

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:07 IST COIMBATORE, July 19, 2011

Technology brings farmers closer to scientists

Field coordinators to send pictures of crops to scientists to analyse and provide instant solutions



Scores of Tamil Nadu farmers will now learn to take pictures using a digital camera, upload them on the computer, use the internet to send them, and also learn to read SMS alerts on the mobile phone. All this related to the crop they cultivate.

They will be initiated into electronic agriculture or 'e-Velanmai', the Information and Communications Technology (ICT)-enabled agricultural extension model, which has been successfully tested on over 1,000 farmers for three years.

A Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water Bodies Restoration and Management (IAMWARM) project of the State Government, it is being implemented by the Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies (CARDS), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, with the support from World Bank.

According to C. Karthikeyan, Principal Investigator of 'e-Velanmai,' the model involves providing timely and appropriate technical advice to farmers using ICT tools. They are used to link the scientists and farmers.

The model works this way: When a farmer spots a pest or disease or any other problem in his crop, he has to contact the Field Coordinator of his area.

The Field Co-ordinator photographs the affected areas, uploads them in the laptop and sends them via internet to the expert team at TNAU or any of the nearest research station of the university.

The expert analyses the problem and sends the solution through the same channel (see image) or over mobile phone to the farmer directly.

The model has gone through various teething problems which has helped it to evolve into a better and popular option in extension.

Says Mr. Karthikeyan: "We have standardised the timing for field visit by the Field Co-ordinator, uploading pictures, and getting the solutions, so that they are all completed between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and the farmer gets his problem solved by the end of the day. If it is an endemic problem, then the scientist visits the farm and then offers solutions."

"Though the model was introduced free of cost in July 2007 in three command areas of Palar, Aliyar and Varahanadhi, it did not receive a good response.

Then it was decided to offer the service based on a membership fee between Rs. 50 and Rs. 300 depending on the size of the land. This saw farmers getting enrolled, and there have been 1,250 members using the model for three years.

At the end of the period, World Bank has reviewed the project and found it to be an effective model of extension that can be taken forward," Mr. Karthikeyan adds.

Accordingly, the World Bank has sanctioned a one-year grant of Rs. 59 lakh to CARDS to scale-up the model starting July 2011 to reach 19 sub-basins in 14 districts to cover maximum number of farmers. N. Ajjan, Director, adds that model will be scaled up not only in terms of adding districts and farmers, but also in services.

"We are roping in the help of farmers' associations, Water Users' Associations and Self Help Groups to get as many enrolled as possible. The rough target is to enrol at least 1,350 farmers on a monthly basis in the 19 sub-basins for a year.

Farmers, and in most cases their children are getting trained in handling the ICT tools so that when the year ends, farmers can use the model independently without the help of the Field Coordinator,” he says.

Fee

The membership fee of all the farmers is being planned to be used by the Water Users' Association for some agricultural use to benefit farmers.

CARDS is gearing up to get the model on track so that it can be handed over to the Department of Agriculture next year.

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:07 IST ERODE, July 19, 2011

Turmeric still hot pick of farmers

Acreage under the crop to cross 10,000 hectares this year too



precious: The area under turmeric cultivation in Erode district is expected to increase this year too. – PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

The area under turmeric cultivation in Erode district is expected to cross 10,000 hectares this year too as farmers hope that the prices of yellow spice will increase in the near future.

Farmers had already covered more than 6,000 hectares under the crop this year. “The sowing will continue till August and there is no doubt that the acreage under the crop will cross 10,000 hectares this year as well,” say horticulture officials.

The normal area under turmeric crop in the district is around 6,000 hectares.

The expectation that the prices of yellow spice would improve had encouraged more farmers to take up the crop. "Besides, the seed price had come down significantly thus reducing the cost of cultivation," officials said.

The prices had crossed Rs. 17,000 a quintal during the last season, making many turmeric farmers in the district richer. The bullish market had encouraged the farmers to double the acreage under turmeric cultivation in the district in 2010.

"Farmers are expecting a repeat of the 2010 market trend. This is the primary reason for bringing more acres under the crop," said Erode Turmeric Merchants Association president RKV Ravishankar.

The turmeric prices currently hovers around 6,500 a quintal. "We expect that the prices may go down further in the near future. But it is not the right time to predict the prices in the coming year," he added.

In 2011, the Erode market alone received over 30 lakh bags. The arrival was expected to increase by 30 per cent in the coming year. "If that happens, then there is a possibility that the prices may even go down to Rs. 5,000 a quintal," traders here pointed out.

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:06 IST TIRUCHI, July 19, 2011

Horticulture college for women inaugurated

Buildings to be constructed with allotment of Rs. 10 crore. The first semester course of the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University Horticulture College and Research Institute for Women, announced by Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, was inaugurated at the TNAU- Anbil Dharmalingam Agriculture College and Research Institute at Navalur Kuttapattu near here on Monday.

The buildings for the horticulture college would come up on a site this year for which the State government had allotted Rs. 10 crore. The Chief Minister laid the foundation for the college during her camp in Tiruchi last month. The college is to be constructed along with its fields for research on an area of about 45 acres.

T. N. Balamohan, Special Officer of the Horticulture College and Research Institute for Women, said that a total of 36 women students were admitted through single window counselling process at TNAU, Coimbatore, of whom 32 have joined the course on Monday, including eight students from other States selected by the Indian Council of Agriculture Research based on all-India entrance examination.

V. Jeyabal, Dean, said that out of 74 students admitted to the agriculture course being offered by the Anbil Dharmalingam Agriculture College and Research Institute, 61 students had joined the course. He said that the college specifically took up research programmes on evolving 'samba' paddy suited for the alkaline soil in the State. He also explained the success of the rice varieties which were gaining popularity among farmers of alkaline regions, particularly in Nagapattinam district.

He said that agriculture course provided prospective scope for students and asked the students to develop the research facilities available at the college.

