

Banana growers seek relief for damage

S. Ganesan

Gale uproots trees on several acres in Lalgudi belt; Government urged to survey damage

— PHOTO: R.M. RAJARATHINAM.



BITTER EXPERIENCE:A farmer pointing to the damage caused to his grove at Nerunchalakudi

TIRUCHI: With a gale destroying banana groves on several acres across the district, especially in Lalgudi belt, farmers have called upon the Government to take up a survey to assess the damage and sanction compensation for the affected farmers.

Over past 10 to 15 days, the summer showers accompanied by strong wind uprooted banana trees in groves across the district.

Farmers claim that they have lost lakhs of rupees, owing to the extensive damage.

Banana is a major cash crop in Musiri and Lalgudi belts in Tiruchi and Kulithalai in Karur districts.

A large portion of the banana grown here is sent to Kerala and other States.

In the latest incident on Friday night, large tracts of banana groves in Lalgudi belt were damaged.

(The gale also caused a disruption in the train services on the Tiruchi-Chennai section as a tree fell on the track near Pullampadi.)

Banana groves in Nerunchalakudi, Ariyur, Angarai, Thirumedu, Pinnavasal, Kookur, Sriumayangudi, Mettupatti, Idayattrumangalam and other villages have been damaged.

In many places, fully grown banana trees in harvest stage have been uprooted.

Farmers say that the average investment for raising banana on an acre was around Rs.40,000.

Adult trees have been uprooted despite the support provided with bamboo poles in many groves.

A. Ganesan, who had grown banana on about 35 acres of leased land in Neruchalakudi lost the crop on about 15 to 20 acres.

“The wind was so strong that trees with bamboo support were also felled,” he said. Though he used to insure the crop every year, this year he had failed to do so as he could not get the relevant land records from the revenue officials “who were busy with government schemes.”

A small farmer of Ariyur, D. Muthukaruppan of Ariyur had raised banana on about 1.25 acres.

Four hundred adult trees, out of the 1,000 in his grove, have been uprooted. His neighbour, S.Nagarajan, has also suffered heavy losses.

Mr.Nagarajan's situation has been aggravated as his lemon crop has also suffered damage, with the young fruits being knocked down by the gale.

“No salvage at all”

Farmers say that there was no possibility of salvaging the banana trees as they have been felled by the strong winds.

The damage has come at a time when banana was fetching good prices at the market.

Banana growers in the region have been badly affected. Farmers of the region had raised different varieties of banana such as kathali, poovan, rasthali and karpooravalli. Only last week large tracts of banana groves were destroyed in the Thottiyam region.

The Government should take immediate steps to sanction compensation to the affected farmers, says P. Viswanathan, president, Tamizhaga Tank and River Irrigated Farmers Association.

Date:02/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/02/stories/2011050255660700.htm>

Farmers seek government's nod to export rice

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: Farmers affiliated to the Tamilnadu Toddy Movement have urged the government to allow export of rice. C. Nallasami said the prices of coarse and fine varieties of paddy in the open market had come down. To compound the problem the State Government had stopped procurement.

Last year the prices were around 1,200 a quintal in the open market. This year it was between Rs. 800 and Rs. 850. While the government procurement rate stood at Rs. 1,100 a quintal for the fine variety and Rs. 1,050 for coarse variety for the current year, farmers could not benefit since procurement had been stopped.

The current situation would prompt farmers in rice-cultivating districts to leave their lands fallow in the ensuing cultivation season, he pointed out.

He said that the Union Government must come forward to allow export of rice

Warning against black marketing of Bt cotton

Special Correspondent

MYSORE: The district administration has warned against black marketing of Bt cotton seeds and urged the farmers not to pay more than the stipulated maximum retail price printed on the seed packets.

In a release, Deputy Commissioner Harsh Gupta said the demand for cotton seeds would be met and the distribution would be completed soon. The area under cotton cultivation is expected to go up to 54,000 hectares in the district, as against the 40,000 hectares last year. Hence, the Government has taken steps to ensure the distribution of quality seeds, said the release.

