

'Farmers should keep pace with latest technologies'

Special Correspondent

Photo: M. Sathyamoorthy



Felicitations: The Director, TNAU,

Udhagamandalam: A five-day capacity building programme on 'Horticultural Technologies for Soil and Water Conservation' organised by the Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute (CSWCRTI) under a National Horticulture Mission scheme of the Department of Horticulture got under way here on Tuesday.

The objective of the training programme, in which about 125 farmers including many women are participating, is to help farmers adopt advanced soil and water conservation and horticulture technologies.

Inaugurating the programme the Director (Open and Distance Learning), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, V. Valluvaparidasan, said that the farming community is the strength of the country and added that farmers should always adopt a positive approach.

Stating that they should not be disheartened by failures, he said that in course of time Indian farmers will be in great demand world wide. They should keep pace with latest technologies.

The head, CSWCRTI, O.P.S. Khola, who presided, said that in a hilly district such as the Nilgiris farmers should accord high priority to soil and water conservation. It would be of considerable benefit not only to this region but also to the entire country. Beneficiaries of such training programmes should help create a chain effect.

The Joint Director of Horticulture in-charge, J. Haldorai, said that the department is attaching a great deal of importance to training of farmers under various schemes.

The Assistant Director of Horticulture, A.J. Jagadeesh Kumar, said that farmers should make the most of such training programmes.

The Senior Scientist, CSWCRTI, S. Manivannan, said that the farmers would be imparted training in water harvesting and recycling, advanced cultivation practices in areas under fruits, vegetables, cut flowers, spices and plantation crops, mechanisation, post-harvest technology, value addition, small scale enterprises and livelihood options.

Senior Scientist K. Kannan proposed a vote of thanks.

Date:09/03/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/09/stories/2011030959480100.htm>

Jairam cancels field trials of Bt maize

Gargi Parsai

Minister's intervention came after Nitish said he was opposed to such trials

Move comes even as moratorium on commercialisation of Bt brinjal stands

Permission should be withdrawn for all States, not just Bihar: BKU leader

NEW DELHI: Even as the moratorium on commercialisation of Bt brinjal stands, Union Environment and Forests Minister Jairam Ramesh has asked the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) to immediately withdraw its permission to Monsanto for field trials of Bt maize in Bihar.

Bt brinjal was the first, and maize is the second food crop for which the GEAC has given permission for field trials in India.

Mr. Ramesh's intervention came after Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar told him personally that he was "opposed" to field trials of Bt maize — a food crop — in Bihar as he was not aware of the risks involved and wanted the GEAC to withdraw its permission.

Letter to GEAC chief

In a letter written to the GEAC chief on March 5, Mr. Ramesh said, "Bihar CM's phone call reinforces my belief that biotech regulation, particularly in the field of agriculture (and food crops especially) cannot be a purely scientific enterprise.

"There are political considerations that will come into play and I use that term in its best people-oriented sense. Regulation in telecom or insurance cannot be equated with regulation in food crop-oriented biotechnology."

A State subject

In a significant move, the Minister has asked the GEAC to give a State government at least one month's time to agree or disagree with field trials for genetically-modified (GM) crops given the fact that agriculture is a State subject.

In fact, ideally, prior approval of the State concerned should be taken before allowing GM crop field trials.

GEAC cleared

BT corn field trials

The GEAC, in December 2010, gave permission for field trials of BRL-II of Bt corn developed by Monsanto at five locations for rabi 2011 — Bihar (two locations), Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh — and at nine locations for kharif 2011 — Bihar (two locations), Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Corn is considered an extremely important crop in Bihar.

India accounts for about three per cent of world maize production. Bihar accounts for 10 per cent, after Andhra Pradesh (17 per cent), Rajasthan (14 per cent) and Madhya Pradesh (12 per cent).

'Absolutely shocking'

Reacting to the permission given for Bt maize trials, Suman Sahai of Gene Campaign, who was awarded Padamshri this year, said, "This is absolutely shocking, coming as it does under the shadow of the review of Bt brinjal, the first food crop to be introduced in India. It is deceitful."

Kavita Kuruganti of Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture expressed concern that "regulators and the government were not heeding democratic and scientific voices about safety aspects of GM crops."

Bhartiya Kisan Union general secretary Yudhvir Singh said: "Permission has been given surreptitiously. This is not right. We strongly oppose it. The permission should be withdrawn for all States, not just Bihar."

Date:09/03/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/09/stories/2011030964270700.htm>

Futures trading in agricultural commodities may go

Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD: Minister for Civil Supplies D.Sridhar Babu has disclosed that the Centre is examining the Chief Ministers' committee's recommendation to ban futures trading in agriculture commodities as a measure to check abnormal increase in food prices.

He was responding to the short discussion on 'price rise' in the Legislative Council on Tuesday where members from ruling and opposition parties flayed the government for its failure to check speculative trading in essential commodities.

They wondered why prices kept rising when food grain production consistently improved and blamed government for not acting against middlemen and hoarders who made huge profits at the cost of farmers and consumers.

Responding to suggestion from K. Nageshwar (Graduates) that State tax on petrol and diesel should be made 'value neutral' so that the State would not make additional revenue whenever petroleum prices were revised, the Minister agreed that it should be given a serious thought. Disagreeing with Leader of Opposition Dadi Veerabhadra Rao's criticism that State government's complacency was fuelling price rise, he said several steps were taken to reign in the abnormal increase in prices.

Market intervention helped in checking the prices of onions, tomatoes, vegetables, he said and hundreds of crores were spent on stabilisation of prices of essential commodities.

Assuring concrete steps to curtail the role of middlemen, he said once Smart cards with biometric evidence were ready, it would be easy to check misuse and diversion of essential commodities under the public distribution system. Mr. Sridhar Babu however said global factors, particularly import of fertilizer, pulses, also impacted food inflation. Yet to lessen the burden on common man, government had been supplying Rs.2 a kg rice and other essentials to white cardholders and ensured supply of vegetables at reasonable rates in Rythu Bazaars.

Mr. T. G. V. Krishna Reddy (Congress) said the subsidy burden was increasing as at least 40 per cent of supplies under PDS were going to ineligible people. Of over two crore white cardholders, government should make a factual assessment of BPL families who deserved the benefit, he said.

Waive all farm loans: Bandeppa

Special Correspondent

BANGALORE: Janata Dal (Secular) member Bandeppa Kashempur on Tuesday urged the Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa in the Legislative Assembly to waive the agricultural loans taken by farmers, instead of reducing the interest on agricultural loans to 1 per cent which was of no use to them and introduce general and weather insurance for them.