P. Pandiyarajan, Professor and Head, Crop Management; G. Gajendran, Professor and Head of the Department of Crop Protection; S. K. Ganesan, Professor and Head of the Department of Crop Improvement; N.R. Padmanaban, Professor and Head, Department of Social Sciences and Languages; Sabir Ahmed, Associate Professor (Education) and M. Manimekalai, coordinator, spoke. They spoke on different research programmes being taken up in agriculture and horticulture by the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University and its colleges.

Earlier, students of the Horticulture college were given a warm reception by the senior students of the Anbil Dharmalingam Agriculture College and Research Institute.

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:12 IST TIRUCHI, July 19, 2011

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 83.15 feet on Monday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 6,329 cusecs and the discharge, 13,007 cusecs.

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:04 IST DAVANGERE, July 19, 2011

Steps initiated to pay for paddy procured

The district administration has agreed to pay for the paddy sold by the farmers so far at the procurement centres by the end of this week. It was also decided not to reduce the weight of the bags by two or three kilograms to compensate the high moisture level in the crop.

The district administration has instructed the municipal corporation to accept paddy if it had the stipulated 17 per cent moisture and reject anything beyond that level.

Accordingly, the corporation officials have been directed not to lessen the paddy even by a kg and he asked them to reject the paddy if it had high moisture content. "Do not get in to unnecessary controversies" they were advised .

The official also said that farmers of border villages could bring their paddy to any procurement centers of their convenience and sell it there. (EOM) Kind attn. of News Editor. I am sending a picture to support the above story. With regards hsnk.

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:12 IST KADAPA, July 19, 2011

Bankers urged to advance crop loans to tenant farmers

Helpline to be set up to resolve the problems of farmers, says Kadapa Collector



Farmers' issues: District Collector V. Anil Kumar at a meeting with bankers in Kadapa on Monday.

District Collector V. Anil Kumar directed bankers on Monday to sanction crop loans to tenant farmers who possessed loan eligibility cards.

Addressing bankers at the District Consultative Committee meeting in the Collectorate Sabha Bhavan, he said the government passed an ordinance to give loan eligibility cards to tenant farmers. Officials identified 10,164 tenant farmers for issuing loan eligibility cards to them. Cards were issued to them in divisional meetings held on July 12, 13 and 16, he said. The number of tenant farmers was very less in Kadapa district compared to other districts.

The government took the scheme prestigiously and hence bankers should liberally sanction crop loans to all the tenant farmers who were issued loan eligibility cards. It would require Rs. 15 crore, which amounted to only one per cent of the targets of bankers, Mr. Avil Kumar said. He advised bankers to take the cooperation of tahsildars, MPDOs and Indira Kranthi Patham staff and disburse loans.

Taluk-level meetings would be conducted from next week. He assured to resolve problems if brought to his notice and added that a helpline would be set up in Collectorate. In case the land owners had already taken loans, the tenant farmers should be organised into joint liability groups and sanctioned loans, the Collector advised. He urged bankers not to entertain fears on repayment of crop loans.

Guidelines

Joint Collector K. Nirmala said the State government boldly enacted a legislation to assist tenant farmers, which was non-existent in other States. State-Level Bankers Committee guidelines would be sent to all the bank branch managers. She assured the cooperation of the Revenue Department to bankers.

DRDA Project Director G. Gopal said joint mandal-level bankers' meeting would be held from July 19, to deliberate on any problems. Lead District Manager Veera Reddy asked bankers to implement the scheme despite the work load.

Andhra Pragathi Grameena Bank Regional Manager Subba Reddy and Assistant General Manager of SBI Ratna Kumari assured to meet the set targets. AGM of NABARD Krishnamurthy, bankers and district officials participated.

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- *'Only Rs. 15 crore required in Kadapa, which amounts to one per cent of targets of bankers'*
 - *Collector asks bankers to take help of Tahsildars, MPDOs and IKP staff in disbursing loans*
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Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:12 IST HYDERABAD, July 19, 2011

Tobacco farmers meet Kiran

A delegation of the Virginia Tobacco Farmers' Federation from West Godavari district on Monday requested Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy to help reduce the interest rate on rescheduled crop loans to 7 per cent from the existing 14.5 per cent.

They thanked the Chief Minister for waiving the interest on crop loans taken last year. Mr. Reddy told them that the decision was taken only to help the farmers though it imposed Rs. 650-crore burden on the State.

Mr. Reddy suggested the farmers to repay old loans and take loans at 3 per cent interest rate.

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:07 IST COIMBATORE, July 19, 2011

Free training in dairy farming

The Veterinary University Training and Research Centre, Coimbatore, of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, will organise a free on-campus training in dairy farming on July 26 and 27.

According to a release, there is an increasing awareness in Coimbatore district about dairy farming as a profitable livestock enterprise. Farmers are maintaining high-yielding crossbred dairy animals for milk production. Mini dairy units are being established in the district. There is a domestic as well as export demand for milk.

The training will comprise lectures and video lectures on selection of dairy animals, housing, breeding, feeding and disease management of dairy cows. Interested farmers and

entrepreneurs can contact the centre on 0422-2669965 for registration; or visit the centre at Kalapatti Pirivu, Saravanampatty, Coimbatore – 641035.

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:06 IST ERODE, July 19, 2011

Cooperative Dept. to open 20 agri service centres

Facility to rent out agri machinery to farmers

Twenty agricultural service centres will be opened by the cooperative department in Erode this year.

The centres would be opened in the premises of primary agricultural cooperative societies and they would provide agricultural machinery on rent to the farmers, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies, S. Babu, said, while attending a programme held at the Palapalayam primary agricultural co-operative credit society near Perundurai recently.

On rent

Mr. Babu said machines such as tractors and power tillers would be available on rent from these centres, he said.

The primary objective of the initiative was to help the farmers to overcome the problem of labour shortage, Mr. Babu said.

