

Parasitoids to control papaya mealy bug distributed

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University distributed free parasitoids to more than 100 farmers at Akkarai Thathapalli village near Sathyamangalam recently.

The university imported the parasitoids through the National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Insects (NBAII), Bangalore, for controlling the papaya mealy bug. They are under mass production at TNAU and 67 centres of the university. These are being supplied to farmers free of cost. So far, it has released 65,000 parasitoids in 300 villages.

Distributing the parasitoids, Vice-Chancellor of TNAU P. Murugesu Boopathi said the university was keen on increasing the release of parasitoids in affected areas.

“The parasitoid usage and release is environmental-friendly, safe, economical, residue-free and also helps in permanent management of mealy bugs. Since the method of release requires only 10 minutes an acre, farmers have received this technology well when compared to pesticide spraying. The release of these parasitoids has resulted in savings of Rs. 48 crore of pesticide usage in the State,” he said. The release of parasitoids has become significant in the light of the fact that infestation of the mealy bug has increased in crops like papaya, tapioca, cotton, red gram, sunflower, vegetables, fruits and flower crops in Coimbatore district and also other parts of the State. R.J. Rabindra, Director, NBAII, said that though the parasitoid release programme was being implemented throughout the country, it was more successful in the control of mealy bugs in Tamil Nadu. E.I. Jonathan, Director, Centre for Plant Protection Studies, TNAU, spoke on the causes for the spread of the mealy bug.

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INM for maximizing sugarcane yield

In many sugarcane growing areas, the productivity of the soils has declined due to intensive cropping and lack of proper soil fertility management practices.

The soil productivity can be restored through rationalized integrated nutrient management (INM) involving organic manures, fertilisers and biofertilisers.

Recommendations

Some of the following INM practices are recommended.

Bulky organic manures like farmyard manure, compost and pressmud must be incorporated into the soil at the rate of 15 to 25 t/ha before planting.

Sunnhemp green manure can be grown as intercrop and incorporated into the soil around 30 to 45 days after planting.

Soil-test based fertiliser schedules are advisable. When this is not possible, a blanket schedule of 275-65-115 kg of N, P and K can be adopted.

Basal application

Phosphatic fertilisers, preferably super phosphates can be applied basally or at the time of first hoeing and weeding during 30 to 45 days after planting.

Nitrogenous and potassic fertilisers must be applied in four splits, first split during 30 – 45 days, second split during 60-75 days, third split during 90 – 105 days and fourth split during 120 – 135 days after planting.

The efficiency of urea can be enhanced by blending it with neem cake powder in 4:1 ratio, a day before application. It is advisable to apply the mixture of urea and potash fertiliser in holes of 10 cm depth at intervals of 15 cm spacing on the sides of the plant rows.

Fifty kg of micronutrient mixture/ha made up of 20 kg of ferrous sulphate, 10 kg of manganous sulphate, 10 kg of zinc sulphate, 5 kg of copper sulphate and 5 kg of borax may be applied basally in the planting furrows.

Chlorotic symptoms

When the chlorotic symptoms due to deficiency of iron or zinc are observed on the leaves of the crop, 5 kg of ferrous sulphate, 2.5 kg of zinc sulphate and 5 kg of urea per hectare may be dissolved in 500 litres of water and sprayed over the foliage. If necessary, one or two more sprayings can be given at intervals of 15 days.

Azospirillum and phosphobacteria biofertilisers at 10 kg each/ha may be mixed with 10 kg of compost and applied basally in the planting furrows or at the time of first hoeing and weeding during 30 – 45 days after planting. The soil pH must be maintained in the neutral range of 6.5 to 7.5 for the crop.

DR. K. KUMARASWAMY

Former Professor of Soil Science & Agricultural Chemistry TNAU, Coimbatore

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<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2011/03/03/stories/2011030353211500.htm>

FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Youth should be encouraged to solve crises-ridden agriculture

M.J. PRABU

People in the age group of 15 to 34 years are a national asset

- Photo: Special Arrangement



Potential area:V. Rajagopal, Founder, Hunger Elimination and You (HEY) at the youth conference.

India is fortunate that over half of its total population of 1.2 billion are under the age group of 30.

“A high percentage of youth in the age group of 26 to 35 years are presently in the country who can undertake work on agriculture production increase, processing in value added products and marketing of various products if their potential is tapped properly,” says Dr. V. Rajagopal, Founder, Hunger Elimination and You (HEY) movement, Tirupati, formerly Director, Central Plantations and Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasaragod, Kerala.

Dr. Rajagopal recently presented a paper at the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai on 'Role of youth in agriculture and combating hunger'.

Having a sizable population of youth - over 45 per cent of the total in the age group of 15 to 34 years - is a national asset. This needs to be exploited for various productive nation building activities, he argues.

Rural population

“The rural youth population, both male and female, is higher than the urban population,” he says.

For instance, the total rural youth population is 296.2 million (153.2 million male and 143.9 million female) as against 130.9 million urban youth population (69.5 million male and 61.4 million female). (Source: Indian population fund- 2008).

“The potential areas to utilize youngsters are: agriculture production, processing and marketing, a comprehensive survey on poverty levels in rural and urban areas, data base on the extent of hunger among the poor and enumeration of malnourished child population,” he explains.