Participating in the budget discussions, he said that Mr. Yeddyurappa had allocated Rs. 17 crore under Suvarna Grama for Bidar district in 2007 when he was the Finance Minister in the H.D. Kumaraswamy Government, but the total allocation for the programme during the last three years was a mere Rs. 14 crore, which spoke of his real interest for the welfare of the farmers.

Of the Rs.10,000 crore announced to implement the D.M. Nanjundappa Committee Report, only Rs. 4,605 crore had been allocated, but spent much less including the Ganga Kalyan scheme for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Mr. Kashempur said. Minor Irrigation Minister Govind Karjol told him that he had raised the amount to Rs.1.5 lakh and dry farming amount to Rs.2 lakh, when he held the Social Welfare portfolio.

Integrated training for farmers launched

Special Correspondent

VISAKHAPATNAM: Sri Prakash Educational Society on Tuesday launched a 90-day integrated training programme for farmers in collaboration with CALF, Chitturi Agro and Lacto Foods (P) Ltd and District Livestock Development Agency (DLDA).

The concept of integrated dairy farming and its benefits are already proved practically by Sri Prakash Educational Society through its associate CALF. In his keynote address, DLDA Chairman Ch. V.K. Narasimha Rao expressed concern at utilisation of non-renewable energy sources. He felt that farmers should be enabled to extend their enterprise into power production, cooking gas and organic fertilizers to meet their captive needs. It was high time for the dairy farmers, financial agencies and veterinary professionals to come under a common platform to realise this noble aim, he said. The unique programme was taken up to educate the farmers on taking the right decision at the right time as per a well-designed curriculum.

State Bank of Hyderabad General Manager (agriculture) M.C. Jacob, Deputy General Manager A.N. Krishnan, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry Y. Simhachalam, Deputy Director V. Venkateswara Rao, Assistant Director Kishore and DLDA executive committee member D. Raghavendra Rao spoke. Animal Husbandry Assistant Director S. Srinivasa Rao proposed a vote of thanks.

Date:09/03/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/09/stories/2011030964450800.htm>

Poor infrastructure hinders growth in farm sector, says Jayachandra

Special Correspondent

Congress member demands revamping of Raitha Samparka Kendras

— Photo: V. Sreenivasa Murthy



IN SESSION:The Assembly discussing the State Budget in Bangalore on Tuesday.

Bangalore: T.B. Jayachandra of the Congress on Tuesday said that poor infrastructure and lack of technology transfer to farmers hindered growth in the farm sector. He then demanded the revamping of the functioning of the Raitha Samparka Kendras (RSK).

Speaking on the budget in the Legislative Assembly here, Mr. Jayachandra, who had earlier served as Agriculture Minister, said agricultural production in the State was declining over the years owing to various reasons, including inadequate marketing facilities.

The Raitha Samparka Kendras have become input delivery centres and have not been providing information to farmers on available technologies, schemes and inputs. There are 745 such kendras in the State.

The Government had to take a note of the problems in the farm sector and intervene or otherwise it would lead to migration of people from agriculture to other professions. Funds allocated in previous budgets had not been spent on developing infrastructure such as market, cold storages, and supply chain management.

Allocation was insufficient for supplying seeds and fertilizers at subsidised prices, crop insurance, and drip irrigation, he said.

Funds

Funds sanctioned by the Union Government for the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and National Horticultural Mission had remained unspent due to poor planning by the Finance and Agriculture departments.

Noting that the shortage of staff hit the functioning of the Agriculture Department, he said that extension services were the weakest link in transferring technology and techniques to farmers.

The major work of the extension workers should be spreading awareness and facilitate soil testing facility to check the nutrient deficiency in agricultural fields, he said.

Farm budget questioned

Stating that there was no constitutional sanctity to present an “agriculture budget”, Mr. Jayachandra said that prices of cocoons and arecanut crashed last week and no funds had been released from the Revolving Fund to procure commodities.

“Agriculture is a buyers' market and not sellers' market,” he said and demanded timely intervention of the Government to rescue farmers.

Mr. Jayachandra demanded a special legislature session on irrigation in view of the the Government's alleged failure to expedite works on major projects in Cauvery and Krishna basins. He also demanded timely utilisation of funds under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit programme of the Union Government.

K.M. Shivalinge Gowda of the Janata Dal (S) sought information on the money spent on various heads during the 2010-11 and said Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa's budget remained only on paper. He urged the Government to utilise the Revolving Fund to procure commodities when prices crashed in the open market.

Date:09/03/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/09/stories/2011030951750300.htm>

HC directs Collectors to ensure quality of food schemes

Correspondent

Court also directs ensuring drinking water facilities in anganwadi centres Matter posted for March 29

CUTTACK: Notwithstanding the State government's contention that barring only eight districts no complaint has been received regarding supply of inferior dal under nutritional food programmes in other districts, the Orissa High Court on Tuesday directed Collectors of all 30 districts of the State to ensure that good quality food was supplied under the

welfare schemes like MDM, SNP and EFP.

Allowing the government to file a detailed counter-affidavit to the main writ petition filed by advocate Dilip Mohapatra, the High Court also directed the State government to ensure that proper drinking water facilities were made available in all the 9,543 anganwadi centres of the State.

The Division Bench of Chief Justice V Gopal Gowda and Justice B N Mohapatra adjudicating over the petition for last two months posted the matter for March 29 by which date the State government shall have to file the counter-affidavit.

Earlier, in an interim affidavit, Women and Child Development Secretary Arti Ahuja informed the court that reports of supply of inferior quality of dal were received from Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Ganjam, Jajpur, Kandhamal, Sundargarh, Kendrapara and Boudh districts where the matter was under vigilance investigation.

Affidavit

She also swore in the affidavit that no complaint had been received by the department regarding supply of adulterated dal in other 22 districts adding that steps had been taken by the department to pursue the matter with Collectors to organise checks from time to time to ensure supply of good quality of dal in all the food schemes.

