

THE HINDU

Online edition of India's National Newspaper

Monday, May 21, 2011

Date:21/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/21/stories/2011052153100300.htm>

Paddy procurement: Collector warns against malpractices

VILLUPURAM: District Collector R. Palanisamy has warned of stringent action against those officials who might indulge in malpractices in the direct procurement centres. The Collector was addressing the farmers' grievance day session held after a gap of two-and-half months here on Friday.

Mr. Palanisamy said that the session was deferred on account of the Assembly elections. He said that complaints were received to the effect that certain officials were procuring paddy from traders instead of from the farmers. If farmers came out with authentic information, officials indulging in such prohibitive practices would be taken to task. Responding to the allegation that certain Village Administrative Officers were wrongly issuing pattas, the Collector said that if they provide him with the clinching evidence he would immediately act upon it.

The Collector said that the officials of the water resource wing of the Public Works Department had been directed to clear the waterways of all the outgrowths, particularly weeds from the canals feeding the Gomukhi dam, Veedur dam and the Manimuktha dam. The officials too had been instructed to strengthen the weak points of bunds of the Gomukhi dam. The Collector told the farmers that adequate fertilizer stocks were kept in the district.

He agreed to look into the demand of the sugarcane growers to conduct a special grievance day session for them. However, the Collector said that an exclusive education loan mela for the wards of the farmers would not be feasible.

As was the practice in the past two years, this year too a common education loan mela would be organised in which the wards of farmers could submit their applications. Personal Assistant

to Collector (Agriculture) Chakkaravarthi and Deputy Director (Agriculture) Manian also participated.

Date:21/05/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/21/stories/2011052157220500.htm>

Farmers to get saplings at subsidised rate

PERAMBALUR: Saplings will be distributed at subsidised rates to farmers as part of implementation of the Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) through District Watershed Development Agency at 21 watershed areas in the district.

Focus will be on enhancing the forest cover area and saplings of fruit bearing trees, shade giving trees and environmental promotion varieties will be distributed under the programme.

In a press release, issued here on Friday Collector M. Vijayakumar said that the saplings will be drought-resistant.

Date:21/05/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/21/stories/2011052162030700.htm>

Fertiliser supply to be increased

ERODE: Agriculture Minister K.A. Sengottaiyan has assured that steps are being taken up to ensure adequate supply of fertiliser to the farmers in the State.

The minister, while meeting senior officials of various departments, told reporters that the shortage in fertiliser supply would be sorted out within a few days and adequate supply would be ensured to the farmers.

The power crisis in the State would also be sorted out soon, he said, and added that Chief Minister Jayalalithaa was holding talks with officials to sort out the issue of shortage of manpower in various government departments.

Welcome

Earlier, party cadres gave a rousing welcome to Mr. Sengottaiyan on his visit to the Gobichettipalayam constituency after assuming charge as the Agriculture minister.

Date:21/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/21/stories/2011052155130300.htm>

Crop loss: input subsidy for groundnut farmers

Ministers, MLAs from Anantapur district convince Chief Minister: MP

Anantapur: Groundnut farmers who lost their crop due to failure of monsoon or inadequate rainfall will be given compensation in the form of input subsidy, according to MP Anantha Venkatarama Reddy.

In a statement issued here on Friday, Mr. Reddy said during the last kharif groundnut farmers had raised the crop in an extent of 20 lakh hectares.

Out of the 20 lakh hectares, 5 lakh hectares would be covered under the compensation scheme. Farmers not covered under the compensation package would be covered under the input subsidy programme. The beneficiaries under the input subsidy programme would be farmers holding the remaining 15 lakh hectares.

Rs. 360 crore

The State government will pay Rs. 230 crore as input subsidy and Rs. 130 crore in the form of compensation. The MP said Ministers and MLAs from the district convinced Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy the need to extend compensation to the beleaguered groundnut farmers in the district. He said 15 lakh hectares could not be covered under the crop compensation scheme as the crop was damaged after harvest. Farmlands which could not be covered under the compensation programme directly would now be given an input subsidy of Rs. 1,875 per hectare.

The district had in the past received Rs. 62 crore worth input subsidy but keeping the severe drought conditions in view the Chief Minister agreed to release Rs. 230 crore, Mr. Reddy pointed out.

Date:21/05/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/21/stories/2011052150750500.htm>

Areca farmers pushed to the brink

Sathish G.T. and Veerendra P.M.