However, it has urged farmers not to demand seeds of any one particular company as it would be difficult to procure and supply them. They pointed out that the various Bt cotton seeds available in the market have been certified by the Department of Agriculture.

The farmers have also been urged not to pay higher amount than the MRP printed on the packets.

Date:02/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/02/stories/2011050253150300.htm>

Kanyakumari farmers all set to try sugarcane

P.S. Suresh Kumar

They get encouragement from a sugar mill in Tenkasi



SWEET DECISION:A file photo of sugarcane field

Nagercoil: For the first time in Kanyakumari district, farmers in Agastheeswaram, Thovalai and Kalkulam taluks have decided to go for sugarcane cultivation in over 300 acres. They plan to increase the coverage to 5,000 acres in phases.

Kanyakumari farmers used to raise paddy, banana, rubber, tapioca and other vegetable crops but not sugarcane. Paddy is raised in over 11,000 hectares. As they were not getting a lucrative price for paddy, they have decided to shift to a cash crop such as sugarcane on an experimental basis. A private sugar mill at Edaikkal near Tenkasi in nearby Tirunelveli district has not only come forward to lend financial assistance to the farmers but procure their produce as well.

About 50 farmers have planned to go on an exposure visit to Tirunelveli district on May 7 to learn sugarcane cultivation. It is expected that the socio-economic conditions of Kanyakumari farmers in the three taluks could get a boost through sugarcane cultivation in all the three taluks as sugarcane is considered to give better dividends than other crops, said A. Wins Andro, chairman of Kanyakumari District Water Resource Organisation.

The sugar mill has announced financial assistance through banks, seed at free of cost, transportation cost of seed to the farmers in Kanyakumari district and the sugarcane to the factory. A sum of Rs. 24,500 per acre would be given as financial assistance to each farmer.

The farmers were expected to get a yield of 40 tonnes of sugarcane from an acre. The procurement price was Rs. 2,000 per tonne. So they could get Rs. 80,000 from an acre. The new government in the State was expected to increase the procurement price to Rs. 2,500 and hence the farmers could get a maximum of Rs. 1 lakh per acre, he said.

Farmers in Kothaigramam Brahmin area, Navalcadu, Thiruppathisaram and Nakkamadamam areas near Nagercoil had already prepared their paddy fields for cultivation of sugarcane.

Paddy cultivation in the district would not be affected as the areas where the farmers wanted to raise sugarcane was remaining fallow owing to lack of a lucrative price for paddy.

The sugar mill has also decided to open a regional office in Nagercoil with adequate staff to give guidance to farmers on sugarcane cultivation. As the climatic and soil conditions were conducive for sugarcane cultivation, more and more farmers in Kanyakumari district would come forward to raise this crop, Mr. Antro added.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/02/stories/2011050253690400.htm>

Going gets tough for cashew nut producers

K. Srinivasa Rao

Heavy rains during last year led to cashew crop damageCashew nut prices expected to go up in the open market

Photo: Basheer



NOT SO ROSY:Workers processing cashew nuts at a unit at Palasa in Srikakulam district.

SRIKAKULAM: Cashew nut processing factories in Palasa-Kasibugga of Srikakulam district are forced to import raw material from African countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Tanzania, Ivory Coast and other countries this year following unprecedented crop loss in the district and other parts of the State.

Andhra Pradesh has about 46,913 hectares of area under cashew with an annual production of 12,500 tonnes of raw nuts. Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasham and Nellore are important cashew-growing districts in the State.

Climate

The crop requires a warm humid climate with a minimum of 600 mm rainfall but for good yield well distributed rainfall is a must. Cashew thrives under a wide range of temperatures.

Production down

However, heavy rains in the one last year led to damage to the crop which could not grow in frost and cold waves.

Production has come down to 1.5 tonnes from 2.5 tonnes per hectare, causing huge loss to farmers in the district.

Last year, a bag weighing 80 kg. commanded a price of Rs. 5,000. It is likely to go up to Rs.6,500 this time, leading to skyrocketing of prices in the open market.