Common belief

Against a common belief that agriculture is not remunerative for youngsters’ opportunities for educated, unemployed and also uneducated youth, men and women, exist in the sector and today agri-business is gaining momentum, according to him.

“The farm sector remained non-remunerative, risky and not so attractive as long as farmers followed old practices and mono crop system, but after the advent of good agriculture practices involving a range of measures like multi crop system, diversification, value addition to harvested produce, enabled by income generating technologies — the scenario today presents a better face of reformation and development,” he explains.

The synergy between traditional technologies and information pathways provides a wider scope to revitalize agriculture sector.

“Agri business, is an emerging field for the youth to avail the excellent opportunities to take up farm related ventures. Many progressive farmers who adopted latest technologies experience less risk than before and reap the benefits of training imparted to them,” he explains.

Need to be trained

About 60 per cent of youth need to be trained — to undertake work on poverty and hunger among poor villagers. The educated and unemployed youth can then undertake survey in rural areas, villages in detail to identify the target group of people --- economically poor back ground and struggling for food and drinking water. Volunteers must form groups to visit the villages

The youth seva sanghs or clubs already in existance in some Universities need to be strengthened. Some youth in Puducherry are doing such activities successfully.

Presence

“The presence of so many private companies in agriculture shows that this is a good money generating field. If youth can properly utilise this area, then they can become self reliant and sustainable,” he says.

“On my part I am willing to guide any youth, movement, or groups if they approach me as to how it should be done,” he says.

Those interested can contact Dr.V.Rajagopal, Founder, Hunger Elimination and You movement, Tirupati, email: rajvel44@gmail.com, mobile:09441200217.

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Need for prudent forest resources management



Forest biomass could replace a quarter of the liquid fossil fuel now used for industrial heating in the Northeastern U.S. and forest resources must be carefully managed to protect the other important services they provide.

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Budget to benefit small farmers: Selja

Special Correspondent

CHANDIGARH: Union Housing and Poverty Alleviation Minister Selja on Wednesday said that the Union Budget for 2011-12 would benefit small and poor farmers and give boost to the health and education sectors.

Laying the foundation stone for a 'ghaat' and 'park' to be set up along the Yamuna near Mahadev Math at Kalesar in Yamunanagar, she said that the UPA regime would rein in the spiralling prices through its policies.

She disclosed that work on the Yamunanagar-Bilaspur-Sadhaura-Chandigarh railway line would start soon.

Places like Aadibadri, Kapalmochan, Kalesar, Chaneti Bodh Stupa, Tajewala Rest House and Herbal Park would be beautified and more facilities would be provided for the tourists, she added.

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Expo on agriculture books

Special Correspondent

Guides for students preparing for competitive examinations on display

— .Photo:R. Ashok



Sifting through:Students going through books at the exhibition at Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute , Tiruchi on Wednesday

TIRUCHI: The two-day book exhibition organised by the Library of the Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute of the Tami Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) which concluded here on Wednesday evoked good response.

Over 5,000 titles on various agricultural subjects and also books and guides useful for the students preparing for the competitive exams were displayed at the fair.

Research Co Book Centre, New Delhi, Associate Publishing Company, New Delhi, Standard Publishers, Bangalore, Pai and Sons, Coimbatore, Srinivasa Book Centre, Madras, are some of the leading publishing houses which participated in the exhibition.

The Hindu Publications had also put up a stall.

According to Thilagar, Deputy Librarian of the Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute, the exhibition showcased marketing books worth over Rs. four lakh.

V. Jayabal, Dean of the Institute, inaugurated the exhibition on Tuesday.

Come up with manifesto for farmers: CIFA tells parties

Special Correspondent

TIRUCHI: The Consortium of Indian Farmers (CIFA) has called upon political parties in the State to come up with a farmers manifesto, spelling out their plans for development of the agriculture sector. The consortium has put forward a charter of demands before the political parties ahead of the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and urged farmers to support candidates who come forward to fulfil them.

Prominent among the demands of the CIFA was presentation of separate budget for agriculture sector, setting aside 70 per cent of Budgetary allocation for rural development and devolution of powers to the local bodies for agricultural planning.

Copies of the demands have been given to the political parties, said P.Chengal Reddy, secretary general, CIFA, speaking to reporters here.

Mr.Reddy called upon the Central and State government to give a push for the agriculture sector, especially in the "critical areas" of farm mechanisation, risk mitigation, and irrigation projects.

The consortium demanded 50 per cent subsidy and soft loans for farm mechanisation, substantial allocations for irrigation projects and extending the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme to cover agriculture work.

Expressing concern over the growing income disparity between the agriculture sector and the industrial or service sectors, Mr.Reddy blamed the wrong policies and meagre allocation for the ills plaguing the agriculture sector in the country now.

The farm gate price of agriculture produce remained static despite the increasing prices of food grains and products in the open market.

Farmers, especially tenant farmers, were facing problems in getting credit. The power shortage in Tamil Nadu was adversely affecting agriculture operations.

The government should allow and promote private participation in areas such as agricultural research, setting up of warehouses and bazaar and introduction of modern technology. Livestock development should be given a thrust, he said.

Despite efforts, the government has not been able to achieve the stated objective of four per cent growth rate in agriculture sector.

The Central and State government should implement the recommendation of the M.S.Swaminathan Committee to fix the procurement price of farm produce taking into account the cost of production and allowing 50 per cent profit to the farmers, said R.V.Giri, general secretary, CIFA, Tamil Nadu, and G.Ajithan, technical secretary, CIFA, Tamil Nadu.