Pest menace and price crash have led to suicide by farmers

— File photo



Loss: Officials of the Horticulture Department say that of the 42,000 hectares of areca plantations in Chikmagalur, 26,000 hectares are affected by yellow leaf disease.

Chikmagalur/Shimoga: Areca farmers in Malnad region were till recently categorised as affluent. However, a sharp decline in yield owing to pest menace and fungal infection, coupled with falling prices of areca, have wreaked havoc, pushing them into a debt trap. Farmers' suicides, once unheard of among areca growers, have become an undeniable reality in the last six to seven years.

According official records, between April 2010 and April 2011, 36 farmers in Chikmagalur district committed suicide. Of them 13 are areca growers. In Shimoga district, 40 farmers committed suicide between 2003-04 and 2010-11 due to financial crisis, most of them areca farmers.

A.N. Basavarajappa, a farmer from Arakere village of Bhadravathi taluk in Shimoga, who owned two acres areca and one acre of coconut plantation, committed suicide in April, 2009. A progressive farmer, he had borrowed Rs. 8.84 lakh from Pragati Grameen Bank and Rs. 80,200 from Malnad Areca Marketing Cooperative Society to set up an areca processing unit. However, "Kole Roga" (a fungal infection) brought down yield in his farm by nearly 40 per cent.

More recently, 11 months ago, S.A. Sundar (59), an areca farmer with three acres and 30 guntas of land in Jaipura in Koppa taluk in Chikmagalur, shot himself dead. There was a time when production in the plantations was 20 quintals a year, but the situation was bad after "Yellow Leaf Disease" (YLD) began to spread.

Last year, when Sundar ended his life, he had debt of Rs 1.5 lakh, including Rs 30,000 borrowed to pay interest from friends and relatives. He owed the Karimane Land Bank Rs. 85,000. According to his son, Chandrakanth, the total earnings from areca plantation last year was roughly Rs. 4,000. The total production was a shocking 20 kg. Traces of the disease YLD were first found 50 years ago at Meguru in Koppa taluk, but started spreading only 10 years ago. According to Sachin Meega, a social worker who filed a Public Interest Litigation in Karnataka High Court seeking relief for areca growers, suicides in the families of areca growers began to happen in the last six-seven years.

The death of Arun (41) of Marithotlu in Koppa taluk was among the first reported cases of areca farmers' suicides in October 2006. His brother, Anil, told The Hindu that Mr. Arun had borrowed lakhs to cultivate 28 acres. "We used to get 80 quintals a year. In 2006, the yield was only 10 quintals," he said.

According to the Horticulture Department, of 42,000 hectares of areca plantations in Chikmagalur, 26,000 hectares are affected by YLD. The disease first turns the leaves yellow and later kills the tree.

Mr. Meega said that a team was constituted by the Centre, headed by Gorak Singh, the then Horticulture Commissioner, Ministry of Agriculture, to study the plight of areca farmers. It submitted a report in December 2009 after visits to Shimoga and Chikmagalur and recommended loan waiver for areca growers with less than 4 hectares of land.

Farmers were hoping for a positive response, but none came. The banks issued notices to recover debts. Mr. Meega and others then moved the High Court which has now asked the petitioners to submit documents to prove that the farmers committed suicide because of loan borrowed from banks.

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THE HINDU Business Line

Rare mango



From Thailand: The "Keo Sevoy" mango (*Mangifera Indica*) at a domestic garden near Thrissur, Kerala. Also known as "Kyo Savoy" and "Khaew Sawei" in Thai, the mango is originally from Thailand. The fruit is sweet and eaten raw. A matured fruit attains a light yellow-green colour with a firm yellow fibre. It has less flesh and a slight lemon flavour.

Rs 137-cr initiative to modernise sheep rearing



Driving change: A shepherd drives her stock across the Arkavathi stream on the outskirts of Bangalore. “Stall Rearing,” is being developed to replace traditional rearing in the coming days.

— G.R.N. Somashekar

Bangalore, May 20:

The Karnataka Sheep and Wool Development Corporation has initiated a Rs 137-crore plan to improve sheep rearing and help farmers in revenue generation.

Currently, grazing fields in the districts are shrinking due to mega infrastructure projects or forest department classifying waste lands as reserve forests. This has forced farmers to shift from traditional grazing to modern methods,” Mr Bhojaraja Karudi, Chairman, Karnataka Sheep and Wool Development Corporation, told *Business Line*.