Fine variety cashew, which is available between Rs. 400 and Rs.450 a kg., may cross the Rs. 550-mark this year.

There are about 200 cashew processing units in the district and the owners are a worried lot.

Palasa Cashew Manufacturers Association president Molla Srinivasa Rao says, "We have to depend on other countries this time for cashew nuts as the production in the State

cannot meet our demands. All the manufacturers require at least 2,500 tonnes per day. Otherwise it will lead to huge losses to the mills, causing unrest among the workers.”

Action plan sought

Bharatiya Janata Party Kisan Morcha State wing vice-president Pudi Tirupati Rao wanted the Horticulture Department to come out with an action plan to improve production in the State.

In Maharashtra, which has adopted modern techniques, the yield per hectare is over 2.5 tonnes per hectare, the Bharatiya Janata Party Kisan Morcha leader added.

Date:01/05/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/01/stories/2011050154810500.htm>

Red chilli price: no tears, only cheer

Staff Reporter



good news:The price of red chilli is expected to increase from May.

COIMBATORE: The price of red chilli is expected to fetch between Rs. 77 and Rs. 91 a kg from April to June. Price is expected to increase from May. Hence, farmers are asked to store red chilli and sell later.

Analysis

According to the Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, the analysis is made based on the price that prevailed in the Virudhunagar market during the last 10 years.

Chilli harvest began in Tamil Nadu in places like Virudhunagar, Ramnad, Paramakudi and Tuticorin, which are major markets. Major varieties are Virudhunagar Samba (Sannam) and Ramnad Mundu (Gundu). Prices are steadily raising from Rs. 5,260 a quintal from August 2010 with the expectation of low production during 2011 because of excess rainfall during fruit setting and less acreage sown for want of availability of labour due to employment guarantee schemes.

Details

Traders opine that in the next two months price may touch Rs. 100 a kg due to decline in arrivals.

Compared to the arrivals of 10,000 to 12,000 bags a day in 2010, it is expected to be only 1,000 to 2,000 bags a day in 2011.

For details, contact DEMIC on 0422-2431405.

Date:01/05/2011 **URL:**

<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/01/stories/2011050155420700.htm>

Smart cards distributed to farmers

Staff Reporter

PUDUKOTTAI: The implementation of the 'IOB Smile" scheme by the Iluppur branch of the Indian Overseas Bank, in issuing smart cards to residents of five village panchayats in its service area, has gone a long way in assisting the small and marginal farmers to avail themselves of jewel loans for taking up agricultural activity.

The service areas are Ennai, Easwarankovil, Kothirapatti, Kattakudi and Irunthuraipatti village panchayats which account for a total of 3,000 account holders. The branch organised a special camp at Kattakudi and issued the cards to the beneficiaries of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme recently.

A large number of small and medium farmers have sought agricultural loans. "We have planned to start an exclusive section for sanctioning agricultural jewel loans to the farmers of these five panchayats," said R.Varatharajan, branch manager.

On an average, the daily disbursement of jewel loan for agriculture stands at Rs.3 lakh. None of the minor has opted for the smart card in these villages.

Date:01/05/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/01/stories/2011050154640500.htm>

Tea growers urged to be quality conscious



The Executive Director, Tea Board, R. Ambalavanan (second right) at quality upgradation

programme in Mel Kowhatty, near Udhagamandalam.

Udhagamandalam: The role of farmers in lifting the image of the Nilgiris tea was emphasised by the Executive Director, Tea Board,

R. Ambalavanan, while participating in a programme to promote mechanisation in tea gardens organised by the United Planters Association of Southern India-Krishi Vigyan Kendra (UPASI-KVK) and the Tea Board at Mel-Kowhatty near here recently.

Pointing out that the quality of the end product depended to a large extent on the quality of the main input, the raw tea leaves, he said that failure to periodically prune tea bushes will result in the factories getting poor quality leaves.

It will also lead to the farmers getting low prices. Once in four years tea bushes should be pruned.

Senior Scientist, UPASI-KVK, G. Ramamoorthy said that studies had shown that pruning and quality went hand in hand.

It also helped deal with a sudden increase in the yield during the summer.