Ms Ahuja also told the HC that the department had initiated a move to decentralise the procurement process of food materials for the schemes concerned from April 1 next as per the direction of the Supreme Court in which it has been said that contractors shall not be involved for supply of nutritional foods under the schemes and funds for these schemes shall be spent by making use of village communities, self-help groups and mahila mandals for buying of grains and preparation of meals.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Mar 9

Max Min

31° | 20.9°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 55%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:21

Sunset: 18:18

Barometer: 1009.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Mar 10

Max Min

35° | 19°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Mar 11	Saturday Mar 12	Sunday Mar 13	Monday Mar 14	Tuesday Mar 15
32° 21° Sunny	31° 23° Cloudy	31° 25° Cloudy	32° 24° Partly Cloudy	32° 24° Partly Cloudy

9 Mar, 2011, 02.35AM IST, Madhvi Sally,ET Bureau

Wheat output to surge on rain, snowfall

AHMEDABAD: Wheat harvesting has begun across Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat and supplies will pick up in a fortnight across central, peninsular and north India. Snowfall and rains across north India are expected to ensure a good production with government officials targetting an 1-2 million tonne increase in this year's production estimate. Wheat output is estimated at a record 81.47 million tonne in 2010-11 against 80.8 million tonne in the previous year.

"The rains in the past one week have been very beneficial for the crop in north India. A similar situation prevails across other parts of the country. We should easily cross 83 million tonne to 84 million tonne production this year", said Karnal's Directorate of Wheat Research project director SS Singh, adding that March was very crucial for the crop.

In Rajkot mandi, daily supplies were in the range of 5000 to 6,000 bags (each of 100 kg).

"Compared to the previous year when farmers were getting `1,250 to `1,700 per quintal , current prices are ruling at `1,000 to `1,500 per quintal owing to an increase in arrivals", said Rajkot-based Tirupati Trading Company owner Ajay Vasant Javav. Similarly, wheat prices in Khanna mandi, Asia's largest grain market, dropped to `1,205 per quintal on Tuesday from `1,220 a week ago, due to a fall in demand. Daily supplies was limited to 10 tonne per day. "In anticipation of new arrivals and a fall in prices, there is no demand in the market. Millers are currently consuming the old stock", said Khanna-based wheat trader Raj Sood.

Procurement by state government agencies and the Food Corporation of India will begin from April 1. However, a survey by Punjab Agriculture University plant pathologists reveals that the

yellow rust disease has started appearing in the sub-mountainous areas of Punjab. TS Thind, the head of the Department of Plant Pathology, said that due to the recent rainfall and changing weather, conditions are favouring for the spread of the disease.

9 Mar, 2011, 02.57AM IST, S Sanandakumar,ET Bureau

Rubber deficit seen at 1.2 lt on poor output

KOCHI: The year-end deficit in natural rubber is projected at 1.20 lakh tonne as production slipped 5% against the target and prices rose to unprecedented levels during the year.

The shortfall is expected to widen in the coming season because the tyre sector, which uses rubber as a key raw material, is planning to add huge capacity. "The gap between production and consumption would widen up to 2 lakh tonne in 2011-12," said Neeraj Kanwar, chairman, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association. He said the industry is in the process of investing `12,000 crore on capacity expansion.

Growing at 3% a year, rubber production would settle at 8.51 lakh tonne in 2010-11 though Rubber Board officials did not rule out the possibility of a marginal upward revision when the figures are finalised. Last year's monsoon that extended for nearly 6 months disrupted production in the plantation belts of south India.

Consumption is expected to go up by 1.9% to touch 9.48 lakh tonne for the year. The official estimate of short supply has been placed at around 1 lakh tonne as against the industry's estimate of 1.2 lakh tonne. A tyre industry spokesman maintained that the actual shortage was much more acute than the slightly conservative estimate put out by the Rubber Board. The imports contracted by the industry would be around 1.7 lakh tonne during the year.

The coming year would see the deficit situation worsen because the tyre industry has been

expanding its capacity in both truck and passenger car tyres. The total capacity that would be added in the two-year period ending 2012 would be 1,700 tonne per day.

“Tyre companies are in a race to set up new plants,” said AS Mehta, marketing director, JK Tyres. He added: “By 2012, capacity would not be an issue in the sector though meeting the requirement of natural rubber is going to be a challenge.” ATMA has already sought government’s permission for duty-free import of 2 lakh tonne to bridge the supply-demand gap. Of the new capacity being added by the industry, truck radial tyres account for about 60% while the remaining is the share of car radial tyres. Natural rubber content is more in truck tyres than in car tyres and this would push requirement up for rubber.

Steady demand and a lower production has driven rubber prices upwards to a record level of `240.50 per kg in February.

About 14,000 hectare of rubber plantation would be ready for tapping in 2012 to meet the additional requirement of the industry. But with the output from this area estimated at 14,000 tonne a year, deficit and high prices are expected to be the rule rather than an exception in the coming year.

9 Mar, 2011, 02.26AM IST, PK Krishnakumar & Madhvi Sally,

Pistachios to cost less on duty cut

KOCHI | AHMEDABAD: Pistachios would soon cost less with large processors and traders having decided to pass on the 20% import duty cut to local buyers.

The import duty on raw pistachios, which is not grown in India, was slashed from 30% to 10% in the recent Budget. “It is good for consumers. India is a fast-developing market for pistachios with 20%-24% growth year-on-year,” said Naresh Gupta, vice president, sales and marketing of Paramount Farms, a leading processor and distributor of pistachios in the country.

The company is reducing the price of its Wonderful brand of pistachios from April, by which time

the present inventory will be liquidated.

“The `240 pack will cost `200 and the `100 packet will be available for `90. Even for small packs costing `20, we will reduce (the price by) `5,” Gupta said. Pista imports into the country are at about 20 million pounds. Gupta said the quantity is expected to reach 50 million pounds in the next season which starts from August as consumption is going up.

Pista prices have fallen by `20 a kg touching `450 to `480 a kg in Katra Ishwar Bhawan in Old Delhi's Khari Baoli area. Traders expect prices to further fall by 15% to 20% by the end of April. “Traders have a two-month inventory which has been purchased at higher rates. By April end when the inventory is exhausted, prices will fall,” said Apresh Aggarwal of the dry fruit association with Indo-Afghan Chamber of Commerce. But processors say retailers would not pass on the revised prices to the consumer immediately with the wedding season beginning in a fortnight. Almond prices too have dropped.

8 Mar, 2011, 03.06PM IST, REUTERS

Oilseeds, soyoil extend losses on global cues

MUMBAI: Oilseeds and soyoil futures extended the previous session's losses on Tuesday afternoon following weak overseas cues and as rapeseed arrivals were rising in local spot markets, analysts said.

"Market is expecting improvement in Argentina's soybean production due to recent rainfall activity...in domestic spot markets rapeseed arrivals are rising," said Veeresh Hiremath, senior analyst at Karvy Comtrade.

U.S. soybean lost around 1 percent, falling for a second day as outlook for a better crop in South America weighed on the market amid expectations that the U.S. Department of

Agriculture later this week will raise its forecast of ending stocks for the first time in 11 months.