Participating in the function, Perundurai MLA N.D. Venkatachalam encouraged the farmers to adopt drip irrigation for effective water management, saying the State government was providing subsidy to the farmers to install drip irrigation system in their farms.

Enhance yield

He also urged the farmers to adopt methods such as drip irrigation to enhance crop yield.

Mr. Venkatachalam also lauded the Palapalayam agricultural co-operative credit society for achieving 100 per cent loan recovery target last year.

Later, he distributed loans to the tune of Rs. 44.15 lakh to 93 persons.

Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies P. Senthilkumar, Chief Revenue Officer of Erode District Central Co-operative Bank Malarvizhi, and senior officials participated in the programme.

Published: July 19, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: July 19, 2011 04:10 IST KANNUR, July 19, 2011

Rain causes crop loss in Kannur

Landslips at two places near Cheruvathur; houses damaged



RAIN FURY: Floodwaters rise around a house at Thazhe choova in the incessant rain in Kannur on Monday; and (right) a house at Bevinje, near Kasaragod, that was destroyed in the rain.

Heavy rain that lashed the district over the past few days flooded low-lying areas and destroyed crops in the hill areas. The areas inundated include Chalodevayal near Valapattanam, Kappad near Thazhe Chovva and Chalad. Some families in the flood-affected areas were shifted.

Heavy rain accompanied by strong winds also damaged crops at Therthalli, Marygiri, Chiyancheri, and Eruvatti in the eastern hill areas. Nearly 500 rubber trees were uprooted in the areas last night.

Two houses were reportedly damaged. V.V. Joy of Cheeyancheri lost 200 of his rubber plants in the winds that swept the area on Sunday afternoon.

A poultry farm run by V.V. Johnson was also damaged. Hundreds of chickens and hatchlings perished.

Damage assessed

Local MLA James Mathew visited Marygiri and nearby areas to assess the damage of crops and properties.

Over 100 hectares under cultivation and 60 houses in the district have been damaged in rain-related incidents since the onset of monsoon.

Families shifted

Staff Reporter writes from Kasaragod: Landslips occurred at two places near Cheruvathur in the torrential rain lashing the district over the last two days. Nineteen families have been shifted to temporary shelters. One house at Bevinje, near here, was destroyed while 12 others suffered damages. Sundara Purusha, 65, a resident of Puthige, near here, was killed, taking the number of deaths in the district reported during the rainy season to eight.

Landslips occurred at Kadankode and Nellikkal, near Cheruvathur. Twelve families in the area have been asked to vacate their place of dwelling following threat of landslip in the locality.

Hosdurg Tahsildar and senior Taluk officials visited the affected localities to supervise the relief works. .

The building of the Government Higher Secondary School in Kasaragod was partially damaged.

An estimated Rs.2.70 lakh worth property suffered damages as the district recorded 98.4 mm rain since Sunday. The rain also caused damages to standing crops, including rubber trees, coconut and areca nut trees and plantains. Sea erosion was reported in Kanhangad, Ajanur, Uppala, Bandiyode and Berika beaches. Several fishermen families have been asked to shift to safer places. The water level in major rivers in the district continued to rise alarmingly causing concern among those living close to the river. There was power disruption in many localities in the region. The district has so far suffered damages estimated at Rs.10.33 crore in the rain fury.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Jul 19

Max Min

38.4° | 28°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 75%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 5:50

Sunset: 18:39

Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Wednesday, Jul 20

Max Min

37° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

Jul 21



32° | 28°

Rainy

Friday

Jul 22



32° | 28°

Rainy

Saturday

Jul 23



32° | 27°

Rainy

Sunday

Jul 24



31° | 27°

Rainy

Monday

Jul 25



32° | 27°

Rainy

19 Jul, 2011, 06.01AM IST, Jayashree Bhosale,ET Bureau

Traders line Up for sugar export licence

PUNE: Because of the impending bullishness in world sugar market, traders are aggregating licences for selling five lakh tonnes sugar allocated in the second round of exports. Mills in the remote parts of Maharashtra, which could not find takers for their export licences in the first round of exports, now find traders queueing up for their licences.

There were no takers for sugar produced by mills which are far away from the Mumbai port and many could not get any response even after publishing their tender details. But the likely rally in global sugar prices has made the mill owners happy. "There are more queries from third-party exporters this time. The rate they are offering for purchasing the export licence is also double the rate offered in the first round," said Vilas Sonavane, managing director of Majalgaon sugar cooperative in Beed district.

Export quotas have been allocated to mills based on their production in the last three years. A majority of mills, which have got very small quotas, cannot export the quantity on their own as the shipment size is much larger than their quotas. Hence, exporters find it easy to pool the quota of mills with smaller capacities. Global sugar prices have risen as the sugar industry association of Brazil cut the forecast of cane output for Brazil by 6%.

Export houses are offering Rs 600/quintal to Rs 750/quintal to purchase sugar export licences from individual mills. This is almost double compared to Rs 250/quintal to Rs 300/quintal offered in the first round of export. A director of a Mumbai-based export house told ET on condition of anonymity, "We are purchasing sugar for Rs 3,325/quintal from mills whereas we are getting the freight-on-board price of \$770/quintal.."

Farmers brace up for 10 per cent urea hike

July 18, 2011 11:00:58 PM

Seema Sindhu | New Delhi

After the diesel price hike, farmers should be ready for a steep hike in the urea prices too. The Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) policy for urea is finally set to be presented to the Group of Ministers (GoM) within a week. The GoM is headed by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee.

A Fertiliser Ministry official told The Pioneer that the department of fertiliser has already prepared the note for the GoM and the policy is likely to be approved within this month. When implemented, it will increase the retail prices of urea by 10 per cent.

At present, urea is sold at Government-fixed prices, which is lower than its production and import cost. By bringing urea under NBS, the Government wants to reduce its fertiliser subsidy bill.