The Managing Director, Vigneshwar tea factory, B. Ramesh said that the quality consciousness at the field level will help bring about a win-win situation.

The General Manager, Paramount Tea Company, Neelavarnan said that it is the responsibility of all the stake holders to safeguard the reputation of the unique Nilgiris tea.

On the occasion Mr. Ambalavanan inaugurated the Lakshmi Narayana Small Tea Growers Society and distributed pruning machines at subsidised cost to seven unemployed youth.



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi, May 01, 2011

First Published: 15:16 IST(1/5/2011)

Last Updated: 15:17 IST(1/5/2011)

Amul hikes milk prices by Rs 2/litre

Dairy major Amul raised prices of its different varieties of milk by Rs 2 a litre from Sunday in the national capital and surrounding areas due to increase in input costs.

However Mother Dairy, that has a major hold over the milk market in the national capital region and its surrounding areas through its vast chain of outlets in Delhi and NCR, has not raised its milk prices.

"There is no decision to hike prices of milk at the moment," sources in the Mother Dairy said.

The Anand (Gujarat) based Amul, also an important player in milk distribution in Delhi and NCR, increased prices of its different varieties of milk by Re 1 on 500 ml pack and Rs 2 per litre from today.

Accordingly, cost of 'Amul Gold' variety rose from Rs 34 a litre to Rs 36 per litre from today. Likewise, 'Amul Taaza' variety will cost Rs 28 a litre from Rs 26 a litre earlier, sources in Amul said.

There is a marginal hike of 50 paise on 'Slim an Trim' variety at Rs 12 for 500 ml from Rs 11.50 earlier. There is no change in its pack of 200 ml, which is still selling at Rs 5, they added.

Amul has also published the revised rates of its different varieties of milk through advertisements in newspapers.

The sources in Amul attributed the price increase to rise in input costs.

High price of milk and vegetables are already contributing to the soaring food inflation, which was recorded at 8.76 for the week ended April 15. The latest rise in milk prices may further push it up.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/691984.aspx>

New Delhi, May 01, 2011

First Published: 10:04 IST(1/5/2011)

Last Updated: 10:06 IST(1/5/2011)

India set for ninth rate hike to cool inflation

India, which has the highest inflation of any large Asian economy, looks set this week to hike interest rates for a ninth time despite mounting concern over the impact of monetary tightening.

The central bank has raised rates eight times since March 2010, albeit in gradual, quarter-point steps to minimise the impact on economic growth.

But inflation has remained high and some economists expect Reserve Bank of India (RBI) policymakers to move more aggressively when they meet on Tuesday.

"A 50-basis-point rate rise wouldn't surprise me -- inflation is proving stubbornly difficult to reduce," Deepak Lalwani, head of London-based India investment consultancy Lalcap, told AFP.

"It's time to step it up," agreed HSBC chief India economist Leif Eskesen.

Others bet the bank will stick to its "slowly, slowly approach" and only hike by a quarter point as it seeks to balance growth and inflation concerns.

The RBI meeting comes after data in April showed inflation had surged to nearly nine percent.

The Asian Development Bank has said controlling inflation must be the Asian region's top priority as strong growth, turmoil in the Middle East and Japan's nuclear crisis drive up food and oil prices.

Asian economies from South Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan to China are all battling inflationary pressures.

But some economists are concerned that India's central bank may push too hard on the brakes.

The benchmark repurchase, or repo rate, at which the bank lends to commercial banks, is 6.75% while the reverse repo, paid to banks for deposits, is 5.75%.

"The bottom line is the central bank needs to act but it should not go overboard," said CLSA economist Rajeev Malik. "It must avoid a repeat of the mid-1990s outcome of killing inflation by crippling growth."

The government has said it expects the economy to expand by nine percent in the current fiscal year, returning to levels it reached before the global financial crisis.

But there are already fears that Asia's third-largest economy will undershoot the target because of interest rate increases.

Investment house Goldman Sachs has already slashed its growth forecast for the year to March 2012 to 7.8% from 8.7%. Credit Suisse economist Robert Prior-Wandesforde has trimmed his expansion forecast to 7.5%.