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Erode farmers block road seeking a waste-free LBP canal

Staff Reporter

-PHOTO: M.GOVARTHAN



Call for action: Farmers and residents of Villarasampatti in Erode protesting against the discharge of untreated effluents into the branch channels of the Lower Bhavani Project canal.

ERODE: Seeking official action against the textile processing units in Erode that choked branches of the Lower Bhavani Project (LBP) canal with untreated waste, over 200 residents and farmers of Villarasampatti in the district blocked traffic on the Nasiyanur road here on Wednesday.

The protestors accused the textile processing units of transporting hundreds of litres of untreated effluents in tanker lorries and letting the waste into the branch channels of the canal, damaging the environment and severely affecting agriculture in the area.

“Many units discharge effluents into the water during the night hours. Though the officials in the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board are aware of the practice, no action has been taken up so far. We have lost our hope that the board will initiate an action. We want the district administration to step in and initiate stern action against the managements of the textile processing units,” the agitators demanded.

Blaming pollution of water brought about by the effluent discharge for the drop in crop productivity in the last few years, some farmers said: “The colour of the water in many branch channels of LBP canal has turned dark green, and in some places, it is black. The soil health is completely affected. The crop productivity has come down drastically during the last few years. If the situation continues, we all have to leave farming and look for other jobs.”

Most of the textile processing units in Villarasampatti and nearby areas do not have proper treatment facilities. They discharge the untreated effluents into the Kalingarayan canal and in the branch channels of LBP canal. The two canals are the major water source for thousands of farmers in the district. “Agriculture sector in the district faces a huge threat due to the indiscriminate discharge of effluents ,” the farmers said.

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Farmers continue stir

Tuticorin: The farmers of Deivaseyalpuram village continued their protest in front of the Collectorate here on Wednesday demanding that the compensation be paid for crop damage

caused due to Northeast monsoon rainfall during October and November in 2010 in Tuticorin district.

They expressed anguish over the disbursal of compensation to six others, who did not claim damage for their crops. They alleged that compensation to the tune of Rs. 9, 24, 340 was extended to them by officials at Primary Agriculture Cooperative Bank, Chekkaarakudi, on February 26 inspite of assurance being given to the farmers, who actually had claimed crop damage.

“We have been staging a series of agitations and hunger strikes since January to expedite the disbursal of compensation, but all in vain. Protest will be staged here until the compensation is settled,” they said.

Asked about this issue, Collector C.N. Maheswaran said that a team comprising the Sub-Collector of Tuticorin, Zonal Deputy Tahsildar, and Revenue Inspector was conducting an inquiry into the incident.

Stern action would be taken against those found guilty, he said.

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Oil prices uncertain factor in economic management

Special Correspondent

'The policy is towards control of inflation'

NEW DELHI: Even as high food inflation at 11.49 per cent, though on a downward trend, remains a major concern and the government is devising various ways of reining in the price spiral, the uncertain factor is the volatility in crude oil prices in global markets.

While Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council Chairman C. Rangarajan on Wednesday held out an assurance that the government would take all monetary and fiscal measures necessary to bring down headline inflation [from 8.23 per cent in January] to the comfort zone of 4 to 5 per cent, the Reserve Bank pointed out that rising crude oil and commodity prices could derail such efforts.

Stressing at a conference here that all policy instruments would have to be activated to douse inflationary pressures, Dr. Rangarajan said: "The policy is towards control of inflation, taking inflation lower down in the range of 4 to 5 per cent. We will use all policy instruments available, state policy instruments, direct intervention in grain market, as well as fiscal and monetary policy."

Major risk

According to RBI Deputy Governor Subir Gokarn, the deciding factor in controlling inflation would be the trend in oil and commodity prices. Pointing out that energy prices are a major risk at present, he said: "It [inflation] is moving downwards, [that] is a reflection of our monetary actions. But the risk of it turning around [is] because of energy and food... we cannot predict how high the oil prices will go or where it will stabilise."

Clarifying what high global crude oil prices would mean for the economy, Chief Economic Advisor Kaushik Basu pointed to two options — the government may either be forced to raise diesel and cooking fuel (LPG) prices or to absorb the price hike and shell out more on oil subsidy. In either case, it would be a tough choice for the government as the country imports 75 per cent of its total crude oil requirements.

"In such circumstances [if oil price rise is significant], the government will either have to bear the additional cost or pass it on to the consumer.

"However, in such a case either decision would be difficult...If crude prices goes up sufficiently high, then so does our calculations on subsidies," he said.

Incidentally, the budget for 2011-12 has estimated Rs.23,640 crore in oil subsidy as compared to Rs.38,386 crore for the current fiscal.

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Farm budget will not help farmers, says Manpade

Staff Correspondent

'Sangha will formulate an alternative policy for agriculture'

MANGALORE: Agriculture policies of the Congress-led UPA Government at the Centre and the Bharatiya Janata Party Government in the State are worsening the plight of farmers, Maruti Manpade, State committee member of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha, said on Wednesday.

Addressing presspersons here, Mr. Manpade said that the Centre had reduced its allocation for agriculture by Rs. 172 crore from the previous year to Rs. 17,522 crore. It had not implemented the recommendations of the M.S. Swaminathan panel on the agrarian crisis, submitted three years ago, he said.