Malaysian palm oil was trading 2.3 percent lower at 3,610 ringgit per tonne at 1:55 p.m.

April soyoil on India's National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) was 1.7 percent lower at 634.7 rupees per 10 kg.

In the Indore spot market, soyoil dropped by 6.5 rupees to 622.3 rupees per 10 kg, while soybean fell by 24 rupees to 2,379 rupees per 100 kg.

April soybean on NCDEX was 1.99 percent lower at 2,414 rupees per 100 kg, and April rapeseed dropped 1.3 percent to 2,804 rupees per 100 kg.

In Sri Ganganagar market in Rajasthan, rapeseed price fell by 10 rupees to 2,735 rupees per 100 kg.

India's rapeseed output could jump 16.1 percent in 2011 to 6.85 million tonnes, helped by favourable weather conditions, a leading trade body had said.

8 Mar, 2011, 11.53AM IST,PTI

Cardamom futures down 0.47 pc on profit taking

NEW DELHI: Cardamom prices declined by Rs 5 to Rs 1,068.50 per kg in futures trade today as speculators booked profits amid sluggish demand at the spot market.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange , cardamom for delivery in March declined by Rs 5, or 0.47 per cent, to Rs 1,068.50 per kg, with a business turnover of just one lot.

Likewise, the spice for delivery in April shed Rs 2.80, or 0.25 per cent, to Rs 1,124.40 per kg,

with an open interest of a single lot.

Market analysts said profit taking by speculators at existing higher prices amid sluggish spot demand led to the fall in cardamom futures prices.

Adequate stocks in the physical markets following increased arrivals from the producing regions also put pressure on cardamom futures prices, they added.



Forest dept organises workshop on landscape restoration

March 09, 2011 10:55:32 AM

PNS | Dehradun

The Forest Department organised a workshop for presentation of work done in sites across the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand as part of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration. The Chief Conservator of Forest (Garhwal) Dig Vijay Singh Khati presided over the programme which was held on Tuesday.

According to the Dehradun Divisional Forest Officer, Meenakshi Joshi, 20 sites each in the three Indian States; Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Odisha have been selected under this global partnership. The first phase of this initiative comprises of documentation of the forest landscape restoration studies undertaken during the past 10 years along with analyses of factors responsible for either success or failure of the efforts undertaken for restoration. In Uttarakhand the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) is in partnership with the Forest Department for this initiative. Presentations were made on the studies undertaken in sites

located in Dehradun, Uttarkashi, Haridwar, Badarinath, Alaknanda valley and Lansdowne in the Garhwal region during the meet held on Tuesday. A presentation of studies undertaken in the Kumaon region will be held on March 10 followed by a State level programme on March 13 to review work undertaken in the first phase of the global partnership effort.

The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration is a proactive network that unites Governments, organisations, communities and individuals with a common goal. The partnership was initiated with the purpose of catalysing and reinforcing a network of diverse examples of restoration of forests and degraded lands that deliver benefits to local communities and to nurture and fulfill international commitments on forests.

FRI to organise national seminar on wood science

March 09, 2011 10:55:43 AM

PNS | Dehradun

The Forest Research Institute (FRI) will be organising a two day long national seminar on advances in wood science and technology research: recent trends, future challenges and opportunities from March 9 to 10 at its campus.

The Additional Director General of Forests (Forest Conservation) AK Bansal who took over the additional charge of the Director General of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) will be the chief guest at the inauguration of the seminar on Wednesday. According to the event organisers, the main aim of this national seminar is to bring together the stakeholders from different segments to share the knowledge, to share the results of research work and to identify future areas for research.

The FRI has data base of more than a hundred years on basic as well as applied research in

wood science in addition to which the institute has also played a crucial role in establishing wood and applied industries.

Officials, researchers and representatives from the paper and pulp industries, universities, State forest departments, various institutes of the ICFRE and NGOs from India, Germany and USA are expected to attend this seminar.

A total of six technical sessions will be held as part of this seminar in addition to which research papers will be presented by delegates on a total of six themes.

The themes on which the papers will be presented include wood quality studies and their integration into tree improvement programmes, value addition, technology development and utilisation, wood processing- wood chemistry and pulp, human resource development in wood science and technology and research organisations and industry interface.

A total of 55 papers will be presented on these six themes during the two day long seminar in addition to which about 35 papers will be presented in poster format.

Business Standard

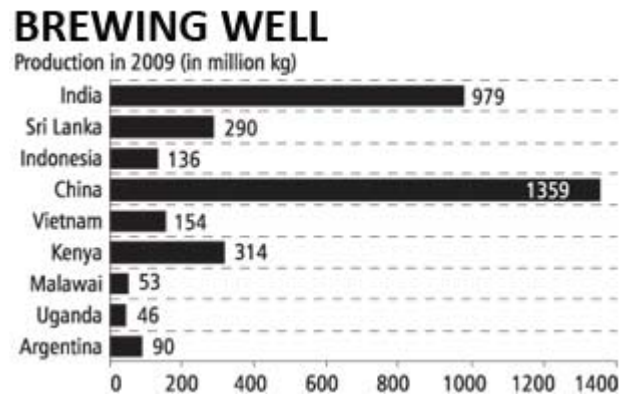
Wednesday, Mar 09, 2011

Good weather to take tea prices to record high

Ishita Ayan Dutt / Kolkata March 9, 2011, 0:26 IST

Having weathered a moderate performance, tea prices may be heading for a record high this year, going by the muhurat sales.

A small quantity of the first flush tea — tea plucked first during each growing season — has been sold through the private-sale mode. While good Assam tea has fetched Rs 200-300 a kg compared to Rs 200 a kg last year, Dooars and Cachar tea were sold for Rs 300-400 a kg as against Rs 300 a kg last year.



“Indications are that when auctions open in the next three weeks, prices will be higher by Rs 15-20 a kg. Last year, the trend showed that better tea registered higher prices, while medium tea was at the same level as that in the previous year. This year, even medium tea will record higher prices,” said Azam Monem, former chairman of Calcutta Tea Traders’ Association.

The weather pattern this year has been much better than the last, with good rainfall during the winter. The cropping pattern in Assam, which produces roughly half of India’s total tea output, is much better than last year. Especially, upper Assam, which has received good rain.

“We are looking at good opening for the season,” Aditya Khaitan, managing director of McLeod Russel India, the world’s largest bulk tea producer, said.

Moreover, the season will formally open with a shortfall. “The cumulative shortfall last year was 50-60 million kg,” Monem said.