The economy is already showing signs of slowing with an 18% year-on-year drop in capital goods output in February, trimming industrial production growth to 3.6%.

Inflation, fed by food and fuel price rises, has been one of the biggest headaches for the Congress-led government headed by Premier Manmohan Singh, whose coalition is also reeling from a string of corruption scandals. Reducing prices is a political priority even as higher growth is seen as key to reducing crushing poverty in the nation of 1.2 billion. Poorer households, the backbone of the party's support, have been especially hard hit by inflation, a traditional lightning rod for political discontent.

"Inflation is the most important short-term problem," said Montek Singh Ahluwalia, deputy head of India's influential economic Planning Commission, who has urged the central bank to use "all the flexibility" at its disposal. Former central bank governor YV Reddy said the Reserve Bank

cannot afford any let up in its anti-inflation fight -- even if it means slower growth."Tell me any single period when we have had higher growth and higher inflation. It just does not happen that way and it is a wrong policy. What we need is low inflation and if it demands low growth, so be it," Reddy said.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/691893.aspx>

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, May 2

Max Min
36.3° | 27.4°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 60%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 5:48

Sunset: 18:24

Barometer: 1006.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Tuesday, May 3

Max Min
36° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

May 4



38° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday

May 5



39° | 29°

Rainy

Friday

May 6



40° | 29°

Cloudy

Saturday

May 7



39° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

May 8



38° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

2 May, 2011, 05.40AM IST, PK Krishnakumar,ET Bureau

Untimely rains may hit coffee output

Coffee Prices Rising on Global Shortage

With the prediction of a normal production and exports looking good, prospects are bullish for the Indian coffee sector in the short term even as bean prices are rising on global shortage. The slight drop in Arabica production seems to have been compensated by a good Robusta crop in India. Coffee Board estimates of the Robusta crop for 2010-11 is 2.04 lakh tonne. With the harvest now over, growers too agree with the numbers. Though Coffee Board estimates of the Arabica crop was 95,000 tonne, it was slightly lower according to the growers.

Exports Jump 60% in 2010-11

It has been an exceptionally good year for Indian exports which touched a new peak of 3,25,116 tonne in 2010-11, recording a jump of 60% year on year. Indian exporters earned a higher revenue with unit value going up to Rs 116 per kg, an increase of Rs 10.

The shipments for the first quarter of the current year are good. But from July, the export may be hit because of the proposed withdrawal of some export incentives and uncertain economic conditions. But still India will be a significant player in the global market as major producing countries are facing a crop shortfall.

Supply Disruption in Brazil to Push Prices Up

Bean prices are rising globally on concerns of lower supply. Coffee futures prices in New York

are hovering around 295 US cents per pound and are inching closer to the 300 cents mark. The prices had touched 320 cents per pound some months ago. With reports of supply disruption in top coffee production nations like Brazil and Colombia, prices could increase further.

Indian Coffee Prices Rise 20%

Indian coffee prices have also risen 20% in the meantime. It is predicted that the prices will rise further slightly before cooling. The Arabica parchment price is in the range of Rs 10,600-10,800 per 50 kg, Arabica cherry at Rs 4,750-5,050 per 50 kg, Robusta parchment at Rs 4,900-5,050 per 50 kg and Robusta cherry at Rs 2,575-2,700 per 50 kg.

The global coffee output is dependent on the production from Brazil, where a crop loss due to frost has been forecast. This may lead to a flaring up of coffee prices. Production from Colombia is also said to be lower.

Production Outlook for Next Season Not Good

The production outlook for 2011-12 for Indian coffee is not good as per the latest reports. The untimely and non-uniform rains in summer have hit the coffee crop. As a result, both Arabica and Robusta crop could be hit as per initial estimates.

1 May, 2011, 01.17PM IST,PTI

Pepper soars to new high at Rs 270-78/kg on low output

KALPETTA (KERALA): Pepper prices in Kerala have touched a new high of Rs 270-78 a kg and the trend is set to continue due to production falling far short of the demand.

