusa-1121 steam (new) ruled at Rs 5,150-5,200 a quintal, while the old variety was quoted at around Rs 5,250. Pusa-1121 sela (new) was at Rs 4,150; old variety was at Rs 4,300.

Pusa-1121 raw (new) ruled between Rs 5,050 and Rs 5,100, while the old variety was quoted at around Rs 5,200. Pusa (sela) ruled at Rs 3,200 and Pusa (raw) at Rs 4,200. Basmati sela quoted at Rs 6,000, and basmati raw at Rs 7,000.

Brokens such as Tibar was at Rs 3,100, Dubar at Rs 2,300 and Mongra at Rs 2,000.

Permal sela ruled at Rs 2,000-2,175, while Permal steam ruled at Rs 2,190 a quintal. Sharbati sela sold at Rs 2,700-2,725 and Sharbati steam around Rs 3,000 a quintal.

Paddy trading

Around 5,000 bags of PR were sold between Rs 1,010 and Rs 1,030.

About 2,200 bags of Sharbati ruled at Rs 1,600. Sugandha-999 arrived in about 3,000 bags, and was quoted at Rs 1,650. Around 2,500 bags of Pusa (duplicate basmati) were quoted at Rs 2,000-2,200. Around 7,000 bags of Pusa-1121 ruled at Rs 1,900- 2,300. About 2,000 bags of pure basmati quoted at Rs 2,200-Rs 2,500.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651721800.htm>

Back Spot rubber zooms to new high

Aravindan

Kottayam, Jan. 5

Domestic rubber prices explored further highs on Wednesday. The market continued its upward journey on supply concerns and gains in trend setting international markets. On

the spot, prices ruled firm, following the bullish mood on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

“The present price hike is the true reflection of the international situation. The price can be said as neither high nor low,” Adv. Joy Nadukkara, Ex. MP and President, Meenachil Rubber Marketing and Processing Cooperative Society said. “In all other producing countries, the price situation is almost the same. It is not a phenomenon peculiar to India. Our production is also not satisfactory commensurate with the total rubber area available. It ought to have been much higher. Climatic change is also yet another set back to bring down the production,” he said.

Sheet rubber firmed up to Rs 212 (210) a kg, according to traders. The grade increased to Rs 210.50 (209.50) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to the official Web site of the Rubber Board.

The January series improved to Rs 214.26 (212.37), February to Rs 221.67 (218.88), March to Rs 226.75 (223.52) and April to Rs 233.05 (230.23) a kg for RSS 4 on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) flared up to Rs 230.94 (226.39) a kg at Bangkok. The grade improved further at its January futures to ¥419 (Rs 231.06) from ¥416 a kg during the day session and then to ¥422.4 (Rs 232.97) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 212 (210); RSS-5: 202 (201); ungraded: 198 (197); ISNR 20: 208 (207) and latex 60 per cent 143 (142).

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[Back](#) Seasonal carrots

P.V. Sivakumar



In demand:A vendor stocks winter carrots (Dacus Carota) that have arrived from Bidar, Karnataka, in Hyderabad on Wednesday. Priced at Rs 20-30 a kg, these carrots are in good demand.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010652291900.htm>

Back TN hikes milk procurement price

Our Bureau

Chennai, Jan. 5

The Tamil Nadu Government has announced a hike in milk procurement prices benefitting dairy farmers. However, it has not passed on the hike to consumers who will be insulated from the hike.

According to an official press release, the Government has hiked procurement price by Rs 1.10 a litre on cow milk and Rs 2.20 a litre on buffalo milk. This will benefit the dairy farmers who supply to the dairy cooperatives. However, this hike will not affect the sale price of 'Aavin' dairy cooperative's milk brand which will continue at prevailing rates, the release said.

This takes the total procurement price of cow's milk for the dairy cooperatives to Rs 17.10

a litre. For buffalo milk the procurement price will be about Rs 24.

