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Organic products worth Rs. 79 crore produced during 2010-11 in TN

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: Organic farmers in Tamil Nadu produced 61,870 lakh tonnes of fruits, vegetables and flowers worth Rs. 78.39 crore during 2010-11, according to T. Gopalakrishnan, Director of Seed Certification and Organic Certification.

He along with Rama Mohan Rao, Agricultural Production Commissioner and Principal Secretary to Government, P. Murugesha Boopathy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, E. Vadivel, Special Officer, Tamil Nadu Horticultural University, A. Gopal, Joint Director of Seed Certification, and others recently visited farmer Sundararaman's farm in Sathyamangalam.

Mr. Sundararaman told the officials that he had cultivated sugarcane, rice, maize and vegetables through organic method of cultivation for the past 18 years and had been enjoying higher yield.

Farmers planning to switch over to organic method of cultivation can register with the TNOCD at 1424 A, Thadagam Road, GCT Post, Coimbatore 641 013. For further details dial 0422-2435080 or e-mail queries to tnocd@Yahoo.co.in.

Date:30/03/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/30/stories/2011033051260200.htm>

Rs. 2,131 crore crop loan target for Anantapur dist.

Banks increase their target for crop loans by 18.42 per cent from 2010-2011

For SME sector, loan amount increases from Rs. 223.11 crore to 273.48 crore

ANANTAPUR: The district-level bankers meeting under the chairmanship of District Collector Dr. B. Janardhan Reddy held here on Tuesday set the targets for the 2011-12 financial year under the annual credit plan.

The banks, which had set a target of Rs. 1800 crore for crop loans in 2010-11, increased their target by 18.42 per cent, thereby allocating Rs. 2131.41 crore.

For agriculture term loan, the growth was 156.59 per cent. The amount being given out as term loans had shot up from Rs. 120 crore to Rs. 307.87 crore. For the SME sector, the increase in loan amount was from Rs. 223.11 crore to 273.48 crore. Total credit was increased from Rs. 2964.08 crore to Rs. 3457.66 crore, registering a hike by 16.65 per cent.

The term loans worth Rs. 307.87 crore cover minor irrigation, land development, farm mechanisation and horticulture.

The target under agricultural allied activity, which covers dairy, poultry, fisheries, sheep, goat units etc. for the year 2011-12, is set at Rs. 64.20 crore.

The target set for financing SSI units, artisans, village industries, professionals and self-employed people, transport operators and the services sector is Rs. 273.48 crore. The target set for financing housing loans, educational loans and other priority sector is Rs. 291.72 crore.

The total target under priority sector is Rs. 3068.68 crore. The total credit budget for the year 2011-12 is Rs. 3457.66 crore.

District Lead Bank Manager Raghavendra, Syndicate Bank DGM C. Sambasiva Reddy and AGM RBI Mahadeva Swamy, NABARD DGM Ramamohana Rao, SBI AGM GopalaNaidu and DRDA Project Director T. Rangaiah participated in the bankers meet.

Date:30/03/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/30/stories/2011033051450200.htm>

Classes held for coconut farmers

KASARAGOD: As part of the national agriculture innovation programme being implemented by the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) here, classes on scientific management of coconut trees and integrated pest control methodology were held at Pattena, near Neeleswaram, on Tuesday.

During the day-long function, aspiring farmers and farm labourers were given training in handling coconut climbing machines at a farm near the programme venue.

The programme was inaugurated by Sunil Kumar, Assistant Agriculture Director, Nileschwaram.

CPCRI senior scientist C. Thampan and Krishi Vigyan Kendra expert R. Sanal Kumar held classes for the farmers.

Date:30/03/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/30/stories/2011033053330500.htm>

Tobacco farmers threaten to declare 'crop holiday' for the next two years

Staff Reporter

Relay fast by growers demanding remunerative price enters second day

Tobacco Board ED holds talks with agitating farmers

Board urged to be "pro-peasant" and ensure fair price

PHOTO: Kommuri Srinivas



The Pacifier: Tobacco Board Executive Director C. V. Subba Rao holds talks with agitating growers in Ongole on Tuesday in a bid to end their boycott of auctioning across Prakasam district.

ONGOLE: Tobacco farmers, whose relay fast entered the second day on Tuesday, threatened to declare crop holiday for the next two years, if the traders did not offer them a 'fair price' for their produce.