The spot price of pepper last weekend in Wayanad, one of the world's major growing areas, stood at Rs 270 a kg for ungarbled and Rs 278 a kg for garbled, against Rs 165 and Rs 173,

respectively during the corresponding season last year.

According to market sources, the prices are set to rise in the coming weeks as the demand-supply gap would further widen due to drastic fall in production.

They attributed a combination of reasons for the output fall like afflictions wilting pepper vines, high input cost, climatic factors and shrinkage of cultivated area.

Projections by official agencies said pepper production in Kerala is expected to fall to 23,322 tonnes from 29,152 tonnes in the previous financial year.

Recent surveys showed that the area under pepper cultivation had shrunk by about 25 per cent over the years. Unsteady prices at the turn of the century and increasing input costs are seen as factors that prompted the farmers to switch over to other crops.

The upsurge in price of pepper, traditionally known as 'black gold' due to its intrinsic quality and international demand since time immemorial, has not cheered the medium and small holders, who account for 80 per cent of growers in Kerala.

According to Gopi, a medium-scale farmer, the drastic decline in yield would cancel out the benefit brought by high prices. "Some six years back, I used to harvest about 14 quintal from one acre. This year, this has come down to as low as 5 quintal per acre," Gopi told media.

The slump in production and unattractive prices had prompted a large number of small farmers to give up pepper cultivation at the turn of the century. This had a cumulative fallout on the production profile of Wayanad over the years.

Another factor often cited by farmers was virtual vanishing of 'erythrina' standards, the supporting plant for growing pepper vines. "It is difficult to find a suitable replacement to this

plant, around which pepper vines can easily creep up. "This fast growing tree, locally known as murikku, has almost disappeared," Gopi said.

While pepper output in Kerala is on the decline, market information was that the production was higher in Coorg in Karnataka and Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, both adjoining areas of Wayanad.

Business Standard

Monday, May 02, 2011

Kesar mango production likely to decrease by 75% this year

Vimukt Dave / Mumbai/ Rajkot May 2, 2011, 0:34 IST

Kesar mango production in the Saurashtra and Kutch region is likely to decrease by 75 percent due to unfavourable weather conditions at the time of flowering. According to Kesar mango traders in Saurashtra region, the Kesar mango production is likely to go down from 50 lakh boxes to 12 to 15 lakh boxes (each box contains 10 kg) as weather was not good in mid February, when mango trees see flowering.

"Earlier in January farmers had expected a bumper crop of the Kesar mango but then untimely rain in February abolished all the expectations. The damage was very huge; almost all the flowers were damaged. Later new flowers came on mango trees but the quantity was very low and as a result Kesar mango production will decline by 70 to 75 percent", said, Talala based farmer and trader Naren Radadiya.

Talala APMC secretary Harsukh Jarsaniya said, "We were expecting that this year about 4 to 5 lakh boxes will come for auction in APMC as against 14.87 lakh last year. Direct buying from the farmers is very nominal. Most of the farmers are trading their products in APMCs at Rajkot, Junagadh, Ahmedabad or any other places. Since the last two to three years no branded companies or exporters have directly bought from the farmers," He further added, "The season of mangoes will start one month late this year. In 2010 the auction had started on April 6, while this year the auction will start only on May 3."

While Kesar mangoes have started to arrive in the market in some places but an actual and full-fledged arrival will only happen in some days says a Rajkot based trader. A similar story is seen in Kutch area where the mango production is likely to decline by 25-30 percent from 70000 to 80000 tonnes to 20000-25000 tonnes this year. Batuksinh Jadeja of Ashapura Farms and Nursery from Kutch said, "Foggy weather damaged a majority of the flowers of mango trees. Moreover, 'powdery mildew' disease in mango trees also hit the production in Kutch and Saurashtra region. Last year I had exported about 100 tonnes of Kesar mango." According to Jadeja, mostly Kesar mango is exported in Dubai, Muscat and London. No other countries of America or UK are likely to import Kesar due to quality measurements.