Farmers representative argue that this will further increase the farmers input cost and consequently the food prices. Already the country is battling with high food prices. Urea is the most commonly used fertiliser.

In January, the Government had announced a Committee of Secretaries (CoS) headed by Planning Commission member Saumitra Chaudhuri to carry out the task of freeing urea prices. The CoS had handed over the draft proposal on the same to the Fertiliser Ministry in May, but Fertiliser Minister MK Alagiri had certain reservations regarding the price hike and tax implications of gas price pooling.

The official said that now the Minister has given the nod and the note for GoM is ready. The proposal suggests 10 per cent increase in the urea prices from its current prices. Currently, price of urea is fixed at `3,310 per tonne for farmers and Government gives around `14,000

subsidy per tonne. Earlier, the Government increased the urea prices by 10 per cent last year after several years of freeze.

The draft proposal has fixed the subsidy for urea within the range of `4,000-`4,200 a tonne based on prevailing gas prices in 2009-10. This is less than what the industry had asked ie `4,600-`5,600 a tonne.

Taking a cautious approach, the proposal has recommended steps to "gradually decontrol" the urea prices as it is a politically sensitive issue. In the beginning, the price formulation has been worked in a manner that it will lead to 10 per cent price rise only, the official told.

The Government had freed prices of all non-urea fertilisers in the April last year by bringing them under NBS policy. Under NBS, the Government gives a fixed subsidy on the nutrients like — nitrogen, phosphorus, potash and sulphur contents for the entire year. In addition to the fixed subsidy on above mentioned nutrients, it gives an additional per tonne subsidy for subsidised fertiliser carrying other secondary nutrients and micro nutrients. And the companies are allowed to decide the farm gate prices. This reduces the Government's subsidy burden.

The Government is also concerned as consumption of urea has increased substantially after the implementation of NBS for potassic and phosphatic fertilisers leading to increased subsidy burden on urea. This year, the Government has budgeted a fertiliser subsidy of `49,997 crore against `54,976 crore in 2010-11.

After the GoM approval, the draft proposal would be sent to the Cabinet for its final approval. Now this is a priority of the Government which already facing a slowing economic threat and rising subsidy bill. This casts shadow over the Government's aim to narrow its fiscal deficit to 4.6 per cent of GDP in the current fiscal year from 4.7 per cent a year ago. Recently, the Government raised fuel prices to reduce the oil subsidies. Overall subsidy bill on food, petroleum and fertilisers is expected at `1,34,210 crore for the 2011-12 against `1,53,962 crore in 2010-11.

Monsoon best season for growing plants

July 19, 2011 12:51:31 AM

With Bhopal experiencing good rain and the whole city getting a green cover it is the best time to go in for flowering plants and for vegetable gardens, writes *Zafar Alam Khan*

There are so many joys in growing plants. Thousands of people grow plants and more start everyday. There are lots of advantages of gardening like fresh air all day long to breathe nice aroma from the flowers, home grown vegetables etc. So, here we present a small and confined practical guide to tell you about all this.

This year rains are clement on the city and are relieving, the whole city has got covered with a green sheet due to the timely and adequate rain till now. This is the best time for those who wish to make their house or courtyard green. A little initiative now would provide year-long greenery. If one is fond of gardening but do not have space for garden in house, still the surroundings could be made green by plantation on terrace, house roofs and flowerpots. The plants already planted in gardens and flowerpots could also be provided new shape easily for a change in this season.

According to gardening experts rainy season is the best for sowing seeds and plants and cropping of plants. Those fond of gardening and know a bit about it love to plant flowery plants in the rainy season. It is in this season that plants sellers/gardeners are seen roaming around in lanes and colonies selling plants and the sale of flowery plants increases in the private and Government nurseries.

In this season plants like Bougainvillea, Sewanti, Gudhal (Hibiscus), Adenium, Tekoma, Noranga, Juhi (Jasmine), Genda, Celosia, Guldaudi, Balsam, Guinea and Ixora can be planted. Local rose also remains in full bloom in this season. All these plants can be planted both in flowerpots and gardens.

Fruit garden

If there is some open place around the house than one could also take taste of own gardens

fruits. Mango, guava, pomegranate, oranges, sapota, papaya, banana, etc can be grown in small areas and rainy season is the best time for growing these trees and plants. These plants start giving fruits from one to three years. Some varieties of guava and papaya start giving fruits in just one year. Once these plants get deep rooted they do not require much care.

Kitchen garden

Kitchen garden could also be developed in this season. Gourd, tomato, brinjal, cauliflower, bitter gourd etc grow easily and do not require much care and grown once can very easily provide a couple of months vegetable. For this 10-12 large size flowerpots can be bought and filled with mixture of soil and fertiliser and either the seeds or plants of choicest vegetables can be grown in them. Tomato plants very easily grow in the flowerpots, climber vegetables flowerpots should be kept at such a place so that they can easily climb up.

Greenery in terrace

If one lives in a flat than the plantation can be done at terrace, gallery or roof by putting up flowerpots. Money plants can be spread in any corner of the flat to make it attractive. For making the corner more attractive some flowery plants can be planted. The house can be given beautiful touch by hanging flowerpots that could be hanged in terrace and galleries.

Where to get plants

Rose Garden and Government plant sale centre both at Link Road number one have ample stocks of the flowery and fruit plants and nowadays selling them.

Superintendent of the Rose Garden MH Saifi while talking to The Pioneer said, "Plants of gourd, cauliflower, tomato and other vegetables can be bought from garden. Flowery and fertilisers are also available for sale in the garden."

Saifi further said that the plants are very economical and costs from just `5 to `60.

In-charge of the Government garden number 1-plant sale centre Rajendra Sharma said, "The

plants planted in the rainy season grows very fast and requires very little care."

Sharma further said that this also being the reason that people opt for buying plants in this season. Before planting fertiliser should be mixed in the flowerpots and or bed. Cow dung and or fertilisers use prove to be very good for the plants, he added.