Based on official statistics this benefits over 22.29 lakh dairy farmers who supply about 26.34 lakh litres milk daily to the cooperatives. The dairy cooperatives sell about 22.37 lakh litres a day with nearly half that quantity sold into Chennai market.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651991900.htm>

Back Pepper futures rebound on domestic buying

G. K. Nair

Kochi, Dec. 5

Pepper futures bounced back on good domestic buying support which activated the bull operators, pushing the market up. All contracts moved up on Wednesday. There were more domestic buyers than sellers and that aided the price rise on both the futures and spot market. Switching over and additional purchases were witnessed in the futures market also. Meanwhile, according to the sources, around 1,100 tonnes of pepper were deposited in the exchange from October to December 2010.

The January contract on the NCDEX increased by Rs 229 to close at Rs 23,134 a quintal. February and March contracts went up by Rs 250 and Rs 250, respectively, to close at Rs 23,408 and Rs 23,632 a quintal.

The total turn over dropped by 1,954 tonnes to close at 12,028 tonnes. Total open interest moved up by 101 tonnes to close at 13,619 tonnes, indicating additional purchases. Spot prices increased by Rs 200 on good domestic demand to close at Rs 21,700 (ungarbled) and Rs 22,200 (MG 1) a quintal.

Date:06/01/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651611800.htm>

Back R.S. Sodhi is Amul MD

Our Bureau

Ahmedabad, Jan. 5

Mr R.S. Sodhi has been appointed as Managing Director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), Anand, India's largest food company with annual turnover of nearly Rs 9,000 crore. GCMMF markets the famous Amul brand of milk, milk products and other food items.

An alumni of the first batch of the Institute of Rural Management-Anand (IRMA), the 52-year-old Mr Sodhi has been associated with GCMMF for the last 29 years. He holds an engineering degree in agriculture from Udaipur, Rajasthan. Mr Sodhi, in-charge MD of the federation for the past seven months, succeeding Mr B.M. Vyas, is credited with giving Amul a 26 per cent growth in turnover during this tenure.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651641800.htm>

Back 81,000 kg more tea on offer at Coonoor sale

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, Jan. 5

An analysis of brokers' final listing shows that a volume of 12.45 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No: 1 of 2011 of the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association to be conducted on Thursday and Friday.

The market is re-opening tomorrow after a fortnight closure for Christmas-New Year celebrations.

This volume is 81,000 kg more than the offer at the last auctions of 2010 but it is as much as 3.87 lakh kg less than the offer this time last year. Of the 12.45 lakh kg on offer, 8.80 lakh kg belong to the leaf grades and 3.65 lakh kg to the dust grades.

As much as 11.34 lakh kg belong to CTC variety and only 1.11 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 0.60 lakh kg belong to orthodox while 8.20 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.51 lakh kg belong to orthodox while 3.14 lakh kg, CTC.

In the 12.45 lakh kg, fresh tea accounts for 11.03 lakh kg. As much as 1.42 lakh kg comprises teas remaining unsold in previous auctions.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/06/stories/2011010651661800.htm>

Back Delhi to host expo on horticulture, floriculture

Our Bureau

New Delhi, Jan. 5

New Delhi will host an international horticulture and floriculture exposition during January 7-9 accompanied by two conferences.

One with the theme 'Heralding New Horticulture Revolution for Investment, Production, Value Addition, Marketing and Exports' will be held on January 7 to discuss global and Indian scenarios, technology advances in crop production and protection, as well as export opportunities.

As many as 40 delegates from Holland are coming as a trade mission to showcase their expertise in a pavilion with the idea of exploring technical tie-ups and joint ventures, Mr M.B. Naqvi, Organiser, told Business Line.

An Indo-Dutch seminar will be held on January 8 wherein Dutch and Indian experts will share their knowledge about global trade trends and the way forward, specifically for floriculture.

India is among the world's largest producers of horticulture crops. The sector enjoys huge

growth potential, but is in need of investment and technology infusion. It is one of the Government's focus areas.

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