The report aimed at taking knowledge from the universities to farmers. But that had not happened, he added.

The State Government's agriculture budget was nothing but a rehash of old policies with nothing to mitigate the crisis faced by farmers. "When the Government's policies are not favourable to agriculture, no law can help farmers," he said.

He said that on the pretext of an agricultural budget, the State Government had set out to make it possible for any person to hold land without any restriction. By amending Section 79 (a) and (b) and Section 109 (1), (2) and (3) of the Land Reforms Act 1961, and clause 64 of the Revenue Act, the Government would "facilitate handing over of 2 lakh acres of agricultural land to multinational companies and large Indian companies".

Mr. Manpade said that the sangha would formulate an alternative policy for agriculture that would include among other things, recommendations of the Swaminathan panel.

The focus of the policy would be on land reforms, protection from moneylenders, measures to increase yield, and a seed policy that favoured farmers.

He said that every gram panchayat should have at least one soil testing unit to help farmers.

Mr. Manpade said that the sangha was pressuring the Government to give land losers shareholding rights in the companies.

Addressing the students displaced by the Mangalore Special Economic Zone on Wednesday, Mr. Manpade urged them to be united and fight for their rights.

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“All-India cadre of agriculture service must be created”

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: The All-India Federation of Agricultural Associations is organising a march from India Gate to Jantar Mantar here on March 12 to press for its demands.

“The objective is to impress upon the Central Government the need to create an all-India cadre of Indian Agriculture Service as recommended by various committees. Since Independence, the government has created several all-India cadres of organised services.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/03/stories/2011030357170500.htm>

Experts list ways to boost farming

Staff Reporter

PALAKKAD: C.K.P. Padmanabhan, MLA, joint secretary of All India Kisan Sabha has said that “food security is possible only through decentralisation of agriculture landholdings, by implementing land reforms.”

Inaugurating a seminar on 'Problems faced by the agriculture sector' organised by Kunjiraman Master Study Centre here on Wednesday he said, "Even after Independence India followed the land policy of the British. The new rulers too allowed large landholdings. Now, multinational companies too are allowed to acquire huge tracts of land in the country. This has led to a crisis in the agriculture sector," he said.

Presenting a paper on 'modernisation of agriculture sector in Palakkad' O.P. Rajendran, Head of Social Services Department of Agriculture University, Pattambi Centre, said the "the desired progress in agriculture sector could be achieved only through strong political will and change in social outlook."

He said that though Palakkad produced more than one-third of total rice in the State it has to keep increasing production to ensure food security. "People must feel that it is their duty to produce food crops and bring about self-reliance in food. That feeling must be instilled in people's minds," he said.

K.V. Ramakrishnan, President, District Co-operative Bank, in his presentation demanded "a crop pattern for paddy cultivation. Protection of water bodies like rivers, ponds, wells, irrigation canals, paddy fields etc., is of much importance for the development of agriculture."

PAP water share

He urged the government to ensure that the district got its due share of water from the inter-State Parambikulam Aliyar Project (PAP).

The speakers at the seminar felt that though many steps had been taken by the local bodies for agriculture in the district, they did not achieve the desired target due to the lack of clear policies and co-ordination among the implementing agencies and farmers.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Thursday, Mar 3

Max Min

31.7° | 21.7°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 69%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:24

Sunset: 18:18

Barometer: 1011.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Mar 4

Max Min

32° | 22°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Mar 5



30° | 23°

Cloudy

Sunday

Mar 6



30° | 23°

Cloudy

Monday

Mar 7



31° | 22°

Cloudy

Tuesday

Mar 8



32° | 22°

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday

Mar 9



33° | 21°

Sunny

3 Mar, 2011, 03.59AM IST, PK Krishnakumar & S Sanandakumar,ET Bureau

Spice exports surge 23% to \$1,203 mn

KOCHI: The spice exports from the country during the April-January period of the current fiscal year have exceeded the targets, in rupee and dollar value, set for the full fiscal year.

Compared to the targets, the achievement during the period is 108% in rupee terms and 107% in dollar terms. Export of spices has registered a 23% rise to touch \$1,203.30 million in the period. In rupee terms, the exports saw an 18% increase to reach a level of Rs 5,485.40 crore during the period under review. The exports in quantity terms stood at 433, 455 tonne during the period, which represents a 5% increase over the same period previous year. In quantity terms, the achievement so far in the year represents 93% of the target.

During the period, the exports of chilli, ginger, fennel, garlic, tamarind, asafetida, spice oils and oleoresins and curry powder have shown an increase.

Chilli, the single major spice in the export basket, is the hottest commodity, having already achieved the target of 2 lakh tonne. It is cruising to a new high this year. The year 2009-10 saw the chilli exports touch 2.04 lakh tonne, valued at Rs 1,292 crore. Till January this year, the chilli exports reached 2 lakh tonne valued at Rs 1,255 crore.