Indoor plants

Indoor plants absorb the carbon dioxide of the house that helps in reducing the temperature by few degrees. Money plants, fern, palm leaks and bonsai plants also make the interior of the house more beautiful. Palm and Chinese bamboo can also be used to decorate the rooms; these could be put up near study desk and in the living room.

Plant Care

Here are a few tips to keep plants looking fresh and healthy:

Selection of plants should depend on availability of space and light. Even though indoor plants do not require direct sunlight, they need bright natural light. To avoid growth of plants in one direction (the direction from which it gets light), turn the plant occasionally to promote fuller growth in all directions.

Plants in water-holding potting mediums require less frequent watering.

Watering should be twice a day in hot and dry seasons. Repotting of plants should be done at least once a year, depending on quality of potting medium. Plants need to be fertilised regularly for healthy growth. Especially flowering plants like roses and hibiscus need regular fertilisers for good flowering.

Plants should be pruned occasionally to maintain their shape, to remove unwanted damaged parts and to promote new fresh growth. Check should be kept for any sign of infection by plant pests. Plants should be treated with appropriate insecticide or fungicide at earliest stage of infection to avoid damage to plants.

Three main factors are important for the growth and health of plants - Light, water and fertilisers.

Forest department organises workshop to recycle industrial waste

July 18, 2011 11:56:33 PM

PNS | Jamshedpur

The Dhalbhum forest division organised a one-day workshop on 'Industrial Waste for recycling of industrial wastes and connecting it to livelihood programmes for the poor.

The workshop was organised at the Nature Information Centre in Tata Steel Zoological Park on Monday. The aim of this workshop is to create awareness about reclamation and uses of industrial wastes in and around Jamshedpur

Representatives of several companies attended the programme to learn about better uses of its wastes, which can help the poor for an additional income. The workshop discussed on industrial wastes like fly ash from thermal power plant; slag from iron and steel companies and OBD (over burden dump) from mining. Representatives from rural areas also participated in the workshop. "We want to generate livelihood by using industrial wastes. The industries here with the help of their wastes can generate additional income for the poor and they need to know that. We had also invited some of the farmers from rural areas so that they too accept the concept which is new in the area," said Sanjeev Kumar, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Dhalbhum.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Jul 19, 2011

Good factory health will mean fair returns for cane growers

Kunal Bose / July 19, 2011, 0:33 IST

The sheer number of farmers growing cane is too important a constituency that ruling parties in states like Uttar Pradesh would stop pandering to, for the sake of an ideal, long-delayed reform.

Its entry would allow the Centre alone to fix incentivised prices of an important cash crop, without the states getting involved. It is because of the stifling of factory operations by the governments at the Centre and in cane-growing states that the Indian Sugar Mills Association (Isma) president, Narendra Murkumbi, has described sugar as the “most controlled of all industries”.

If the states have found cane an option to patronise farmers, the controls spelt by the Centre come from the perception that sugar prices leave a major impact on family budget. This, though, is not the case. In the new series of the rural and urban combined consumer price index, sugar has a weight of 1.91, against 14.59 for cereals, and 5.44 for vegetables. It is against this and also that bulk buyers like confectioners lift around 70 per cent of sugar, Murkumbi recommended reforms to allow factories to go through surplus seasons without getting bruised. The reforms will have the extra merit of not treading the path of states.

Murkumbi has acted sensibly by leaving issues like cane-area deregulation and cane price-fixing, where the states are involved. He pleads for taking two steps ahead in the industry’s deregulation. That the monthly release mechanism is retrograde has been proved between October 2009 and February 2010, when prices rose to unacceptable levels on fears of shortage in production. It does not allow factories to do sales planning, thus affecting cash flows. Due to this, the industry is often laden with more than acceptable levels of stocks. We have learnt from Murkumbi that the food ministry, in a note to the cabinet, has expressed reservations about the mechanism.

The surprise spurt in production at a later stage during 2009-10 allowed the 2010-11 season to open with comfortable stocks of 4.98 million tonnes. The production estimate for this season has now been scaled down to 24.2 million tonnes, from the earlier estimate of 25 to 25.5 million tonnes. After providing for domestic use, and exports made under obligation of past imports, and under OGL, as also imports of 340,000 tonnes, the country will open the next season in October with stocks of around six million tonnes. As is happening with the Food Corporation of India, sugar factories are also constrained for space, and Isma estimates the “value of stock balance with mills at a back-breaking Rs 30,000 crore.”

No surprise then that factories, instead of recovering production costs estimated at Rs 2,900 and Rs 2,700 a quintal for Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, respectively, are engaged in some

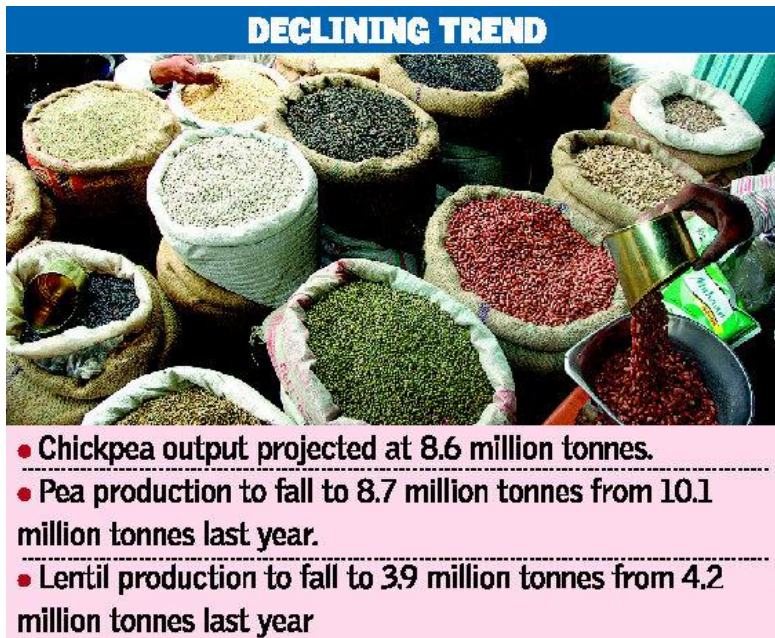
panic selling. Improvement in prices is there, since the recent announcement of the second tranche of a 500,000-tonne export. But an industry burdened by mounting stocks will get real relief if the government removes the stock holding limit on the traders. At the same time, it should allow further exports of one million tonnes to enable factories to benefit from exceptionally high world sugar prices, caused by concern about the Brazilian crop. The ideal opening stock for a season here is considered five million tonnes.