He added, "The Indian market is very huge and most of the stocks have been used in domestic market." The regions of Dharampur and Kutch from Gujarat are leading for export in the Kesar mango.

8.33 MT wheat procured in Punjab

BS Reporter / New Delhi/ Chandigarh May 2, 2011, 0:18 IST

Government agencies and private millers procured more than 8.33 million (8,329,000) tonnes of wheat till Friday, whereas 9.71 million tonnes (MT) wheat was procured last year.

Of the total wheat procurement in all the centres in Punjab, government agencies procured 8.32 MT of wheat (99.08 per cent) till date whereas private traders procured 14,416 tonnes (0.2 per cent) of wheat. The central government agency Food Corporation of India (FCI) had been able to procure 1.19 MT of wheat which was 14.3 per cent of the total wheat procured in the state.

The spokesman added that Ferozepur with 0.94 MT procurement was leading in procurement operations whereas district Sangrur with 0.91 MT was at the second slot and district Patiala with 0.81 MT ranked third.

The state government has set up 1,734 procurement centres and activated its total machinery to ensure smooth wheat procurement, the spokesman added.

Costlier raw materials forced hike in fertiliser prices: Ifco chief



Business Line

New Delhi, May 1:

Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (Ifco) has defended its decision to raise prices of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) and complexes twice during the current month.

“We had no option, given the soaring import cost of final product as well as raw material,” the Managing Director of the country's largest fertiliser concern, Dr U.S. Awasthi, told *Business Line*.

He made particular mention of two ingredients used in the manufacture of DAP – ammonia and sulphur. In the last one month alone, landed prices of ammonia have gone up from around \$460 to \$525 a tonne, while corresponding rising from \$220 to 250 a tonne for sulphur.

For every tonne of DAP manufactured, fertiliser plants use about 220 kg of ammonia. An increase of \$65 a tonne in ammonia prices, then, pushes up DAP production costs by around

\$14 or Rs 630 a tonne. Even landed prices of phosphoric acid have moved up by around \$150 a tonne (see Table).

The higher import costs have been the main reason for Iffco hiking its maximum retail price of DAP from Rs 10,750 to Rs 12,000 a tonne in the current month, while hiking the same for '10:26:26' and '12:32:16' complex fertilisers from Rs 8,997 and Rs 9,437 to Rs 10,800 and Rs 11,200 a tonne, respectively.

According to Dr Awasthi, these increases were required not only to cover import cost escalations, but also send a signal to farmers to reduce fertiliser consumption. "Fertilisers should be priced slightly expensive so as to induce farmers to not use them injudiciously. One has to realise that we are entirely dependent on imports of potash and phosphates, whether in final product form or as rock phosphate, phosphoric acid, sulphur or ammonia," he noted.

Even in the case of urea, "we cannot produce beyond 20 million tonnes (mt), of which four mt is high-cost urea", Dr Awasthi pointed out. The country, therefore, has no option, but to scale down consumption, which is the only way to "cool down the minds of foreign suppliers".

Between 2003-04 and 2010-11, India's urea consumption has gone up from 19.77 mt to 28.22 mt, while increasing from 5.62 mt to 11.10 mt for DAP, from 1.84 mt to 3.89 mt for muriate of potash, and from 4.76 mt to 9.83 mt for complexes.

Iffco is currently undertaking a 'Save the Soil Campaign', where, Dr Awasthi claimed, "we have shown that you can reduce fertiliser consumption by 10-15 per cent and still raise oilseeds and pulses yields by 15 per cent and wheat by 10 per cent".

This, he said, is possible by promoting use of green manure (to increase organic carbon in the soil), bio-fertiliser treatment of seed (for nitrogen fixation) and incorporating enriched nutrient supplements into the soil through phospho-sulpho-nitro (PSN) compost.

"By improving the health of the soil, you can produce more with the same or even less fertilisers. We intend, though our three-year campaign (which started last April), to have demonstration plots covering all the districts of the country", Dr Awasthi added.

Amul hikes milk prices by Rs 2/litre



New Delhi, May 1:

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However Mother Dairy, that has a major hold over the milk market in the National Capital region and its surrounding areas through its vast chain of outlets in Delhi and NCR, has not raised its milk prices.