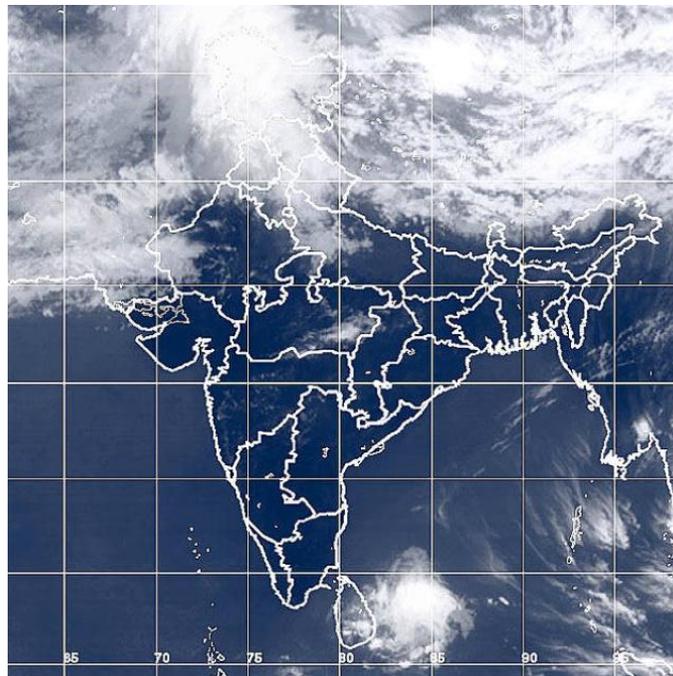
The prospects for export in the remaining two months are good though the production is expected to be 20% short as the crop in China, a major chilli producer, is not that good. "In China there is a shortage of paprika, which is high in colour. The production of medium-heat variety is slightly better. Our prices are matching that of China," said Philip Kuruvilla, managing director of Indian Products.

Kuruville said that the prices in the local market could remain bullish in the coming months given the shortfall in crop, depleting carryover stock, which has touched a level of 30,000 tonne, rising local demand and increasing export enquiries. The spot price is hovering around Rs 87 per kg while the April contract for delivery touched Rs 103 per kg on Tuesday.

But there are under performers like cardamom. The cardamom export for the ten month period ended January stood at 780 tonne, valued at Rs 91.18 crore.

THE HINDU Business Line

Scattered rains over plains of northwest India



India meteorological dept satellite picture at 16-00 hrs

Scattered light rain or snowfall has occurred over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand as a causative western disturbance

Thiruvananthapuram, March 2:

Scattered light rain or snowfall has occurred over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand as a causative western disturbance persisted over north Pakistan and adjoining Jammu and Kashmir.

The system is expected to move in completely over Jammu and Kashmir and be on course for its continued away-movement to the east.

UNSTABLE WEATHER

Unstable weather has already been triggered over the plains of northwest India with scattered rainfall being reported from Punjab, west Rajasthan and west Madhya Pradesh during the 24 hours ending Wednesday afternoon.

An India Meteorological Department (IMD) update said that isolated rain was also reported from west Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and east Madhya Pradesh during this period.

The western disturbance will continue to affect western Himalayan region and adjoining plains of northwest India for three more days, the IMD said.

A weather warning said that isolated heavy rain or snow would occur over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on Thursday and Friday.

Isolated hailstorms or thunder squalls may unfold over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh during this period.

CONVECTIVE CLOUDS

Morning's satellite cloud imagery showed the presence of convective (rain-bearing) clouds over parts of Jammu and Kashmir and southwest Bay of Bengal.

Meanwhile in the south, the upper air cyclonic circulation over southwest Bay of Bengal persisted.

An extended outlook valid until Monday said that scattered precipitation would occur over Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh while, it would be isolated over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The gradually daily temperature maxima in northwest India are proving a perfect foil for fully-loaded trains of cooler western disturbances to trigger sudden and sometimes violent weather incidents along the plains.

WESTERLY ACTIVITY

The IMD has warned of the possibility of the weather getting frequently unstable over the plains from west to east even as a bulk of the moisture has bypassed it beyond the Himalayas to the north-northeast.

Indications are that western disturbance activity would continue into the next week, though noticeably weaker in intensity – which means the weather aberrations would be confined to the hills and linearly weaker over the immediate plains in Punjab, Haryana and north Rajasthan.

RESTIVE BAY

There are also hints about the Bay of Bengal getting into action mode next week, but the benefits would be largely confined to the southern peninsula, mainly south Tamil Nadu and south Kerala.

Global model forecasts tend to suggest a summer that is less hot than the last year for peninsular India i.e. for March, April and May. They also signal the possibility of enhanced thundershower activity for the region during this period.

Agri conference to focus on bizwomen

Hyderabad, March 2:

Focus on women entrepreneurs in agribusiness and their role in agricultural development will form part of the three-day Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubation Conference to be hosted by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (Icrisat) during March 8-10, 2011.

Incidentally, March 8 is the Women's Day. The session will look at how to engage women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups to set up agribusiness ventures. Inspiring stories of women in agriculture, demonstrating their entrepreneurial qualities in rural areas, will be shared at the conference.

General William Dar, director of the crop research institute, said, "Icrisat's inclusive market-oriented development (IMOD) strategy identifies successful ways to link poor smallholder farmers with the marketplace to generate incomes and improve their lives. To fulfil this mission, Icrisat recognises the crucial role of women in agriculture development."

Steady trend in rice market



Karnal, March 2:

The rice market witnessed a steady trend with prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice ruling firm on Wednesday.

Prices of aromatic rice have been ruling unchanged since last weekend, while prices of sharbati variety ruled firm on Wednesday, after witnessing a good uptrend in the last few days, said Mr

Tara Chand Sharma, a rice trader. Though market is ruling on lower levels, buyers are still keeping themselves out of the market and waiting for more decline in prices, he added.