Another reform Murkumbi advocates is doing away with the levy sugar obligation, equivalent to 10 per cent of production. The government has a subsidy obligation of about Rs 70,000 crore on food, calculated to rise to Rs 100,000 crore, once the Food Security Act comes in. If it agrees to buy the levy amount directly from the market, its subsidy bill will be up Rs 2,500 crore. It is surprising that the industry has not been relieved of the levy burden, which incidentally obtains here only, despite the finance and commerce ministries no longer seeing merit in it.

Former Isma president Om Dhanuka says while the two overdue reforms will give much relief to factories, the industry's real redemption will depend on establishing "linkages between prices of cane and sugar and its by-products. Hopefully, the committee headed by Dr Rangarajan will soon be recommending an ideal linkage formula." Whatever the dispensation under the Dr Rangarajan formula, farmers will have the assurance of minimum prices in all situations. But, in the event the market favours sugar and its by-products, their rewards will be more.

According to Dhanuka, the principal objective of such linkages is to spare the industry of cyclicity (periods of high production followed by low production). Cane, a one year crop, has to compete with wheat, rice and cotton to catch the fancy of growers. Good working of factories on a sustainable basis will alone ensure fair returns for growers as also timely settling of cane bills, says Dhanuka.

World pulses output set to decline; price likely to remain firm



Vancouver, July 15:

With planted acreage and crop size set to decline in major origins and exporting countries, world pulses production is most likely to decline in 2011 by about 5 per cent which in turn will result in tighter supplies, said experts at the Canadian Special Crops Association convention here.

World output of pulses in 2010 was an estimated 60 million tonnes. In the current year, the output may fall to nearly 57 mt as a result of lower planted acreage in two of the large exporting countries Canada and the US as well as the world's largest producer India.

With demand from consuming markets expected to stay unabated, tighter supplies would mean firm prices.

Specifically, world pea production for 2011 is projected to decline to 8.7 mt from 10.1 mt in the previous year.

World lentil production is set to fall to 3.9 mt this year from 4.2 mt of last year. Chick pea story is no different with current year output seen at 8.6 mt as compared with last year's 9.2 mt.

In a panel discussion on world pulses outlook, experts pointed out that high price of chana in India tends to boost yellow pea imports into the country. The latter is admittedly the cheapest pulse available in the world market currently.

India has become the world's largest importer of yellow peas with 2010 volume reckoned at 1.5 mt. In the same vein, when Indian masoor prices remain high, Canadian red lentil exports improve. Obviously, given the price sensitivity of Indian market, the products are substitutable at given prices.

Canada, the world's largest exporter of pea and lentil, has been facing weather related problems since 2010. "Pulses will have to compete with other crops such as durum in order to retain acreage," an expert panelist pointed out adding that Canada needs to expand pulses acreage in 2012, but the crop will have to be remunerative relative to competing crops.

Canadian Wheat Board is set to lose its monopoly status by August 1, 2012. How this would impact wheat production, markets and prices is yet unclear.

The pulses market outlook for 2011 is somewhat bullish. Major origins including Canada, the US and India are beset with supply issues. On the other hand, demand is robust. Very clearly, South Asia in general and India in particular was the focus of attention at the Canadian Special Crops seminar because of the huge consumption demand this region generates. Expectations in the world market about decline in Indian kharif pulses crop size are running high. As of early July, acreage planted to various pulses has lagged. To what extent it would be made up remains to be seen. As of now, any estimate of crop size would be speculative.

New spinning machine enters Kerala's coir industry



New Coir Spinning Machine

Kochi, July 18:

Kerala's traditional and labour intensive coir industry is in the throes of experimenting with a new mini spinning machine capable of enhancing production of quality yarn coming up. The innovation will help the tufting industry and ensure better wages to workers.

Fabricated by a Bangalore-based company, it had undergone trials at the Coir Board's Central Institute of Coir Technology (CICT), Bangalore, before its formal launch by the Kerala Minister for Coir and Health, Mr Adoor Prakash, recently.

Trials

The Coir Board Chairman, Mr V.S.Vijayaraghavan, said that the machine would be subjected to detailed evaluation by the Central Coir Research Institute (CCRI), Kalavoor, Alapuzha, and the state-owned National Coir Management and Research Institute (NCMRI), Thiruvananthapuram, before its large scale commercialisation. If well accepted by the industry, the machine is expected to revolutionise the industry coming under the MSME sector, he said.

The yarn quality has already been vouched for by two major tufting mat manufacturers: the Alleppey Company and Cocotuft of the Travancore Mats and Matting company (TMCC). Costing roughly Rs 50,000 a unit, the one-person operable machine is capable of producing 23 kg of quality yarn a day, which can fetch an average wage of at least Rs 300 per head.

The Board also plans to recommend to the Centre the inclusion of the machine for allocation under the Mahila Coir Yojana at 75 per cent subsidy during the 12th plan period. If included, the machine would be distributed through the Board's 19 odd functional SFRUTI coir clusters spread over 11 coir producing States, including Assam and Tripura, Mr Vijayaraghavan said.

The Minister, during the launch of the machine, had also said the State Government would consider supplying the machine to coir workers under the BPL category free of cost as part of the government's efforts to alleviate the problems being faced by the industry due to low wages and resultant desertion of labour.