“There is no decision to hike prices of milk at the moment,” sources in the Mother Dairy said.

The Anand (Gujarat) based Amul, also an important player in milk distribution in Delhi and NCR, increased prices of its different varieties of milk by Re 1 on 500 ml pack and Rs 2/litre from today.

Accordingly, cost of ‘Amul Gold’ variety rose from Rs 34 a litre to Rs 36 a litre from today.

Likewise, ‘Amul Taaza’ variety will cost Rs 28 a litre from Rs 26 a litre earlier, sources in Amul said.

There is a marginal hike of 50 paise on 'Slim an Trim' variety at Rs 12 for 500 ml from Rs 11.50 earlier.

There is no change in its pack of 200 ml, which is still selling at Rs 5, they added.

Amul has also published the revised rates of its different varieties of milk through advertisements in newspapers.

Sources in Amul attributed the price increase to rise in input costs.

Over 30% tea unsold at Coonoor auction

Coonoor, May 1:

Continuing the last one month's trend of huge volume remaining unsold in Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions, as much as 31 per cent of the 14.14 lakh kg on offer remained unsold at Sale No: 17.

Teas worth Rs 2.78 crore were withdrawn for want of buyers despite shedding Rs 3 a kg.

“High priced CTC leaf lost Rs 2-5 while better mediums and plainers suffered withdrawal despite shedding Rs 2-5. Orthodox leaf, however, managed to be steady. Orthodox dust eased Rs 2-3. Some CTC dusts, however, gained up to Rs 5, but there were withdrawal in many invoices”, an auctioneer told *Business Line*.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, and Vigneshwar Estate tea, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, topped CTC market at Rs 144 a kg. Hittakkal Estate got Rs 135, Garswood Estate clonal and Shanthi Supreme Rs 127 each, Sree Tea Supreme Rs 124, Kannavarai Estate Rs 122 and Blue Monte Estate Rs 120. In all, 63 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 201, Havukal Rs 156, Glendale and Tiger Hill clonal Rs 155 each, Kairbetta and Prammas Rs 151 each. In all, 28 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Export purchases continued to be weak. Pakistan bought very selectively in a wide range, Rs 48-74 and the CIS, Rs 48-55 a kg.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 45-47 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 80-120 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 47-51 for plain dusts and Rs 85-135 for brighter liquoring dusts.

ICAR draws up blueprint to make Goa a major floriculture centre

Panaji (Goa), May 1:

The country's premier agricultural research organisation, ICAR, has drawn up a detailed blueprint for turning picturesque Goa into a prominent flower-growing State.

ICAR Research Complex, an arm of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), has chalked out a five-point blueprint for the development of floriculture in Goa, known world over as a tourist paradise.

The outlay would be given to the State Government soon to tap the floriculture potential of Goa, ICAR Research Complex Director, Mr N. P. Singh, told PTI.

“The annual demand for flowers in Goa is about Rs 15 crore, in which, the share of local farmers is very small.

Flowers from Solapur, Belgaum and Pune are flooding the local markets in the State, popularly described as the beach capital of India, he added.

Despite the huge demand, hardly 25 hectares is under floriculture, accounting for a mere 1 per cent of the total area used for horticultural crops, Mr Singh added.

“The hot and humid climate of the western state is suitable for cultivation of loose flowers like jasmine, marigold and crescendo,” he said.

The Centre has also developed a “production technology” for three flowers — Gerbera, Anthurium and Lillium — and open field technology for Gladiolus, which has been demonstrated to farmers and experts, the ICAR Director added.

Giving details of the design, he said provisions should be made to provide a support price for flower crops like the one given for cereals and plantation crops.

Contract farming

Farmer-friendly land reforms like contract farming, tenancy issues and Government support to progressive and interested farmers should be provided, he said, adding that the subsidy procedure should be formulated on the lines of a production-based subsidy and also on a lease basis.

At present, the State provides subsidy only to farmers who have land in their own name. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan are the major flower-growing States in the country.