What could go in India’s favour is that both Kenya and Sri Lanka, the other major producers, have clocked in lower crop on the back of divergent trends in the weather. While, Kenya is facing a severe drought, Sri Lanka has seen unprecedented rainfall since December.

“The situation in Kenya is so bad that more than a dozen tea factories are on the verge of being shut down as green leaf tea production is lower by 80 per cent,” an industry representative said.

Production in Sri Lanka was about six million kgs lower cumulatively till February due to heavy rainfall, which slowed the growth of tea bushes. India, Sri Lanka and Kenya produce around 86 per cent of the total tea and a shortfall in the three countries may imply that the cup of morning tea will cost more.

Arecanut market comes to a halt

Mahesh Kulkarni / Bangalore March 09, 2011, 0:23 IST

SC order banning the sale of gutkha in plastic pouches triggers panic.

Trading of arecanut (betelnut) has come to a standstill in the major markets of Karnataka, Kerala and parts of Assam, following a Supreme Court order banning the sale of gutkha in plastic sachets. Subsequently, the gutkha industry, which largely uses arecanut as the main ingredient, stopped purchasing arecanut in south India. The order came in effect on March 1.

As a result, the prices of arecanut dropped to a three-year low of Rs 10,000 a quintal as against Rs 18,000 a quintal in December and January, a drop of 44.5 per cent.

The current prices are not economical for growers as they cannot even recover their cost of production, AG Nagappa, director, Davanagere Arecanut Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd said.

At present, the cost of cultivation of arecanut is Rs 14,000 to Rs 15,000 a quintal, while farmers can recover only 50 per cent if they sell at the price fixed by the Karnataka government.

Following the price crash, the state government has announced Rs 7,500 a quintal as the support price and released a Rs 25-crore market intervention assistance.

Meanwhile, the state government has sought an intervention of the Central government and requested for fixing minimum support price of Rs 16,643 a quintal for the red variety arecanut and Rs 10,810 a quintal for the white variety arecanut. However, the Central government is yet

to take any steps in this regard, the chief minister BS Yeddyurappa said on the floor of the state Assembly last week.

“The prices have come down with just a ban on the use of plastic by gutkha manufacturers. In case, the court bans the manufacture of gutkha itself then there will be no takers for our produce and lakhs of farmers will lose their livelihood in southern states,” Nagappa said.

Out of an estimated production of 600,000 metric tonnes in Karnataka, hardly 20 per cent is sold by farmers this year and a large quantity is still unsold, thereby, leaving farmers in distress throughout the state, said A S Bhat, managing director, Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd (Campco), a Mangalore-based multi-state cooperative, which trades arecanut.

A large number of farmers staged protest rallies across Karnataka on Monday and are plan to protest in Delhi later this month. As a mark of protest against the apex court order, the gutkha manufacturers stopped purchasing arecanut from major markets in Karnataka like Sirsi, Shimoga and Mangalore and Kannur, Kozhikode, Thrissur, Kochi in Kerala, he said.

Bhat said Campco has filed an impleading petition in the Supreme Court seeking deferment of the earlier order to ban the sale of gutkha in plastic pouches. “There is a need to defer the implementation by one more year and in the interim find out an alternative method of packing gutkha”, he said.

Meanwhile, Yeddyurappa has said the state government is also planning to hire a lawyer in the Supreme Court to file a review petition.

Karnataka is the leading producer of arecanut in the country and produces 600,000 metric tonnes annually from 572,000 acres. As many as three million families are dependent on arecanut for livelihood in the districts of Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Kodagu, Shimoga, Tumkur, Davanagere, Chitradurga and Chikmagalur. Kerala, Assam, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar islands are other producers of arecanut in the country.

Gadag farmers urged to go for diversified cultivation

Business Line Visitors showing curiosity on Medicinal Plants displayed at the Ayurveda Mela in Hyderabad (file photoP): G.Krishnaswamy

Hubli, March 8:

Farmers in Gadag urged to go in for cultivation of horticultural crops and medicinal plants on commercial scale to derive maximum returns.

Speaking at the 'Agricultural extension programme on horticultural, organic farming and medicinal plants organised by Syndicate Bank's Hulkoti branch, Mr G.C. Mishra, General Manager, Syndicate Bank, PSCD-Bangalore said, "farmers by going in for commercial cultivation of Alluvera, Tulsi, Ashwagandha, Kalmegh, Amla can derive higher income per acre.

This model is well suited for the small farmers and advised them to follow it, he added.

Syndicate Bank, Hulkoti branch held farmers meet at the farm of a progressive farmer, Mr Balavant Patil of Kurthkoti. About 250 progressive farmers and farmer clients of Syndicate Bank branches in Dharwad, Gadag and Haveri districts participated in the field visit.

On Schemes

Mr C.K. Medappa, Deputy Director, Horticulture Department at Gadag, Mr Suresh Kumbar, Assistant Director, Horticulture at Mundargi, explained the various state government schemes available from the Horticultural department and advised the farmers to utilise the benefits of subsidy scheme for taking up high investment projects like poly-house, green-house structures and go for commercial ventures. Mr Shadakhsari, from Ravishankar Krishi Vidyalaya, Harti, delivered lecture on organic farming.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Srikanth B. Kulagod, Assistant General Manager, Syndicate Bank, said "Regional Office, Hubli, has given loan to the tune of Rs 866 crore so far to

agriculture and related field to eligible farmers under the jurisdiction of our branches for various purposes like land development, minor irrigation, farm house, agricultural machinery.”

“The bank has been giving loans to agriculture, horticulture projects and also for cultivation of medicinal plants and here the farmers should take benefit,” he added.

He also advised farmers to take up diversified farming by cultivation of different types of crops including horticulture and medicinal plants for deriving better returns.

Shivakumar Swamijee of Nadiverimath, Gadag, Mr D.G. Hegde, Mr G. Girish, and Mr Balavant Patil, were present.

1.61 mn tonnes of pulses were imported in 2010-11



The Hindu Pulses being sold at the wholesale weekly market in Old Delhi. File Photo: Shiv Kumar Pushpakar.

New Delhi, March 8:

India imported 1.61 million tonnes of pulses worth Rs 4,542.29 crore in the first seven months of this fiscal, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

The country had imported 3.51 million tonnes of pulses worth Rs 9,813.37 crore in the corresponding period of the 2009-10 fiscal, Food Minister Mr K V Thomas said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

“During 2010-11, during April-October, a quantity of 1.61 million tonnes of pulses has been imported at a value of Rs 4,542.29 crore,” he added.