On directions from Tobacco Board Chairman G. Kamala Vardhan Rao, now camping in New Delhi, Tobacco Board Executive Director C V Subba Rao reached Ongole this evening and held talks with the agitating farmers, who have been boycotting the auctioning in 11 auction platforms in the district since Monday.

"We cannot carry on farming if traders do not offer an average price of Rs. 120 per kg. We are prepared to go for crop holiday for two years if they fail to provide us a remunerative price for our product," the farmers told to Mr Rao at the fasting venue in front of the Indian Tobacco company main office here.

"We will not take part in the auctioning till the issue is resolved to our satisfaction as it is a question of life and death for us," said CPI (M)-led Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham Prakasam district secretary N. Ranga Rao.

"I have come to hear the views of the farmers. We know that the farmers have incurred heavy loss in the initial stage due to incessant rains. They have in-fact produced a high quality

tobacco. We will do our best to ensure best possible price to ryots", Mr Rao told reporters after the talks.

The Board Chairman while sympathetically considering the demands of farmers would hold talks with the traders on Thursday, Mr Rao said. Senior TDP leader from Kandukur Divi Sivaram urged the Board to be "pro-peasant" and intervene in the market to ensure a fair price for their produce.

"Though farmers got initially an average price of Rs 120 per kg, the price went down each day towards the month-end," Tobacco Board former member P. Bhadri Reddy said. "If the present trend continues we will end up this season with an unbearable loss, producing a high quality produce overcoming vagaries of nature," said another former Tobacco Board member M. Bangaru Babu. "We will have no option but to end our lives if our genuine demand is not met," he said. CPI-led APRS district president K.V.V. Prasad said Tobacco production in the State was well within the authorised production of 170 million kg. "The Board which fixes the crop size has a responsibility to ensure lifting of the produce by traders offering us a remunerative price," he said. State Tobacco Growers Association's former chairman C. Seshaiyah said the Board, which had imposed penalty on growers, should cancel the licence of traders who failed to lift the produce offering Minimum Guaranteed Support Price (MGSP) to ryots.

Date:30/03/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/30/stories/2011033053680500.htm>

Freebie culture fails to strike right chord with agriculturists

L. Renganathan

'Manifestos not focussing on infrastructure and technology'

KARUR: Farmers are seeing red in the burgeoning freebie culture and, fearing its induced laxity, have termed it as a retrograde step that bodes ill for society.

"While previously the parties or alliances used to promise voters scope for work, increase employment opportunities and jobs these days it seems the rival alliances are more intent on delivering freebies dime a dozen to the voters," according to Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association working president Mahadanapuram V. Rajaram.

Rather than focusing on development issues such as infrastructure development, technology upgradation, popularizing recent scientific advancements, steps to increase productivity and the like, the manifestos of the leading alliances vie with one another in lulling the voters into laziness with their freebies and sops that range from free or subsidized rice to mixie and grinder besides the laptop and fans, he has pointed out in a press release issued here on Tuesday.

The voters are being lured with the carrot of such sops and offerings, so much so that the concept of work and earning has definitely been pushed to the background.

The freebies culture is only inducing laziness and laxity among the people and has a definite negative bearing on productivity, which has become the worst sufferer in the situation, Mr. Rajaram pointed out.

Besides, such sops have adversely affected the farm sector as instead of taking them as aid most of the beneficiaries have chosen to remain content enjoying them.

Work culture and ethics have suffered immensely due to the competitive offers of freebies by the rival groups, Mr. Rajaram has observed.

Rather than be beguiled by the rival promises and allurements, farmers must apply their minds and support the suitable or the right candidates in the fray in each of the constituencies.

Money earned through dint of hard work would be far suited in today's needs and requirements than that earned as freebies and sops offered by the political groupings that could encourage laziness and spell doom for the societal ethics and work culture, Mr. Rajaram has cautioned.

Date:30/03/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/30/stories/2011033054100500.htm>

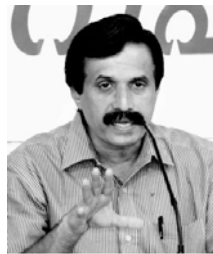
Candidates promise sustainable growth

Staff Reporter

Contestants in Pudukad face each other at press meet



K. P. Viswanathan



C. Ravindranath

Thrissur: C. Ravindranath and K.P. Viswanathan, LDF and UDF candidates in Pudukad, on Tuesday promised development that would reach all sections of society.

They were addressing the 'meet-the-press' programme at the Thrissur Press Club.

Talking about the success of the Kodakara Sustainable Development Project implemented by him as Kodakara MLA, Mr. Ravindranath said the project envisaged the socio-economic empowerment of marginalised sections.