“Keeping this in mind, the corporation plans to shift sheep rearing from traditional to modern ‘stall feeding’. But for this the farmers lack knowledge and resources,” he added.

For funds, the corporation plans to tap state and central government-sponsored schemes in addition to organisations such as Nabard and a few public sector banks.

Explaining the key components of Rs 137-crore initiative, Mr Karudi said at present when animals die due to accidents, fire or rain, the revenue department fixes the compensation. But the amount fixed by the department is small.

“The corporation, through its newly introduced insurance scheme ‘Kiru Kamadenu’, plans to insure the animals so that the farmers get a minimum of Rs 1,000 an animal,” he added. Knowledge of shearing wool is lacking at district and taluk levels and there is lot of wastage happening. “In order to address this problem, the corporation plans to fund one shearing machine along with a generator to a group of farmers. One unemployed youth in the village will be trained in shearing methods,” he said.

The corporation plans to strengthen the infrastructure for sheep and wool processing by creating federation of farmers' societies for collecting the wool to be forwarded to the factories.

The corporation also plans to set up and monitor breeding centres in the districts from where marketing of live animals to prospective breeders is to be done. The farmers would also get health coverage for the sheep. “Farmers buying sheep from the district centres are to sell two to three month-old lamb back to the centres. The lamb is then reared hygienically for meat production, which the corporation will market in urban centres for better realisation,” Mr Karudi explained.

“Through this controlled operations, the corporation aims at exporting processed meat to Gulf countries,” he added.

Cotton association seeks PM's intervention on export policy

Mumbai, May 20:

The battle for an unrestricted export policy for raw cotton has been catapulted to the highest level with the Cotton Association of India (CAI) seeking the intervention of the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh.

In a representation, the CAI president, Mr Dhiren Sheth has urged the Prime Minister to announce a free export policy for cotton without any quantitative restriction as the planting season is set to begin. He said restrictions on exports and frequent changes in the policy have not only hurt cotton growers' interest, but also have resulted in the country being sidelined in the international market because of risks associated with vacillating policies and unsteady supplies. CAI asserted that cotton growers and exporters deserve unrestricted access to export markets when cotton imports are allowed without any restriction.

Consuming industries such as yarn, fabric and garment enjoy multiple benefits of unrestricted exports, duty-free imports of cotton and access to indigenous raw material at prices 15-30 per cent lower than their international competitors, the representation observed adding that it was nothing but cotton growers subsidising the user industry.

“Any restriction on cotton export would be detrimental to the Indian cotton economy and deprive all the cotton farmers of the legitimate price for their produce”, Mr Sheth pointed out.

Spot rubber turns weak

Kottayam, May 20:

Spot rubber turned weak on Friday. The market appeared to be deserted owing to a State wide motor workers' strike to protest against the recent hike in fuel price. The trend was partially mixed while the volumes were extremely dull.

According to traders, sheet rubber closed steady at Rs 222 a kg amidst scattered transactions. The grade slipped to Rs 222 (222.50) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi as reported by the Rubber Board.

In futures, RSS 4 improved at its June series to Rs 223.60 (222.70), July to Rs 227.40 (226.86), August to Rs 226.25 (224.85) and September to Rs 222 (220.39) a kg while the October series finished unchanged at Rs 219.50 (219.50) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs 230.64 (231.41) a kg at Bangkok. The May futures for the grade increased marginally to ¥405 (Rs 223.20) from ¥404.1 a kg during the day session and then to ¥409.8 (Rs 225.85) a kg in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM).

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 222 (222); RSS-5: 220 (221); ungraded: 218 (218); ISNR 20: 213 (214) and latex 60 per cent 133 (133).

Slaughter house waste turns into fodder

Hyderabad, May 20:

It's a typical "wealth from waste" project. The waste is rumen contents of slaughtered animals such as buffaloes, sheep and goat. The wealth is enzymes, which can be useful as dietary supplement for livestock and poultry.

The slaughter waste may produce many pollutant gases in the environment such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), Ammonia, Carbon monoxide (CO) hydrocarbons and so on, which are harmful to the environment.

Researchers at the National Research Centre on Meat (NRCM) here feel that slaughter wastes will be helpful in two ways, firstly – reducing the burden on environment and secondly, maximum use of slaughtered animal by-products.

In a project initiated last year, Dr S. Vaithinathan and co-scientists at NRCM are working to extract enzymes from the rumen contents of these three animals, a major waste of slaughter houses in the country.