Mr Thomas pointed out that although the estimated production of pulses for the current year is higher than the last year, it still falls short of the estimated demand, which would necessitate imports.

According to second advance estimates released by the Agriculture Ministry last month, pulses output is expected to increase by 16.51 million tonnes in the 2010-11 crop year from 14.66 million tonnes in the previous year. Domestic demand is pegged at 18-19 million tonnes during the crop year.

“To the extent domestic availability meets larger proportion of demand, the share of import requirement to that extent will be lower,” Mr Thomas said when asked whether pulses imports would be lower in view of the bumper harvest.

Since India annually imports about 15 per cent of its pulses requirements, he said global prices would have an impact on domestic prices, as the country is the largest consumer and importer in the world.

Karnataka tobacco see-saws at auctions

Business Line Buyers bidding through handheld devices at the tobacco auction at Platform No 3 in Hunsur, Mysore district on Wednesday. The Tobacco Board of India is conducting a pilot of e-auctions at Hunsur. - Photo: G R N Somashekar

Hubli, March 8:

Tobacco prices are fluctuating between Rs 5 and Rs 10 a kg on a weekly basis at different auction platforms for the last one month.

The key reason attributed for the fluctuation is that the crop size is huge at around 130 million kg against authorised crop size fixed at 97.95 million kg and also when big tobacco companies descend on the market prices move up sharply and when small and medium companies enter the prices are correcting.

?This fluctuation has led to a few farmers holding on the crop confused as to when to sell their produce,? said Mr T Vikram Raj Urs, a tobacco grower and secretary Federation of Karnataka Tobacco Growers' Association farmer.

At the end of the 124-day of auction (March 7), about 83.67 million kg (8.24 lakh bales) of FCV tobacco variety have been marketed in Karnataka, with an average price of Rs 96.10 a kg.

Of the total quantity marketed, bright grades comprised of 16 million kg with an average price of Rs 119.35. Medium grades comprised of 43 million kg, were traded at an average price of Rs 103.61/kg. Low grades, comprised of 25 million kg, were traded at an average price of Rs 68.18/kg.

Following are platform-wise auction details, as on March 7:

H.D.Kote 79,766 bales marketed (7.64 million kg), average price Rs 92.87/kg. Hunsur-1 47,786 bales (4.89 million kgs), Rs 98.83 a kg. Hunsur-2 68,494 bales (7.01 million kgs), Rs 96.90 a kg. Periyapatna-1 95,721 bales (9.70 million kg), Rs 96.75 a kg. Periyapatna-2 89,546 bales (9.23 million kg) Rs 99.77 a kg. Periyapatna-3 81,714 bales (8.47 million kg) Rs 96.75 kg. Ramanathpura-1 84,409 bales (8.52 million kg) Rs 93.52 a kg. Kampalapura-1 78,630 bales (7.90 million kg) Rs 97.83 a kg. Kampalapura-2 67,031 bales (6.74 million kg) Rs 96.70 a kg. Ramanathpura-2 81,329 bales (8.49 million kg) Rs 91.82 a kg. Hunsur-3 49,996 bales (5.03 million kg) Rs 96.25 a kg.

Soyameal exports jump over 2-fold in Feb



New Delhi, March 8:

India's soyameal exports jumped by more than two-fold to 5.45 lakh tonnes during last month compared with 2.18 lakh tonnes in February 2010, the Indore-based Soyabean Processors Association (SOPA) said in a statement today.

During October-February 2010-11, exports rose 93.93 per cent to 25.87 lakh tonnes from 13.34 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia are the major importers of Indian soyameal at 7.32 lakh tonnes, 6.01 lakh tonnes and 2.86 lakh tonnes, respectively.

Nabard okays Rs 707 cr for Maharashtra



Business Line NABARD has made substantial contributions in the developments of agriculture and rural development. - Photo: P V Sivakumar

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) has sanctioned Rs 707.24 crore to Maharashtra to develop

Pune, March 8:

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) has sanctioned Rs 707.24 crore to Maharashtra to develop roads and bridges, minor irrigation, Kharland projects, construction of fish landing jetties and participatory watershed development projects in the State.

Of this, Rs 253.97 crore is for 12 minor irrigation projects in Latur, Solapur, Washim, Thane, Raigad, Nanded and Nagpur districts. This is towards the creation of an additional irrigation potential in 9,048 ha. A sum of Rs 303.84 crore is for 63 road and 25 bridge projects in 28 districts that will create 150.57 km of roads and 3,418 metres of bridges connecting 334 villages, 146 marketing centres as also several tourist places, pilgrimage centres, etc.

RIDF projects

The new projects sanctioned under RIDF for the first time include Rs 23.72 crore for 32 Kharland projects to reclaim 4,520.38 ha saline land in the four coastal districts. A sum of Rs 106.27 crore has been sanctioned for construction of 16 fish landing jetties in Mumbai, Mumbai suburban and Thane. This will facilitate parking of vessels at the harbour even during low tide and enhance safety of fisherman as well. The investment activity includes construction of repair yard, toilet blocks and fish drying platforms. With this sanction, the total amount of loan sanctioned to Government of Maharashtra under RIDF XVI aggregates to Rs 1,022.12 crore during 2010-11.

Tea auctioning becomes national for first time

Coimbatore, March 8:



Walls were broken as tea buyers registered in all six auction centres – Coimbatore, Coonoor, Kochi, Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri - in the country were able to position their bid during the TGLIA Speciality tea auction held on Monday.

“This is the first time that the auction went beyond the confines of a particular auction centre. Thanks to the Board's electronic auction platform,” industry sources told *Business Line*.

Volumes

The volumes on offer stood at 40,743 kg in 118 lots, of which leaf grades accounted for 26,015 kg (82 lots) and the balance 14,728 kg (36 lots) were dust grades.

Coonoor leads

The auction centre at Coonoor saw the highest number of buyer participation at 43, followed by Coimbatore at 32 and Kochi 31. Upcountry centres saw a few buyers take part in the auction with Siliguri at 5, Kolkata – 4 and Guwahati at 3.

Over 85 per cent of the leaf grades were sold and the average price realised was Rs 140.48 per kg. Dust, however, was sold fully and the average price realised stood at Rs 117.68/kg

Highest price

Leaf tea from Welbeck Organic fetched the highest price. It was sold at Rs 360/kg and was purchased by JFK International, Coimbatore.

On the dust category, Vigneshwar Speciality Tea fetched Rs 290 a kg with Jay Kay Enterprises, Coonoor buying the same.