"It set a role model for the State in scientific planning and systematic implementation of development projects. Using funds effectively and with a clear perspective about development, it achieved basic growth targets," the academic-turned-politician said.

The KSEB had installed 84 transformers to ensure power supply with adequate voltage to all houses in Kodakara, he said. "The farm sector witnessed considerable progress. Paddy production increased three times. Fruits of cluster farming are benefiting coconut farmers. Kodakara has tasted success in the production of 'Nature Fresh' brand of milk and farming 'kadali' plantains for Guruvayur Devaswom through the Kudumbasree platform," Mr. Ravindranath said. Kodakara is now attached to the Chalakudy constituency.

Mr. Ravindranath said he would continue the development initiatives in Pudukad if he was elected to Assembly.

Seasoned politician and UDF candidate K.P. Viswanathan dismissed his rival candidate's claims of achievements as exaggerated propaganda.

A four-time MLA from Kodakara constituency, Mr. Viswanathan said many of the development projects initiated during his period were neglected during the LDF rule. He alleged that Mr. Ravindranath had been falsely using the title 'professor' to influence the voters. He claimed that Mr. Ravindranath was a 'special grade lecturer' and not a 'professor'.

Mr. Ravindranath, however, refuted the allegation and said from January 1, 2006, onwards, colleges had no lecturers, but only professors.

"I resigned from the college on June 25, 2006. So, I am entitled to be considered as a professor," he said.

Puthukkad Assembly segment comprises Alagappa Nagar, Mattathur, Nenmanikkara, Parappukkara, Pudukad, Varantharapally and Thrikkur panchayats.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Wednesday, Mar 30

Max Min
35.8° | 24.2°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 66%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:07

Sunset: 18:20

Barometer: 1007.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Mar 31

Max Min
36° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Apr 1	Saturday Apr 2	Sunday Apr 3	Monday Apr 4	Tuesday Apr 5
33° 22° Partly Cloudy	33° 21° Cloudy	33° 21° Cloudy	32° 22° Cloudy	33° 22° Cloudy

Crops worth Rs 1.2 lakh destroyed in fire

March 30, 2011 10:46:00 AM

Staff Reporter | Bhopal

With the mercury level rising in the city and expected to touch 38 degree Celsius, there has been an increase in fire incidents.

Three fire incidents were reported in the city, all of them bushfires. No one was injured. On Tuesday afternoon, a fire broke out in the open fields of Kolar area at Bairagarh Chichli, Mother Teresa School and Amrawatkala (village Baderi) where standing wheat crops were gutted.

Several crops of wheat were destroyed by the fire, which spread and threatened to spill over to other areas. Firefighters were pressed into service and they were able to take control only after the support of fire tenders from the main fire station at Bhopal and from Mandideep. Five fire tenders were rushed to the spot, two from Kolar and main station at Bhopal and one from Mandideep. The wheat crop was reduced to ashes. The blaze started at 3.30 pm and firefighters managed to douse it by 5 pm.

As per police, the cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained and the matter was being probed. The fire resulted in damage worth ` 1,20,000, said the police.

Business Standard

Wednesday, Mar 30, 2011

Shubhashis Gangopadhyay: Costly coffee day

Meaningless subsidies only benefit vested interests

Shubhashis Gangopadhyay / March 30, 2011, 0:24 IST

Coffee growers in Orissa have demanded that subsidies for the expansion of coffee plantations in areas that have traditionally not grown coffee should be the same as those given for such expansion in traditional areas. In other words, their grouse is that, being non-traditional growers, the subsidies they get from the Coffee Board is a lot less than what the Board gives to traditional growers. In particular, the association of coffee growers in Orissa are demanding that the subsidy for bringing new areas under coffee should cover 50 per cent of the costs of doing so with a cap of Rs 1.75 lakh per hectare.

Currently, the subsidy they get is 25 per cent of the cost with a cap of Rs 60,000 per hectare on plantation project cost. They make two points to support their claims: (a) the current subsidy figures are based on calculations made in 1992 and so, need to be revised upwards as costs have gone up since then and (b) the non-traditional area growers receive less than the traditional area growers and that, they claim is unfair.

Let us consider the arguments one by one. In 2011, people are arguing that the subsidies being given for the last 20 years need to be revised upwards. Though they do not say as much, I presume that they are saying that coffee production is not spreading in non-traditional areas because even with the subsidy, this economic activity is not lucrative enough for the producers.