The rumen contents also cause environmental pollution when proper disposal is not practiced in the nearby areas of slaughter houses. If this is the negative side, then the positives of these enzymes are that they could be used as dietary supplement for livestock and poultry to improve the utilisation of low quality feed, the scientists feel.

Once the project is completed, they will develop methods to extract the enzymes: Amylase, Xylanase, Carboxymethyl Cellulase from the slaughter waste, NRCM, part of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, said.

"In this research we have focused on three meat animals – buffaloes, sheep and goat, which are generally used in the slaughter houses," said Dr N Kondaiah, Director of NRC Meat. Testing of the product at the laboratory level is progressing well.

At present, these enzymes are produced from aerobic fungus and bacteria for the use in feed industry. The scientists also found that buffaloes have higher quantity of Xylanase while sheep and goats have more Amylase in their rumen contents.

Restricted purchase drags sugar



Mumbai, May 20:

Thin, need-based local demand pushed sugar prices lower on the Vashi wholesale market on Friday. Spot prices declined by Rs 5-8 a quintal on selling. Mills' tender rates came down by Rs 7-8. *Naka* rates were steady.

Local demand was low and steady due to vacation. Demand from other States improved. Prices may drop because of higher month-end selling at the mill level, according to traders.

Mr Harakhchand Vora, of Kavita Trading Co, said in absence of fresh demand volumes and prices have remained unchanged since the beginning of the month. Stockists and mills avoided big deals since local retailers bought only hand-to-mouth because of vacation. . At present, stocks are at 74-75 truckloads of 100 bags each. . From next week, mills will be hard pressed to sell under the free-sale quota, bringing down prices further. On the other hand, considering higher costs of production, prices may not collapse from the present levels. All depends on emergence of fresh demand, said Mr Vora. The Government has declared 19.63 lakh tonnes of sugar (levy sugar — 2.13 lakh tonnes and non-levy sugar — 17.50 lakh tonnes) for May 2011. Market sources said on Thursday evening, few mills sold 27,000-28,000 bags of a quintal each at Rs 2,600-2,640 for S-grade and Rs 2,650-2,730 for M-grade. Most mills kept tender offers open. Arrivals were lower at 38-40 truck loads, and local dispatches were at 32-33 truck loads.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 2,736-2,771 (Rs 2,741-2781) and M-grade Rs 2,786-2,881 (Rs 2,791-2,881).

Cotton blooms on Govt's assurance to ginnerers



Rajkot, May 20:

The Centre's assurance to the delegation from Saurashtra Ginnerers Association that 15 lakh bales more would be allowed for exports lifted cotton price by about Rs 2,000 a candy of 356 kg. The price increased from Rs 42,000-45,000 on Monday to Rs 46,000-47,000 on Friday.

B-grade cotton traded at Rs 35,000-40,000 a candy in Gujarat. Price of raw cotton has also increased by Rs 50 to Rs 950-1,000 for 20 kg. In Gujarat, 7000-8000 bales arrived in Gujarat, and 25,000 bales arrived in the rest of the country.

At the meeting of the delegates from the association with Ministers and leaders in Delhi, the ginnerers were assured their demands would be met after the Government discussed the issue with the Cotton Advisory Board. However, ginnerers in Gujarat have decided to continue their six-day old strike, waiting for the Government orders on exports.

A Rajkot-based cotton broker said: "The news about the meeting on cotton exports has lifted the price. There were some new inquiries but few were selling."

Prices are not expected to fall below Rs 52,000 a candy in the future as ginnerers have enough stocks. According to the association, ginnerers in Gujarat have 18-20 lakh bales of unsold stocks.

Uptrend continues in chana; tur steady



Indore, May 20:

Pulses and pulse seeds showed mixed trend, with chana maintaining its uptrend on rise in demand and low arrivals. Moong and masoor witnessed a decline on weak buying. In the spot, chana gained Rs 20-25 at Rs 2,425-2,430 a quintal. Besides, weaker arrivals and improved demand, monthly cut on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange on Friday and bullishness in chana also contributed to the rise in spot chana, said a chana trader, Mr Sanjay Bansal, adding that at present demand for chana is higher than arrivals.

On Friday, about 5,000 bags of chana arrived in local *mandis*. Chana (*desi*) also gained Rs 20-25 at Rs 2,375 a quintal and chana (*mausmi*) remained steady at Rs 2,400-2,600 a quintal.