Cashew prices likely to rule firm till year-end



Kochi, July 18:

The cashew market was generally quiet last week but witnessed some scattered activity. The general price levels for W240 were from \$4.85 to \$4.95, W320 from \$4.55 to \$4.65, W450 and SW320 at around \$4.50, splits at around \$3.95 to \$4.00, pieces at around \$3.80 to \$3.90 an lb (f.o.b).

There was good buying interest at the lower-end of the range but except for some processors, mainly from Vietnam, there were few sellers at lower levels.

The domestic market was also quiet, but some business was being done by big processors, trade sources said.

Raw cashew nut (RCN) market was steady but good quality parcels were trading at high prices. "Some processors who do not have adequate kernel sales or need cash are selling some parcels at lower levels. RCN arrivals into India and Vietnam in the third quarter will be better but reduced labour availability will limit the conversion to kernels," said Mr Pankaj N. Sampat, a Mumbai-based dealer.

There is no change in the market outlook, he said. If there is good demand in coming weeks, either from importing countries or domestic market, “we might see prices moving up a bit in August/September. If demand is slow, prices will move in a narrow range at around current levels. In last quarter of the year, market movement will depend on crop prospects and RCN prices in Southern Hemisphere and contracting for end 2011 and 2012”.

Kernel prices

The only cause for a decline in kernel prices in 2011 would be if there is a big drop in kernel buying in the next three-four months. This does not seem likely because reduced shipments from all origins in the first-half and the trend of short-term buying in the last six-nine months means that inventories in importing countries are low. Even if the retail offtake in the US and Europe is lower than normal, importers (and some roasters) will have to continue buying from origin to meet their needs as forward buying has been limited.

Demand trends uncertain

There is a lot of uncertainty about demand trends and this is affecting the buying pattern. So far, the impact of the higher prices on demand has not been as bad as feared, the trade said. In most markets, part of the price increase has been passed on to consumers and in some markets, increase has been passed on in full.

A part of the price increase - caused by higher processing costs - cannot be rolled back. Only if RCN prices come down, can there be a significant drop in kernel prices.

Tea e-auction volume crosses 1-b kg mark



A tea garden near Coonoor. (file photo)

Coonoor, July 18:

The volume of tea handled by the e-auctions launched by Tea Board in 2009 has crossed the one-billion-kg mark this week.

“In all, in the six e-auction centres in the country, 1,007.42 million kg (mkg) have been offered for sale until this weekend, thereby crossing the one-billion-kg mark. Of this, about 728.69 mkg had been sold,” Tea Board Executive Director, Mr R. Ambalavanan, told Business Line.

“This has happened because of the support extended by different stakeholders including buyers, sellers, brokers and NSE.IT professionals. We have sought their continued support to make e-auction platform more efficient and transparent for better price situation,” Mr Ambalavanan said.

Kerala Oceanarium project gets ready to roll



A graphic representation of the proposed Oceanarium at Kochi.

Kochi, July 18:

Kerala's industrial development arm is expected to soon shortlist bidders for its Rs 350-crore oceanarium project, which is slated to come up on 40 acres of land along the coast at Puthuvypeen in the city.

The first stage of the selection process involves qualification of bidders. The Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) will from today start giving out the request for qualification (RFQ) applications that will eventually be used to shortlist applicants.

After the shortlist is complete, the public-private partnership project would be awarded through a competitive bidding process.

The project, an initiative by the State Fisheries Management Society, is expected to turn into a major tourist attraction in Kochi, said Mr Alkesh Sharma, Managing Director of KSIDC, which has been made the bid manager for the project.

facilities

The project envisages the setting up of a fourth generation Oceanarium. It is aimed at creating awareness about the marine environment and its bio-diversity, according to a press release.

The Oceanarium would offer a unique underwater experience by showcasing an aquarium alley, deep sea tunnel, polar pavilion, shark tank, touch tank and other entertainment facilities.

A consortium of Mahindra Consulting Engineers and Jacques Rougerie Architecte, France, has completed the detailed feasibility report and is doing the conceptual design for the project.

The Oceanarium project will be rolled out under the Design, Built, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) model.

3 DRR scientists bag ICAR awards

Hyderabad, July 18:

Three scientists working at the Directorate of Rice Research (DRR) have won national awards instituted by ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research).

Dr Jagadish S. Bentur, an expert in entomology, received the Rafi Ahmed Kidwai award for his research on rice gall midge, one of the most destructive insect pests of rice. "His work helped develop better rice varieties resistant to this pest," Dr B.C. Viraktamath, Project Director of DRR, said here in a press release.

Dr N. Sarla, Principal Scientist, was selected for Panjabrao Deshmukh award for her research that helped transfer some useful characters from wild relatives of rice to modern varieties and improve grain output.

Dr R. Meenakshi Sundaram, Senior Scientist (Biotechnology), bagged the Lal Bahadur Shastri outstanding Young Scientist award for her research on use of molecular and biotechnological tools in rice improvement.

“One of the first products of rice biotechnology, a rice variety called Improved Samba Masuri with inbuilt resistance to bacterial leaf blight disease has already been made ready for cultivation,” he said.

These awards were presented to the winners by the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, marking the 83rd Foundation Day of ICAR held in New Delhi on July 16, 2011.

The Directorate, so far, has developed 900 rice varieties and 46 hybrids.

International Rubber Study Group gets new chairman



Ms Sheela Thomas
Kottayam, July 18:

Mrs. Sheela Thomas, Chairman of the Indian Rubber Board has been elected as the new Chairman of the International Rubber Study Group (IRSG). The decision was made

unanimously in the meeting of the Heads of Delegations (HOD) held at Singapore. She will officiate as the Chairman of IRSG representing India for the next two years.