The obvious question is why is it important to increase coffee production in non-traditional areas? Is coffee a strategic crop that India needs to produce and, hence, one should not look at its own economic profitability? Are there wider consequences for national security or, for the profitability of other activities? Or, may be, is it a public good and considerations of private profitability alone will lead to under-investment in this activity and that is inefficient? The reason why I am speculating along such lines is because, for the life of me, I am unable to get the

argument. When I start thinking about it, I am invariably led to the following inescapable inference: if a subsidy that has continued for 20 years leads one to the conclusion that more is needed for a further unidentified length of time, and at a greater scale, then probably it is better to scrap the subsidy altogether. Unless of course, we can find some other non-commercial reason for growing more coffee in non-traditional areas. I am sure that after another 20 years we will be able to come up with such justifications for we would have then found that a number of people working in these plantations kept going because of the subsidies. And then, any reduction or stoppage of the subsidy will mean loss of livelihood of these workers and, hence, we can argue that subsidies should continue in perpetuity. Moreover, by then the number of people whose livelihoods will be at stake would have increased manyfold due to the growth of coffee in non-traditional areas.

It is wonderful that the Coffee Board has identified more areas where coffee can be grown. However, I presume that it is not only the technological feasibility — soil and weather, for instance — but also the commercial feasibility that should be considered. If after continuous subsidisation for 20 years, one clamours for more, there has to be something seriously wrong with the process of such identification. I can just imagine what could be done with the Rs 1.75 lakh per hectare amount by the children of the would-be coffee plantation workers. May be they can get some education and training and end up working for Infosys! Perhaps, I am being silly.

Now let me take the second reason put up by the Orissa coffee growers — that of equity between traditional and non-traditional area growers. One would think that the traditional areas had some specific advantages to growing coffee and, hence, their legacy. Of course, it could be pure luck that they started growing coffee before the growers in non-traditional areas. But now that they know that such opportunities exist for them too, the non-traditional growers should seize the moment and start making profits. Indeed, that is what they are trying to impress upon the government and the Board. Well, because they have understood the real way to make profits — through subsidies! And, hence they demand equity; if the government allows some groups to benefit from government's largesse, then why not everyone in a rule of law, democratic society.

Once again, I wonder. Coffee growers will be transferred money by the government but that money does not belong to the government or the coffee growers. It belongs to the non-coffee growers and, of course, the coffee drinkers. Instead of going to the Board, should not the coffee

growers ask those whose money they want to take? For example, should they not spell out exactly why they need the subsidy and how it will help the non-coffee growers to encourage them to give up their money? Is it not the responsibility of the government that gives subsidies and the takers of these subsidies to explain to those whose money is being taken how the subsidy is helping any one (other than the takers)?

Every time someone questions any subsidy, those who receive and bleeding hearts fill the air with cries of “loss of livelihood” and “down with markets”. The only problem is that this has been the pattern ever since Independence and 1991 notwithstanding. However, livelihood issues are not any less significant than before and our only effort at addressing that seems to be concentrated on conjuring up newer and newer ways to subsidise.

World rubber production likely to rise 6.2%

George Joseph / Kochi March 30, 2011, 0:19 IST

The Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC), a 11-member international organisation, projects 6.2 per cent growth in the production of the commodity this year. The expected growth matches the 6.4 per cent increase registered in 2010.

The latest estimates of ANRPC project global output to be at 10.06 million tonnes in 2011 as against 9.47 million tonnes last year.

The increase in output is expected due to a rise in the area under natural rubber. An additional 203,000 hectares has been brought under natural rubber this year.

The total sown area is expected to be 7.19 million hectares compared with 6.99 million hectares in 2010. The average per hectare yield is likely to increase to 1,398 kg per hectare from 1,355 kg per hectare last year.

Supply from Thailand, the world’s largest producer, accounting for 34 per cent of the global supply, is likely to rise 5.5 per cent or 3.43 million tonnes this year due to area expansion.

About 114,550 hectares of trees planted in 2004 and a portion of 173,000 hectares planted in 2005 are expected to be tapped now.

ANRPC projects an increase of eight per cent in the supply from Indonesia and the estimated supply for this year is 2.95 million tonnes. As the world's second-largest producer, Indonesia accounts for 29 per cent of the total global supply.

In Malaysia, supply would be around 975,000 tonnes as against 1.05 million tonnes targeted by the government.