Prices of Pusa-1121 (steam) ruled at Rs 5,200-5,300 a quintal, Pusa-1121 (sela) ruled at Rs 4,270-4,400, and Pusa-1121 (raw) at Rs 5,150-5,210. Basmati (sela) was sold at Rs 6,200-6,260 and basmati (raw) at Rs 7,300-7,375. Prices of duplicate basmati ruled at Rs 3,970-4,100 a quintal. Broken such as Tibar was quoted at Rs 3,000-3,500, Dubar at Rs 2,200-2,610 and Mongra Rs 1,900-2,100. Prices of sharbati (sela) quoted at around Rs 2,650-2,700, while the Sharbati (steam) at Rs 3,000-3,170. Permal (sela) ruled at Rs 1,900-2,110 and Permal (steam) at Rs 2,100-2,200 a quintal. For the broken of Sharbati variety, Tibar was quoted at Rs 2,450, Dubar 2,100 and Mongra Rs 1,475.

Paddy Trading

About 220 bags of Pusa (duplicate basmati) were sold at Rs 2,150-2,170 a quintal and around 250 bags of Pusa-1121 at Rs 2,090-2,420 a quintal. Around 300 bags were sold at Rs 2,250-2,600 a quintal.

Turmeric drops Rs 1,000 a quintal



Erode, March 2:

Spot turmeric prices dropped Rs 1,000 a quintal in Erode markets on Wednesday on heavy arrivals of 12,000 bags.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, prices dropped due to want of demand, said traders.

“Many farmers expecting good prices brought higher quantities to the market. But buyers, without fresh orders from North Indian towns quoted low rate. Because of this, the price of the turmeric decreased by Rs 350 per quintal,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

On Thursday and Friday the markets will be closed for *Mahasivarathiri* and weekends are usual holidays. Only 35-40 per cent of the arrivals were sold.

Mr Ravishankar said arrivals would be heavy arrival when the markets open on Monday and prices could come under further pressure.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 10,317-11,827 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 10,099-11,827.

Out of 859 bags that arrived for sale, only 609 were sold. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety ruled at Rs 7,989-12,098 and the root variety at Rs 7,501-11,555.

Salem Crop:

The finger variety sold at Rs 10,969-13,010, the root variety Rs 10,689-12,500. Out of arrival of 4,925 bags, only 1,002 were sold. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 9,511-12,860 and the root variety Rs 9,501-11,027 a quintal.

Moderate rise in rubber prices



Business Line Rubber sheets being dried in the sunlight in Kerala. (file photo): K K Mustafah Kottayam, March 2:

Spot rubber prices improved further on Wednesday.

Domestic rubber futures market was closed on the National Multi Commodity Exchange owing to Maha Shivratri, the physical market made moderate gains on fresh buying and short covering. Traders seemed to be bullish in all counters as sellers stayed away expecting better rates in the days ahead.

Sheet rubber increased to Rs 227 (223.50) a kg, according to traders. The grade closed firm at Rs 226 (224) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to the Rubber Board.

RSS 3 (spot) slipped to Rs 274.71 (274.89) a kg at Bangkok. The March futures for the grade finished unchanged at ¥506.0 (Rs 277.79) a kg in the day session but remained inactive during the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates (RS/kg)were: RSS-4: 227 (223.50), RSS-5: 224 (221), Ungraded: 221 (218), ISNR 20: 224 (223)and Latex 60%: 140 (140).

US cuts dumping duty on Indian shrimp imports



Business Line Fisherman holds up freshly caught shrimp at Blangad beach fish landing in Kerala. (file photo): K K Mustafah
Kochi, March 2:

The US Department of Commerce has announced a reduction in the anti-dumping duty on shrimp imports from India to 1.6 per cent. The preliminary results of the Fifth Administrative Review on anti-dumping duties on Indian shrimp imports had undertaken a detailed examination of the performance of two mandatory respondents from India, Falcon Marine Exports and Apex Exports, before announcing an average 1.6 per cent duty for all other shrimp exporters.

The preliminary findings of the Fifth Administrative Review have, meanwhile, imposed a 1.36 and 2.31 per cent duty respectively for the two mandatory respondents. “The slashing of anti-

dumping duty from 2.67 per cent to 1.69 per cent is a welcome step and would galvanise Indian seafood exports substantially,” sources in the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) said.

The lower levels of anti-dumping duties have revived the pace of Indian shrimp exports to the US in the recent past. Indian seafood exports to the US that had lagged behind its peers in the last couple of years have gathered momentum and the US is now second biggest export destination after the European Union.

Exports revive

Buoyed by the surging demand and reduced import duties, Indian shrimp exports had staged a strong come back to the US markets, growing by 88 per cent in volume and 149 per cent value during April-December. This also enabled shrimp to hold its position of dominance in the country's marine export basket as it accounted for over 48 per cent of the total export earnings.

The US became the second biggest export destination with seafood exports to the region growing by close to 50 per cent in volume and 110 per cent in value. While the EU continued to remain the single most important export destination, exports to the region witnessed a deceleration of close to five per cent in quantity during the first nine months of the current fiscal.