The meeting was part of the 107th Group Meetings of IRSG held from 11 to 14 July 2011. Members opined that India, being both a producer and a consumer of rubber, would be in a good position to protect the interests of both producers and consumers in IRSG. Apart from Chairman, Rubber Board, the Indian delegation to the IRSG Group Meetings included Mr. J. B. Upadhyay, Under Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Mr. Toms Joseph, Deputy Director, Rubber Board. Another major development in the meeting was the adoption of a revised constitution for IRSG.

The next meeting of the HOD will be held in Singapore in May 2012 in conjunction with the World Rubber Summit.

Australian dairies eyeing Indian market

Melbourne, July 18:

Australian milk processing companies could earn handsome profits by marketing their products in India, which is said to be facing shortages of up to three million tonnes a year.

India's National Dairy Development Board has forecast milk demand at 180-200 million tonnes by the end of 2020.

According to a report in 'The Age', Australian milk processors and trans-Tasman firm, Fonterra already has its eyes firmly on the prize.

Australian dairy exports to India have soared 70 per cent in the past 10 years, according to National Australia Bank figures.

Indian exports are worth about \$200 million annually to Fonterra, which supplies milk powder and pharmaceutical-grade lactose, among other dairy products.

However, the report quoted trade strategy manager Mr James McVitty as saying that Australia and New Zealand could only supply a "small slice" of India's booming milk demand.

Trans-Tasman milk production totals almost 30 million tonnes a year, compared with India's 112 million tonnes.

India's import taxes on milk are also high, between 20-60 per cent.

"The vast majority of that demand growth in India will have to be met by their own growth in local milk production," Mr McVitty said.

Fonterra is partnering with the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative and Global Dairy Health to complete a feasibility study on a joint dairy project.

The trio hope to establish a pilot farm for 3,000 cows, at a reported cost of \$40 million.

India's National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) is understood to be supportive of the deal.

The World Bank granted the board almost \$4 billion to streamline India's fragmented dairy sector and there are about 70 million dairy farmers in the country, milking an average of two cows each. Of that milk, about 20 per cent is formally processed.

"So 80 per cent is consumed on the farm or in the local village," Mr McVitty said.

National Australia Bank agri-business economist Mr Michael Creed said improving farm productivity could ease milk shortages in developing countries.

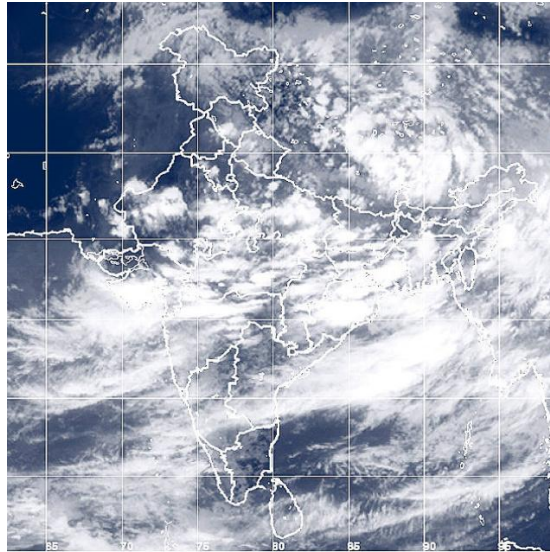
"A lot of talk and analysis around this tends to discount the fact that a lot of these developing countries can and will increase productivity to meet their consumption requirements," Mr Creed said.

"But I still think there will be a shortfall, these things tend to take a bit of time to be implemented," he added.

The results of Fonterra's feasibility study are expected to be released in the coming months.

The Australian Stock Exchange-listed Warrnambool Cheese and Butter also have plans for the sub-continent.

Heavy rains for west, central India to continue



Thiruvananthapuram, July 18:

The overall rain deficit has been cut back to one per cent on Monday as an ongoing heavy to very heavy rains in central India and west India yielded major gains in the region.

An India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in an update that the southwesterly monsoon flows across the equator are continued to drive themselves to a new peak over Arabian Sea and south peninsular India for the second day.

HEAVY RAINS

The 24 hours ending Monday morning reported heavy to very heavy precipitation from parts of Gujarat, western Maharashtra, coastal Karnataka and Kerala while they were muted to the peninsular east.

The heaviest overnight rainfall (in cm) was reported from Mahabaleshwar-29; Bhira-27; Passighat and Bulsar-12 each; Ratnagiri and Harnai-11 each; and Honavar and Cannur-10 each.

A weather warning said that heavy to very heavy rainfall would break out at a few places with isolated extremely heavy falls over Konkan and Goa on Tuesday before relenting.

Isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall would occur over coastal Karnataka, Kerala, south Gujarat, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and the Northeastern States during the next two days.

GLOBAL OUTLOOK

The US National Centres for Environmental Prediction saw the possibility of the flows weakening somewhat through the next week before picking up strength towards end-July and into early August.

Kalpana-1 satellite imagery on Monday afternoon showed the presence of convective (rain-bearing) clouds over parts of south Rajasthan, central, east and north India, Maharashtra, north coastal Andhra Pradesh, north and adjoining central Bay of Bengal, north Andaman Sea and northeast Arabian Sea.

The major weather setting features included a prominent and full-blown offshore trough starting from the Gujarat coast down to south to the Kerala coast.

The offshore trough is headed by an upper air cyclonic circulation over Gujarat region and neighbourhood.

WESTERN DISTURBANCE

Besides the land-based monsoon trough is located not far off, explaining the heavy falls that have already fallen as also expected realisation. Western Madhya Pradesh too would get heavy to heavy precipitation during the next two days.

The extreme north and northwest of the country is expected to get buffeted by a western disturbance traced on Monday evening to north Pakistan and neighbourhood persists. It has already sent in a 'recce' upper air cyclonic circulation to over Punjab and neighbourhood.

A counterpart circulation was located to over north Madhya Pradesh and adjoining south Uttar Pradesh, completing a network of weather-generating systems over the landmass.