India's supply may touch 884,000 tonnes this year, up 3.9 per cent from last year due to an estimated 14,000 hectares increase in the area and better yield. Incidentally, India at present has the highest natural rubber productivity across the globe.

Production in other leading producing countries like Vietnam and China is also estimated to increase this year, according to ANRPC data. Vietnam will have a production of 755,000 tonnes, China (647,000 tonnes), Sri Lanka (153,000 tonnes), Philippines (99,000 tonnes) and Cambodia will supply 42,000 tonnes in the current year.

Low recovery in UP, Maharashtra may depress sugar output

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai March 30, 2011, 0:18 IST

Extended rainfall in October-November and short cold wave later hit the quality of cane.

India's overall sugar output is unlikely to surpass 24 million tonnes during the current crushing season, due to a steep decline in recovery in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, the country's leading producers. The country produced 18.8 mt of sugar last year.



The extended rainfall in October-November, dry weather after that and the short cold wave hit the quality of cane substantially. The sucrose content has declined drastically, resulting in factories crushing more cane for less sugar.

Also, government-run employment programmes, including the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, created a scarcity of labour for harvesting cane. Hence, the prolonged period of standing crop meant resulted in blooming of flowers, indicating very low moisture content. Factoring all these issues, sugar output even at 24 mt looks unachievable, said Sunil Kakria, managing director of Mawana Sugars Ltd.

Talking on the sideline of a press meet here recently, Kakria said UP's sugar output was likely to decline to six mt from the industry's previous estimate of 6.4 mt. The Indian Sugar Mills Association (Isma) factored in 6.4 mt from UP in making an overall estimate of 25 mt for the current season. The state's sugar commissioner estimated total output at 6.1 mt. As of yesterday, total output in the state was reported at 5.65 mt as against 4.07 mt by the same time last year.

During the rest of the operational period of nearly a fortnight more last year, sugar mills in the state added another 1.1 mt, which is highly unlikely this year. Hence, we can safely estimate total output in the state between 6.1-6.2 mt, said Isma director general Avinash Verma.

The deficit may not be bridged by mills in Maharashtra, as they are struggling with unharvested cane crop and lower recovery. Maharashtra is the country's largest sugar producing state and has reported a decline of 0.26 percentage point in recovery, from 11.50 per cent last year to 11.24 per cent this year, according to an official with the Maharashtra State Federation of Co-operative Sugar Factories (in UP, the Isma recovery estimate is 9.11 per cent, down from 9.13 per cent last year).

Verma said the picture on overall output would be clearer in the next 15 days. Small states such as Bihar, Haryana and Karnataka have reported a slight increase in output, which may partly compensate the loss in the two leading states.

Sugar prices remained range-bound at Rs 2,600 a quintal in Maharashtra and Rs 2,800 a quintal in Uttar Pradesh.

THE HINDU Business Line

Rural cattle fair showcases local, north Indian breeds



Business Line Calf at the cattle fair at Mooduperar near Kaikamba - Photo:R.Eswarraj
Muduperar (Dakshina Kannada), March 29:

The arecanut plantation of Mr Narahari Prabhu at Muduperar village was a beehive of activity for dairy farmers on Tuesday with many bringing their cattle to the cattle fair, and others visiting the spot to know more about rearing of some of the new breeds of cattle.

Organised by the Dakshina Kannada Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, farmers brought more than 350 cattle to the fair from near and far off places.

A platform for dairy farmers to interact with officials and fellow farmers, the fair focused on issues concerning dairy farming in Dakshina Kannada district.

Many farmers, with whom this reporter spoke, said that dairy farming needs to be supplemented by other farm activity, and also expressed concern over the lack of good quality cattle in the market. However, the President of the Dakshina Kannada Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, Mr Raviraj Hegde, stressed the need for better calf-rearing practice to improve the yield.

COST FACTOR

Mr Hegde said that there is scarcity of cattle in Dakshina Kannada district. A cow, which cost around Rs 15,000 a year ago, now costs more than Rs 25,000. Considering this, the cooperative union is encouraging better calf-rearing practice among dairy farmers. A fair like this will have a demonstrative effect on farmers, he said.

Showing his HF (Holstein-Friesian) breed of cattle, Mr Sadananda Shetty from the nearby Ekkar village told *Business Line* that he has three HF breed cattle, and gets around 18 litres a day from two of them. One cow, which is in its fourth year, is not even able to conceive. "I have brought this cow also to discuss the matter with the veterinarian here," he said.