Bonds with US Customs

While the present levels of anti-dumping duties are not a serious concern to the Indian shrimp exporters, what continues to be a cause of worry is the cyclical requirement to execute bonds with the US Customs before the exports can be effected, SEAI sources added. The cumbersome process of executing the bond and the inordinate delay in its liquidation are the major hurdles faced by the exporters.

Since it takes three years for the bonds to be liquidated, Indian exporters will have an outstanding of three bonds with the US customs at every given point of time. The cumulative amount tied up in bonds would be well over \$100 million at every juncture, the sources pointed out. While the bonds may not be of very serious consequence to the bigger exporters, they are permanent cause of worry and concern to the smaller players.

Budget disappoints on some counts, says agro foods chamber

Madurai, March 2:

Budget 2011-12 has given priority to agriculture, agro food processing and post-harvest preservation to minimise wastage.

However, the Budget has disappointed on other counts, the Agro Food Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has said.

Mr S. Rethinavelu, Chamber President, in a statement here said that interest waiver for agriculture loan, raising the credit availability for farmers, allocation of Rs 10,000 crore to Nabard for short term rural credit fund, establishment of mega food parks, encouragement to private sector in cold storage facilities, among other, are laudable.

Market cess

Mr Rethinavelu thanked the Finance Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, for insisting that State governments review and enforce a reformed Agricultural Produce Act.

He pointed out that the system of levying market cess needed reconsideration and farming activities corporatised without disturbing ownership rights to boost agriculture production.

IT Exemption

He also said that the income-tax exemption ceiling could have been increased to Rs 2,00,000 as recommended in the Direct Taxes Code.

And that the expectation of duty concession on petroleum products has been belied.

To facilitate the introduction of the Goods and Services Act on April 1, 2012, a Constitutional amendment needs to be introduced in the current session of Parliament itself, he added.

Buying support boosts chana



Business Line Rajma (kidney bean) and Chana (Chick peas) for sale, in New Delhi. Photo: S. Subramaniam
Indore, March 2:

Chana witnessed good buying support from the millers in private trading with its prices being quoted slightly higher at Rs 2,530- 2,540 a quintal.

On Tuesday evening, chana gained Rs 10-15 on demand and was quoted at Rs 2,430-2,440 a quintal and it continued to rule at the same level on Wednesday.

Arrival of chana in private market continued with about 2,000 bags being offloaded in Indore on Wednesday. According to trade sources, demand from millers increased with the arrival of good quality and moist-free chana.

As arrivals picked up the millers have gone on a buying spree. Under the circumstances, it chana prices may not fall, but at the same time pressure of increased arrivals may give rise to sluggishness in chana, said a trader.

Traders also attributed the current limited surge in chana to pressure of arrivals. Trade sources said that arrival of chana in Indore mandis, the biggest chana mandi in the country, may hit 15,000-20,000 bags a day this month.

On the other hand Dollar chana or chickpea is ruling at Rs 4,500-Rs 4,800 a quintal at Indore *mandis*. Notwithstanding rise in arrivals with 5,000-6,000 bags of dollar chana being offloaded in Indore mandis on daily basis, the speculators are spreading rumour of sluggishness due to subdued demand in the export market. As a result, the container prices of dollar chana have declined by Rs 100-150 in the past couple of days.

The prices of 42-44 count dollar chana is at Rs 5,525 a quintal, while 44-46 count and 58-60 count are being quoted at Rs 5,175 and Rs 4,500 a quintal respectively.

Govt cuts floor price of onion export to \$450/tonne



New Delhi, March 3:

The Government has reduced the minimum export price (MEP) of onions to \$450 a tonne from the earlier \$600.

In a notification, the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade said: "The MEP of onions, other than Bangalore Rose onion and Krishnapuram, will be \$450 a tonne f.o.b. (free on board). Earlier it was \$600 a tonnes."

The MEP on Bangalore Rose and Krishnapuram varieties is \$1,400 a tonne and their exports have been allowed through the State Trading Enterprises.

Last week, the Union Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, had said that the MEP of \$600 a tonne was almost double the current rate in international markets for the item, making exports uncompetitive.

Curbing price rise

An Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) on food had last month decided to completely lift the ban on onion exports, but kept a minimum export price of \$600 a tonne as a precaution against further price spike.

The EGoM decision followed after wholesale prices of onion crashed in the domestic market, leading to protests by farmers in Maharashtra. Prices had fallen to around Rs 4 a kg with the arrival of fresh supplies of late-sown varieties.

A week before that decision, the Government had lifted export ban on Rose and Krishnapuram varieties of onion grown in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh respectively.

Soon after, the Maharashtra Chief Minister, Mr Prithviraj Chavan, and Mr Pawar sought total lifting of the export ban, citing the farmers' agitation.

The Government had in December 2010 banned exports of onion and scrapped import duty of the item after its prices surged over Rs 70 a kg. Before the total ban on onion exports, the Government had increased the minimum export price of the item from \$525 a tonne to \$1,200 a tonne to discourage exports.

Coonor tea auction volume up 22,000 kg



Business Line CTC tea being manufactured at a factory in Coonor. (file photo): K. Ananthan Coonor, March 2:

A volume of 9.72 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No. 9 of the auctions of Coonor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) to be conducted on Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of the listing by brokers.

This is 22,000 kg more than last week's offer but as much as 4.93 lakh kg lower than the offer this time last year.