The convener of the Organising Committee of TGLIA: Southern Tea Competition Mr C Shreedharan said R J Tea Corporation, Coimbatore picked a maximum of 28 lots and emerged as the largest buyer followed by Bhansali & Co, Coimbatore picking 20 lots.

The sale was conducted jointly by the brokers under the aegis of Tea Auctioneers' Association of South India.

Cloves surge on supply shortage, buying frenzy



Kochi, March 8:

Cloves prices are soaring sharply on acute shortage on one hand and a searching spree on the other by buyers at all the origins during the past fortnight, according to trade sources.

Indian production this season is estimated at around 20 per cent of the total production last season, according to Mr Subramani of Sri Alagappa Estates, a Nagarcoil-based grower and office-bearer of All India Cardamom growers association.

“It is going to be hardly 400 tonnes this season,” he told *Business Line* on Tuesday. He said prices in Nagarcoil on Tuesday were at Rs 500 a kg and “we are expecting it to increase further as demand outweighs supply,” he said.

Prices in upcountry markets have shot up to Rs 525-550 a kg today, trade sources in Bangalore and Kochi said. Domestic demand for the next 4-5 months is estimated at 4,000 tonnes, they said.

Meanwhile, according to overseas reports, stocks in Brazil have almost been exhausted and as a result the price there is reported to have risen to \$6,800 a tonne today from \$4,900 a tonne.

Madagascar had quoted \$8,000 a tonne while Zanzibar and Indonesia were at \$8,500 a tonne.

Colombo was offering at \$9,000-9,500 a tonne. The Colombo crop is estimated to be only 1,500 tonnes and of which 800 have already been sold out and the balance is in contracts. Hence, there were reported defaults, trade sources said.

As the prices started shooting up there has been under-invoicing and mis-declaration by some of the traders, growers alleged.

Consequently, importers of cloves have demanded adoption of uniform valuation for cloves at all ports in the country as the prices of the commodity has soared significantly on short supply following poor crop in several growing countries.

In a representation to the Chairman, Central Board for Excise and Customs, they claimed the cloves market has risen from \$4,500 to \$8,500 a tonne in the past couple of months due to failed crops in Indonesia, Madagascar and Sri Lanka following heavy rains.

They said many imports are coming at Navaseva and Chennai ports. While import cargoes at Navaseva port are cleared at valuation of \$5,800 to \$6,100 a tonne for cloves from Madagascar and Zanzibar, "we learn from reliable sources that several big cargoes arrived at Chennai port were cleared at \$4,000 a tonne, which meant 50 per cent cheaper and this is totally wrong, discriminative and will lead to unhealthy competition", they alleged.

As the indigenous production of cloves this year is much less and rather negligible when compared with the annual requirement of around 12,000 tonnes, the country is dependent on imports to meet the domestic demand. The imports are mainly from Madagascar, Zanzibar, Comoros and Indonesia paying an import duty ranging from 21 to 35 per cent while imports from Colombo attracts only 4 per cent duty under Indo-Sri Lanka free trade regime, they said.

They said that since all the ports and customs are interlinked by advanced communication network and the valuations could be easily cross checked so as to arrest any fraudulent activity by importers.

They claimed that Colombo cloves had been traded at \$6,700 to \$9,000 a tonne and imports were coming to Chennai port. They alleged that mis-declaration and undervaluation were still going on at some ports and hence urged the CBEC to initiate necessary steps to arrest it in the interest of the trade and State's revenue.

Dharwad agri varsity sets up lab for bio-fertilisers, pesticides



Hubli, March 8:

The University of Agricultural Sciences-Dharwad for production of bio-fertilisers, bio-pesticides and vermicompost, laboratories have been established at Dharwad and Bijapur.

According to Dr P.M. Salimath, Director of Research, UAS-Dharwad, the university has yearly production target of one lakh kg bio-fertiliser, bio-pesticide 75,000 kg.

In addition to this, the university also produces quality seeds for rabi/summer crops. A total of 8,925 quintals are produced adopting farmers participatory approach.

For sugarcane

Talking about other developments at the university which are being showcasing at the 'Rabi/Summer Krishi Mela', Dr Salimath, said in integrated control of sugarcane woolly aphids, bio-agents have been found quite effective. Among them, Micromus and Dipha are more effective. The UAS-Dharwad has developed mass production technology to produce Micromus which has been used by sugar factories.

Low-cost and environment-friendly bio-pesticides have been developed. Among them, Trichoderma is one. Seed treatment with this is found to be effective in controlling wilt disease in chickpea. Soil application of Trichoderma also effectively controls foot rot disease in pepper.

Integrated Farming System

The university under special component and tribal welfare programme of the Karnataka Government is demonstrating Integrated Farming System (IFS) in districts of northern Karnataka for empowerment of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families.

For this project, the State Government has released Rs 7.28 crore and the programme is being implemented effectively through transfer of technology centres situated in the jurisdiction of the UAS-Dharwad and the UAS-Raichur. In all, about 500 families have been selected and demonstrations are on, he said.

Crop Improvement

The university is showcasing developments in wheat, where in 10 varieties have been developed. Among them, important varieties are DWR-162 (bread wheat), this variety has occupied 80 per cent of wheat growing area in Karnataka and 2.5 lakh ha in southern India.

This variety has been released in Indonesia in the name of 'Devata'. Another variety DWR-225 has yield potential of 40 quintals a hectare and is resistant to rust disease.

Very recently, high yielding (47 quintal a hectare and rust-resistant variety) UAS-304 has been released, said Dr Salimath.

Durum wheat

In durum wheat, DWR-185 and DWR-1006 are released for irrigated area and DWR-2006 for rainfed area. Recently, high yielding and rust-resistant UAS-415 is released for irrigated areas.

Dicoccum wheat

Dicoccum wheat is being grown in Gujarat and southern Deccan plateau. The UAS-Dharwad for the first time has developed dwarf dicoccum variety DDK-1001.

Recently, disease-resistant DDK-1009, DDK-1025 and DDK-1029 have been released. All these varieties possess medicinal value and are helpful in managing diabetics.

As for the crop protection, the university has developed integrated pest management techniques for different rabi-summer crops.

?Pod borer control in pigeon pea is done with least environmental pollution using bio-pesticides such as NVP, predatory birds, need-based products and selected chemicals,? said Dr Salimath.

Rs 120.95-cr Nabard loan for Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram, March 8:

The regional office of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) has sanctioned a fresh loan of Rs 120.95 crore for implementation of 102 projects in rural areas under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF). This would take the total loan sanctioned under RIDF-16 (2010-11) for the State to Rs 444.86 crore, said Mr K.C. Shashidhar, Chief Regional Manager, Nabard. The projects sanctioned include Mambaram bridge in Kannur district; infrastructure for Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University at Pookot.