FARM ACTIVITY MUST

Saying that his paddy field helps him sustain the cost of dairy farming, Mr Shetty said the cattle feed price has increased by Rs 35-40 a kg and the price of the milk being sold to the cooperative society by only Rs 2 a liter.

But for Mr Rukku Pujari from the nearby Mogaru village, who rears a cow of local breed, the Rs 2 increase is enough for him. However, he stressed on the need for having paddy field or arecanut plantation to meet the cost of dairy farming.

The star attraction of the fair was the Gir and Sahiwal breeds from Mr Ratankumar of Nellikaru village. Mr Ratankumar said he has travelled 50 km, from Muduperar. He brought the Gir breed of cattle from Gujarat and Sahiwal from Punajb.

Happy with their productivity, he said the cost of rearing these cattle is less than that of Jersey breed.

Mr Yashovarma, secretary of the Nellikar Milk Cooperative Society, said that the Gir breed gives around 15 litres of milk a day here, compared to around 25 litres a day in Gujarat.

Mr Narahari Prabhu, President of Mudabettu Milk Cooperative Society – in whose farm the cattle fair was held – said that he rears around 100 cattle. The cooperative society in his village, which was collecting 100 litres of milk a day two years ago, is now collecting 300 litres a day.

Considering the scarcity of fodder in the market, he is now bringing a truckload of cattle fodder block from Rajasthan on an experimental basis. The fodder block includes all the necessary ingredients for cattle. Based on the results, further decision will be taken, he added.

Pepper futures turn hot on bullish activities



Kochi, Mar 29:

Pepper futures on Tuesday bounced back on bullish activities/reports pushing up all the contracts significantly.

The market opened at lower levels and moved up to the highest price and slid slightly at the time of closing.

In fact, in the opening hours there were more sellers on the exchange platform and at one stage as against buyers for 290 tonnes there were sellers for about 1,000 tonnes.

Vietnam prices remained firmer as Dubai-based international operators reported to have bought huge quantities of pepper from there.

Storage and funds facilities are said to be cheaper in Dubai and these operators appear to have taken over the pepper market also, market sources told *Business Line*.

Domestic market

Domestic market is expected to pick up when the markets open on April 4 in the next fiscal, they said. April contract on the NCDEX shot up by Rs 465 to close at Rs 24,574 a quintal.

May and June increased by Rs 487 and Rs 463 respectively to close at Rs 24,950 and Rs 25,255 a quintal.

Total turn over increased by 838 tonnes.

Total open interest moved up by 274 tonnes to 11,028 tonnes.

April open interest dropped by 236 tonnes to 7,645 tonnes while that of May and June moved up by 446 tonnes and 57 tonnes respectively to close at 2,867 tonnes and 377 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend shot up by Rs 300 to close at Rs 23,000 (ungarbled) and Rs 23,800 (MG 1) a quintal.

In the international market the Indian parity has gone up to \$5,725-5,750 a tonne (c&f). Buyers are on a wait-and watch mode now as the prices are reportedly turned firmer in all the origins.

Yes Bank, Business Line organise agribusiness conclave

Mumbai, March 29:

As part of two years of strategic partnership "Banking on Agribusiness," Yes Bank and The Hindu Business Line are jointly organising a "Food and Agribusiness Conclave" on April 4 in New Delhi.

The Conclave seeks to bring together experts and thought-leaders from the agriculture-related sectors for a brainstorming session featuring two panel discussions covering "Role of private Sector in enhancing food security" and "Achieving food security by building an efficient agri supply chain."

Top level executives from reputed corporates in agribusiness and related fields will participate in the two panel discussions.

The event will be inaugurated by Mr Ashok Sinha, Secretary, Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries, and Prof Abhijit Sen, Member, Planning Commission. Mr Rana Kapoor, Founder, Managing Director and CEO, Yes Bank, will deliver the welcome address.

A compendium containing collection of articles that appeared in *Business Line* over the last two years as part of the agribusiness knowledge initiative with Yes Bank will be released.

The Conclave will host over 150 delegates including policymakers, opinion leaders, corporate executives and independent experts in agriculture and food-related fields who are in a position to provide policy inputs for the government.

APMC Act: Demand for amendment in other States is gaining ground

Chennai, March 29:

Even as some States have begun changing the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act, demand for amendment in other States is gaining ground, particularly on the heels of surging inflation.

A popular perception is that the APMC Act prohibits farmers from selling their produce to anyone outside of a demarcated area. Besides, the Act arms the State Governments to regulate wholesale agricultural markets.