Of the 9.72 lakh kg on offer, 6.85 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 2.87 lakh kg, to the dust grades. As much as 9.02 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.70 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 0.39 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 6.46 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.31 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 2.56 lakh kg, CTC.

Port curbs, riders for non-basmati rice export



New Delhi, March 2:

The Government has imposed port restrictions and some mandatory conditions on the exports of Sona Masuri, Ponni Samba and Matta, premium non-basmati rice varieties. Exports of these three varieties were permitted last month with quantity ceilings.

Now in a notification, the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade has said that out of the total 1,00,000 tonnes of Sona Masuri allowed for export, 50,000 tonnes each would have to be from Chennai and Vishakhapatnam.

Besides, the entire 25,000 tonnes of Ponni Samba exports would have to be from Tuticorin, while a similar quantity of 'Matta' has been permitted through the Cochin port, it said.

The notification specified certain conditions that have to be mandatorily observed while exporting these varieties of non-basmati rice. They include: export should be in consumer packs of not more than 10 kg each; a maximum quantity of 5,000 tonnes for all three varieties would be allowed for export per Import Export Code; the export would be allowed only during the

current marketing season ending September 30; the Customs Department will do random testing of samples for quality analysis from AGMARK Laboratories to check against any mis-declaration of varieties being exported.

Govt slashes onion MEP to \$450/tonne



New Delhi, March 2:

In a major relief for exporters, the Government has slashed the minimum export price (MEP) of onions by 25 per cent to \$450 per tonne from \$600.

“Minimum Export Price (MEP) of onions other than Bangalore Rose onions and Krishnapuram will be \$450 per tonne freight on board,” the Directorate General of Foreign Trade said in a notification.

Last month, the Government had lifted a ban on onion exports after farmers’ protested a crash in domestic prices, but restricted overseas sales by capping the MEP at \$600 per tonne as a precautionary measure to control local prices, which had shot up to Rs 70-80 per kg in December last year.

However, the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, had subsequently indicated that the MEP of \$600 per tonne was almost double the prevailing rate in the international markets, rendering them uncompetitive. The MEP for Bangalore Rose and Krishnapuram onions was \$1,400 per tonne.

In this regard, the DGFT notification appears to be aimed at rectifying the situation.

Onion production in the country is likely to be around 10.5 million tonnes in 2010-11 down from 12 mt last year.

Furthermore, the DGFT — the arm of the Commerce Ministry that deals with export and import-related matters — also said three varieties of rice (Sona Masuri, Ponni Samba and Matta), whose exports were allowed last month, would be subject to port restrictions.

Export of 'Sona Masuri' was allowed from the Chennai and Vishakhapatnam sea ports with a quantity cap of 50,000 tonnes from each port. While 25,000 tonnes of 'Ponni Samba' exports were permitted from Tuticorin sea port, a similar quantity of 'Matta' was allowed from the Cochin sea port, it said.

“The export would be in consumer packs of up to 10 kg each (not more than 10 kg per pack),” the DGFT said, adding that shipments would be allowed only during the kharif marketing season 2010-11, that is, up to September 30.

In addition, a maximum quantity of 5,000 tonnes of all three varieties would be allowed for export, as per the IEC (Import/Export Code).

Customs will draw necessary samples and get them tested for quality analysis from AGMARK Laboratories, it said, adding that a copy of the test report should be sent to the concerned regional authorities, who would keep a watch for possible violation or misdeclaration and take necessary action.

Agrochemicals industry set to grow to \$1.7 b by 2012



Business Line A farm worker spraying pesticides at a paddy field near Kochi in Kerala.

Agrochemicals Policy Group , the industrial body representing the crop protection companies, including the pesticides manufacturers and formulators, has estimated the crop loss at Rs 6,000 crore annually due to use of spurious pesticides. (file photo)

Bangalore, March 2:

The Indian agrochemicals industry is expected to grow at 7.5 per cent, to reach over \$1.7 billion by 2012, driven by various factors including the need for foodgrains self-sufficiency and the momentum in floriculture and horticulture sectors.

“Increasing population, high emphasis on achieving foodgrains self-sufficiency, limited farmland availability coupled with pressure to increase yield per hectare and growth in horticulture and floriculture is expected to increase the usage of agrochemicals in the future”, the Founder and Managing Director of Camson Biotechnologies Ltd, Mr Dhirendra Kumar, told PTI.

Companies are increasing their marketing efforts to train farmers, among other things, about the right use of agrochemicals in terms of quantity to be used. With increased awareness, the use of agrochemicals will also increase, he said.

Currently, crop lost due to non-use of pesticides is estimated to be around \$17 billion every year.

“Indian floriculture industry has grown by 50 per cent in last three years. The National Horticulture Mission targets to double production by 2012. Flourishing horticulture and floriculture industries will need increasing amounts of agrochemicals, especially fungicides”, he said.

The Indian agrochemicals market grew at a rate of 11 per cent from \$1.22 billion in 2008 to over \$1.36 billion in 2009.

India is the fourth largest producer of agrochemicals in the world after the United States, Japan, and China, he said.

Bio-fertilisers and biocides are perfect substitutes for chemical fertilisers and pesticides. However bringing out “change in the mindset of farmers”, who have been using the tried and tested chemical pesticides for generations, is one of the biggest challenges that the bio-fertilisers sector faces.

The sector is striving to woo farmers to switch from chemical pesticides to natural biocides, Mr Kumar said.