Unido, Kudumbashree to expand ties to develop agri-biz value chains



For women empowerment: A file picture of workers engaged in a Kudumbashree unit.

Thiruvananthapuram, March 8:

The UN Industrial Development Organisation (Unido) and the Kudumbashree State Mission for poverty eradication and women empowerment have decided to expand cooperation in the development of agri-business value chains. Farm experts from Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia

and Sri Lanka had flown down to take part in a workshop at Thanneermukkom, a remote village in Alappuzha district, to pick a few lessons about various value chains practised by local women groups.

FUTURE COLLABORATION

Unido and the Kudumbashree have decided to pursue opportunities of future collaboration in fruits and vegetables processing, setting up of training centres and development of training and entrepreneurship curricula. The international workshop on 'Analysis and design of pro-poor value chain development projects in Asia' was held from March 1 to 4 with financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Thirty delegates representing the participating countries learned about the 'Marari mushroom' value chain development project run by Kudumbashree, an official spokesman said here.

MILKY MUSHROOMS

This is an initiative where women groups engage in production of mushrooms under controlled environments, a process that requires technical skills and inputs and made available by the Tropical Botanical gardens and Research Institute of India. The product, 'milky mushrooms,' is marketed through the Marari Marketing Company owned by the community groups.

The second value chain to be featured was of garments, in which Kudumbashree supported garment production and marketed through a community-owned company. These projects have helped to improve the livelihoods of more than 600 women across various districts in Kerala, the spokesman said.

UNIQUE EXPERTISE

"Unido has been keen to understand the Kudumbashree model that manifests unique expertise in community development and poverty eradication, particularly among rural women," said Mr Frank Hartwich of the agri-business unit of Unido. This is an important ingredient in support programmes which should not only focus on efficiency in business and chain organisations but also design programmes that benefit the poor and vulnerable members of the rural society, particularly women.

PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

The workshop also produced a practitioners' guide on 'Pro-poor agro value chain development: 25 guiding questions for successful project design and implementation.'

Mr T. Vijaya Kumar, Joint Secretary, SGSY (Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna) and Mission Director, National Rural Livelihoods Mission, inaugurated the workshop in the presence of Mr Antonios Levissianos of the Unido Regional Office in New Delhi, and Ms Sarada Muraleedharan, Executive Director, Kudumbashree.

Cashew market active on good buying interest



Business Line Growing stages of a cashew kernel that was grown at the backyard of a house near Kochi. Photo: K K Mustafah

Kochi, March 7:

Breaking the sluggishness in recent days, the cashew market last week witnessed more buying interest than that of the previous few weeks, even though the volume traded was limited, as there were few sellers in the market.

Prices moved up a few cents for all grades to at around \$4.30 for W240, at around \$3.80 for W320, at around \$3.35 for Splits/Butts, at around \$3.20 for Pieces and some processors were even able to sell few cents higher.

Indian domestic market showed signs of revival in demand for brokens and the prices were about 10-15 per cent higher than that of the international market, trade sources said.

Meanwhile on the raw cashew nut (RCN) front, there has not been any encouraging news. Arrivals in India and Vietnam have been slow so far which has pushed up the prices very high, Mr Pankaj N. Sampat, a Mumbai-based dealer told *Business Line*.

Uncertainty

Benin expected to start shipping in second half of March. Uncertainty still hovered over the movement from Ivory Coast (IVC), he said. RCN available for processing in India and Vietnam in April-May will be much lower than normal. Until sellers have firm news about RCN shipments, they will be reluctant to make sales. "This means reduced liquidity and could cause sudden spike in prices if there is any big buying interest before supply situation improves," he predicted.

US imports of cashews in 2010 were 1,21,270 tonnes, registering an increase of 1.85 per cent from that of 2009. Origin-wise shares showed Vietnam on top with 58,540 tonnes (about two per cent higher) followed by India 30,720 tonnes (marginally higher), Brazil 5,010 tonnes (about 15 per cent lower) and others 6,860 tonnes (marginally lower). "We do not have figures for EU imports but believe that they may not be much different than 2009. Imports in first half of 2011 will give some indication of impact of high prices on usage and that will help to determine buying interest for the second half," he said.

Chance for a dip

If demand is very slow in coming months and if (or when) supply situation improves, "we might see prices drifting lower but that may not happen till middle or second half of the year as it will take time for the supply-demand imbalance to be corrected. Till then, we can expect prices to move around current levels."

Day by day, the outlook is becoming hazier as there seems to be no end to the tunnel. Historically high prices are causing concern about impact on usage. Supply side constraints are putting a question mark on kernel availability in second quarter (and may be beyond that as well). Even if crops are normal, RCN may not reach processors in time and this could mean significant shortage for few weeks and maybe months. "Lack of product could mean lost sales (at the retail level, food / snack purchases are not postponed). This could have great impact on 2011 usage but the extent may not be known until it is too late," he said.

Everybody is being very cautious. Selling and buying is being done for short periods. This increases importance of spot prices and also means higher volatility. Inability to judge trend and take reasonable forward positions exposes everyone to huge risk of sudden moves in prices depending on news and developments on supply or demand side, dealers said.

Improvement on supply side or negative news from importing countries could have an immediate and significant impact on sentiment and trend.

But, for the time being, there is nothing on the horizon to change the firm undertone of the market, they added.

Darjeeling labour unions' demands unrealistic: Tea producers' body



Kolkata, March 8:

The Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations, the apex body of tea producers' associations in the country, has expressed concern over the move initiated by the Darjeeling Terai Dooars Plantation Labour Union to block despatches of made-tea from the tea estates in the hills of Darjeeling.

In a statement, the committee points out that a few days ago, the union submitted a charter of demands accompanied by a threat to stop despatches of tea if the demands were not met.

“It is a significant departure from all earlier practices where the charter of demands was first discussed in a composite manner with participation of all trade unions controlling tea workers in West Bengal,” the statement observes. “What is [a] matter of concern is that the present union's

bid to bypass the established norms to achieve objectives through threats.” Also, the demands have been set with no relation to the ground realities of the tea industry.

The tenure of the three-year wage agreement, which came into force in April 2008, would expire this month. Negotiations between the employers and the unions over revision of wages are due.

The tea garden owners, following the time-honoured tradition, are open to parleys with the unions. Such negotiations in the past were generally held in a tripartite forum as part of conciliation proceedings initiated by the Labour Department of the State Government.