What happens due to this is that farmers do not get fair price for their produce and they go unprotected from exploitation by traders, a recent study has revealed.

In this context, SMC Comtrade, a commodity brokerage arm of SMC group, has urged the Centre to initiate fresh measures for APMC Act reforms.

“In addition, special status should be given to perishables and horticulture commodities with all items being de-listed from Schedule I of APMC Act to enable producers to buy and sell these commodities anywhere in the country,” said the SMC Group Chairman and Managing Director, Mr Subash Chand Aggarwal.

The private sector should be encouraged to develop specialised fruits and vegetables markets that would offer more marketing options.

Multiple levies and taxes charged by different APMC and State-level rules and regulations were also distorting trade, he said, adding that proper infrastructure was also required for storage.

Leaf, dust auctions on April 1



Business Line Tea leaves at a garden in Devala in Nilgiri-Wyanad.

Coonoor, March 29:

Both leaf and dust auctions of Sale No. 13 will take place on April 1, contrary to the Coonoor Tea Trade Association's initial programme to conduct leaf auctions of Sale No. 13 on March 31 and dust on April 1.

According to the initial programme, all leaf auctions were meant to be conducted on Thursdays and dust auctions on Fridays. But now, buyers have expressed difficulty in accounting as leaf auctions would happen in the current fiscal and dust auctions of the same Sale No. 13 in the next fiscal. So it has been decided to conduct both auctions on April 1.

Accordingly, the transaction of 8.53 lakh kg of leaf grades worth over Rs 6 crore scheduled for Thursday will be taken up on Friday.

Consequently, auctions for the current financial year have concluded with Sale No. 12. In all, 51 auctions were conducted. This financial year ended on a disappointment with 31 per cent of the offer worth over Rs 2.52 crore remaining unsold for want of buyers. Quality teas, however, gained recognition. Four grades of Vigneshwar speciality teas topped CTC market. “Our Broken Orange Pekoe Fanning topped CTC market fetching Rs 169 a kg, followed by Broken Pekoe at Rs 168. Our Pekoe Dust topped dust market at Rs 165, followed by Super Fine Dust at Rs 160. Our teas also fetched the next two top prices in dust market. In all, our 13 grades got Rs 103 and more,” Vigneshwar Managing Partner Mr Ramesh Bhojarajan told *Business Line*.

Homedale Estate got Rs 148, Honeydew Rs 145, Hittakkal Estate Rs 136, Shanthi Supreme Rs 132, and Sree Tea Supreme and Professor Rs 131 each.

India joins coffee genome network



Hubli, March 29:

India has joined the International Coffee Genome Network. The network is purely a scientific network aimed at establishing a common platform for advanced genomic research for sustainable coffee production in the producing countries.

The network is also expected to take stock of what has been achieved in countries and to establish priorities for a future programme for the coffee genome with long-term benefits for the coffee sector.

Knowledge of the genome is fundamental to allow efficient use and conservation of coffee's genetic resources for the development of improved cultivars in terms of pest and disease resistance, higher yield, quality and reduced economic and environmental costs.

“The first initiative was taken by Coffee Board of India in 2004 to discuss the possibility and interest of an international commitment to work jointly in the area of coffee genomics. The main goal of the initiative was to sequence the coffee genome and develop genomic tools and resources to further the understanding of the coffee genome and its diversity at the molecular, biochemical and physiological levels,” Dr Jayarama, Director of Research, Central Coffee Research Institute, told *Business Line*.

“In this endeavour, 27 institutes from 19 coffee-producing countries are participating for mutual benefits and to decode the genetic and molecular bases of important biological traits in coffee tree species that are relevant to growers, processors and consumers,” he added.

Through this network, International Coffee Organisation is planning to build on expertise and findings from member countries to establish priorities for the future and explore sources of financing.

Those who have expressed interest are: Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Vietnam and the InterAfrican Coffee Organisation.

“The major overall goal of this consortia of scientists is to provide producers with coffee varieties that are better suited to environmental constraints and growing conditions (shade, altitude, drought, etc) and higher-yielding and more disease-resistant, and produce better quality coffee,” said Dr Jayarama.

Govt mulls permitting wheat exports



Wheat being heaped. File Photo: Kamal Narang.

New Delhi, March 29:

The government on Tuesday said it is mulling allowing wheat exports as the country is braced for a record wheat production this year.

“We are thinking about it (wheat exports). The decision may be taken by April-end or May,” Minister of State for Agriculture Mr Arun S. Yadav told reporters on the sidelines of the north zone conference on agri-cooperatives. The exports would be considered only after ensuring the domestic demand is fully met, he said.