Getting support from the rise in spot chana, its dal also perked up by Rs 25 a quintal, with chana dal (bold) in the spot quoted at Rs 3,075-3,100, chana dal (medium) quoted at Rs 2,975-3,000 and chana dal (average) quoted at Rs 2,850-2,875 a quintal.

Masoor declined by Rs 40- 50 on slack demand, with masoor (bold) in the spot being quoted at Rs 2,950-2,960 a quintal and masoor (medium) at Rs 2,650 a quintal. Taking cues from the decline in masoor, its dal also witnessed a drop. Masoor dal (bold) quoted at Rs 3,650-3,675, masoor dal (medium) at Rs 3,500-3,525 and masoor dal (average) at Rs 3400-3,425 a quintal.

Tur remained steady on slack demand. Tur (Maharashtra) in the spot quoted at Rs 3,250-3,275, tur (*Nimari*) at Rs 2,900-3,000 a quintal. Subdued demand also kept tur dal prices flat, with tur (marka) quoted at Rs 6,100, tur dal (full) at Rs 5,300-5,400 and tur dal (*sawa* no.) quoted at Rs 4,600-4,650. Similarly, lack of queries kept urad steady with urad (bold) quoted at Rs 4,200-4,300 and urad (medium) quoted at Rs 3,800-4,000.

Moderate buying perks up rice



Karnal, May 20:

Trade inquires and some buying lifted prices of both aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties marginally on Friday.

After ruling unchanged since last weekend, prices of aromatic rice increased by Rs 10-20 a quintal.

“Traders are getting some overseas inquires and that pushed up the aromatic rice prices, while some domestic demand lifted the non-basmati varieties,” said Mr Amit Chandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company.

Pusa-1121(steam) quoted at Rs 5,200-5,320 a quintal, Pusa-1121(sela) was at Rs 4,100-4,350, and Pusa-1121(raw) ruled at Rs 5,080-5,120 a quintal.

Prices of duplicate basmati quoted at Rs 3,750-4,065 a quintal. Pure basmati (raw) ruled around Rs 6,500-6,620 a quintal.

For the brokens of Pusa- 1121, Tibar was quoted at Rs 3,100-3,470, Dubar at Rs 2,400-2,700 and Mongra was at Rs 1,900-2,230.

Some buying lifted the prices of all non-basmati varieties marginally by Rs 10-25. Sharbati (steam) quoted at Rs 3,100-3,280 while the Sharbati (Sela) ruled between Rs 3,000-3,030 a quintal.

PR-11 (sela) ruled at Rs 2,120-2,270 while PR-11(raw) was quoted at Rs 2,050-2,265 a quintal.

delayed harvest

Permal (sela) was quoted at Rs 1,750-2,100 a quintal while Permal (raw) traded at Rs 1,900-2,125 a quintal.

Among broken of the Sharbati variety, Tibar was quoted at Rs 2,350-2,560, Dubar was at 2,100-2,260 and Mongra ruled around Rs 1,800-1,845 a quintal.

According to reports, the monsoon is unlikely to come on time and the delay may have some impact on summer rice as sowing and harvesting may be delayed. This may affect prices in the short term.

Spot turmeric gains on local buying



Erode, May 20:

Local demand lifted spot turmeric price by Rs 400 a quintal in Erode markets on Friday.

“Spot turmeric increased Rs 400 a quintal mainly because of local buying. Those buyers who already have enough stocks are waiting for good price in North India and for fresh orders,” said Mr R. K.Viswanathan, a senior turmeric trader. Still, farmers were unhappy over the negligible price hike.

Turmeric had decreased steeply by about Rs 1,700 a quintal in the last few days. The sale of both varieties of turmeric was also encouraging. Mr Viswanathan said there would be no major

increase for the commodity in near future, but there would be a price fluctuation from Rs 200 to Rs 500 a quintal. He said 13,000 bags arrived for sale, and out of this 50 per cent was sold.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety was sold at Rs 6,174-8,161 a quintal and the root variety, Rs 6,204-7,289 .

Salem Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 7,773-9,689 and the root variety, Rs 7,009-9,899 . Out of the 4,087 bags that arrived, only 400 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 6,216-8,269 and the root variety, Rs 5,769-7,266 . Out of the 205 bags kept for sale, 193 were sold. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 6,459-8,289 and the root variety, Rs 6,389-7,329 . Out of the 1,502 bags that arrived, 1319 were sold. At the Regulated Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 7,869-8,339 and the root variety, Rs 6,739-7,555 . Out of the 920 bags that arrived, 869 were sold.