As per the official estimates, the country’s wheat production is expected to be a record 81.4 million tonnes this year, as against 80.80 million tonnes in 2009-10 (July-June).

The wheat harvesting has begun in some states and even FCI, the nodal agency for procurement and distribution of foodgrains, has started buying wheat from farmers at a minimum support price (MSP), the minister said.

According to the FCI data, the arrivals of wheat crop so far in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have been only 2.4 lakh tonnes as compared to 4.93 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period.

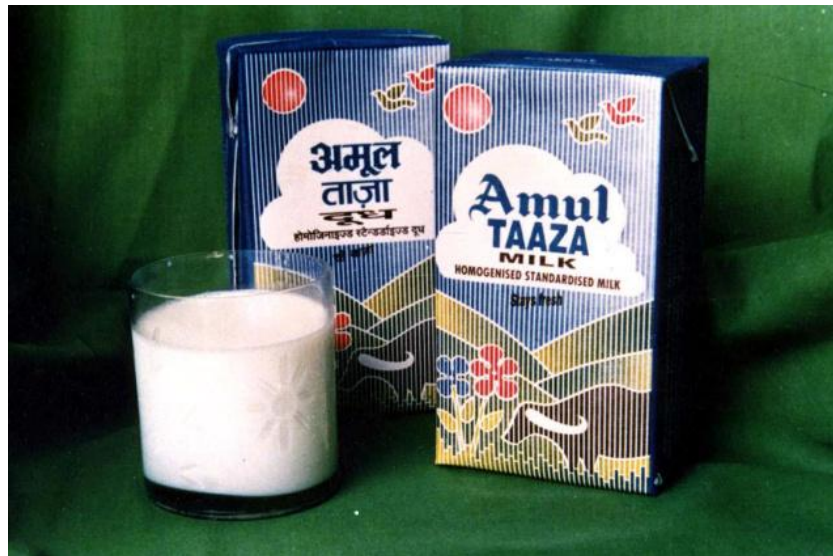
Despite low arrival, the FCI has procured over 1.57 lakh tonnes of wheat largely from Madhya Pradesh and only 40 tonnes from Gujarat so far. Wheat procurement is likely to begin in Punjab and Haryana from April 1, an FCI official said.

FCI has set a higher procurement target of 26.2 million tonnes for 2011-12 marketing year (April-March), as against 22.51 million tonnes last year. The bulk of the procurement is being done between April and June. Wheat is grown in Rabi (winter) season.

On cotton, the minister said the country is heading for a bumper production in 2011-12. "Cotton output in the next year will be 10 per cent more than 2010-11," Mr Yadav said.

Cotton production stood at 33.9 million bales (170 kg each) in 2010-11 crop year (July-June), as per the government's second advance estimate released in February.

Amul procuring milk from outside Gujarat to meet demand



Business Line Amul has been procuring milk from outside its birth place Gujarat to corner the growing dairy market.

New Delhi, March 29:

The country's leading milk co-operative which sells its dairy products under the brand name "Amul", in a strategic move, has been procuring milk from outside its birth place Gujarat to corner the growing dairy market.

“We are procuring 7-8 lakh litres of milk daily from outside Gujarat for over last six months,” Mr R.S. Sodhi, Managing Director of Amul’s body Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), told PTI over phone.

This is in addition to procurement of about one crore litres of milk daily from within Gujarat, Mr Sodhi added.

Formed in 1946, the Anand (Gujarat) based GCMMF, the market leader of milk in the country, is purchasing milk from Maharashtra, West Bengal, Bihar, Haryana and Rajasthan, the Managing Director said.

Earlier, the co-operative, which spurred white revolution in the country, used to cater the milk needs of the entire country from Gujarat itself.

Milk is purchased strictly from dairy co-operative and not from individual or other agency, he said.

Mr Sodhi said, “though procurement of milk outside Gujarat is low at present at around 7-8 per cent of the total procurement, we wish to increase it to 50 per cent to give benefits to dairy farmers outside Gujarat too.”

He said currently the co-operative is concentrating on these five states, but would expand to others later on.

Amul is the largest food brand in the country and world’s largest pouched milk brand with an annual turnover of \$1,700 million in 2009-10.

Besides India, Amul has entered overseas markets such as Mauritius, UAE, USA, Bangladesh, Australia, China, Singapore, Hong Kong and a few South African countries.