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'Pulses not given adequate care'

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: Farmers do not give adequate care for pulses as they consider it as a mere bonus crop. Therefore, two critical technologies are being introduced to double the yield, Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University P. Murugesu Boopathi said here on Thursday.

Inaugurating a two-day annual research workshop on pulses at the university, Mr. Boopathi said seed drill to maintain proper plant population and using mobile sprinkler for irrigation during 35 to 40 days after sowing were the critical technologies that he had apprised the Agriculture Minister K.A. Sengottaiyan recently of.

"The Government has been given suggestions to procure pulses through the Civil Supplies Corporation as procurement at higher price will encourage farmers to grow pulses with adequate care. Seed Replacement Ratio (SRR) is less than 10 per cent in pulses, for which TNAU has drawn up a plan to produce around 20,000 tonnes of foundation seed to be multiplied by the State Department of Agriculture for distribution to farmers," Mr. Boopathi said.

Identified

The university had identified one of its research stations for producing certified seeds for pulses, for which financial assistance from the Government was required.

It had also developed a plant booster called 'Pulse Wonder' a micronutrient mixture to boost pulse yields, which was being promoted by the State Department of Agriculture. Mechanisation

of pulse cultivation was a priority area without which farmers would find it difficult to continue in agriculture.

It was also planned to create a model farm in the National Pulses Research Centre at Vamban, Pudukottai district, which would be under 100 per cent mechanisation as a demonstration plot to educate farmers, he added.

The Vice-Chancellor said the area under pulse cultivation had decreased from seven lakh hectares to five lakh hectares over a 10-year period. Scientists needed to concentrate their research on increasing productivity of pulses in the State.

M. Paramathma, Director of Research, TNAU, said out of the 450 improved pulse varieties that were released at the national level, 93 were from TNAU. Under National Agricultural Development Project – Rashtriya Krishi Vigyan Yatra, a mega project had been submitted to the Government with a budget outlay of Rs, 1.52 crore for popularisation of mechanised pulses cultivation in the State.

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Poultry farmers in Namakkal worry over escalating land costs

M.K. Ananth



Costly to rear: Birds at a poultry farm in Namakkal -

Namakkal: While the demand for egg and chicken meat is increasingly commendably, poultry farmers here are forced to restrict their expansion processes owing to escalating land and construction costs over the last five years, says P. Selvaraj, Chairman of the National Egg Coordination Committee's (NECC) Namakkal Zone.

The Namakkal Zone comprises of nearly 1,100 poultry farmers who own the 459.01 lakh layer birds (egg laying birds) of which Namakkal district houses nearly 75 percent of the farmers and 81 percent of the total bird strength.

But only 40 farmers – 38 in Namakkal and one each in Erode and Annur (Coimbatore) – are expanding this year despite the mounting investments, Dr. Selvaraj told The Hindu.

However of the nearly 30 NECC zones across India, Namakkal takes credit as one of the only two zones in the country – the only other zone is Barwala near Delhi – that would expand during this financial year, he said. Farmers in the other zones have frozen their expansion processes owing to similar issues, he added.

An engineer who has been constructing poultry sheds for more than two decades said that the 10 years ago the investment for construction of sheds (excluding land rates) was around Rs. 200 per chicken. “Whereas now it stands at Rs. 400 per bird for construction of sheds and it goes up to Rs. 450 per bird for erecting automatic feeding system,” he said.

According to him a farmer would have to invest around Rs. 4.5 crore to expand his layer bird strength by one lakh birds, in addition to the investment for lands. Pointing out that the construction cost of sheds increased from Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 in nine years (2000-08) it rocketed from Rs. 300 to Rs. 450 between the years 2009-11, he added.

Expansion

Since the year 2000 the Namakkal NECC zone's targeted annual expansion this year would be the second highest (by 50.82 lakh birds) compared to the average strength of the previous year.

The best-ever expansion of the bird strength of this zone was in 2005-06 when the average strength increased to 307.34 lakh – that is 72.85 lakh more than the previous year's strength of

234.49 lakh. But it is said that the massive expansion was before escalation of land and construction costs.

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Farmers wait for Neyyar dam waters

P.S. Suresh Kumar

Kerala not discharging water from Kollemcode head works

Nagercoil: Farmers in Vilavancode taluk are not in a position to undertake agricultural activities like their counterparts in other parts of Kanyakumari district owing to non-release of water into the left side channel by the Kerala government.

The district administration has announced the release of water from all four dams in the district — Pechipparai, Perunchani, Chittar I and Chittar II — on June 3 to facilitate farmers take up agriculture operations.

The newly-elected MLA from Vilavancode Assembly segment, S.Vijayadharani of the Congress party, had assured during her election campaign that she would take immediate steps to ensure the early release of water in the channel.

Now, with the change of guard in Kerala, it is also possible for her to persuade the United Democratic Front (UDF) government to release the water.

The Neyyar dam, the source of water supply for the Kanyakumari branch channel, is situated in Neyyattinkarai taluk in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. The right side channel taking off from this dam irrigates the ayacuts in Kerala and the capacity of the channel is 300 cusecs. The left side channel taking off from the dam irrigates the ayacuts both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The capacity of the left side canal is also 300 cusecs. The ayacuts originally proposed under the Kanyakumari branch channel was 9,200 acres. But only 3,370 acres could be developed. Rules of Regulation for Neyyar Irrigation System were sent by the Kerala government in 1968. However, the government considered entering into an agreement and accordingly sent a draft agreement to the Kerala government and a reply is still awaited.

Forest Department indicted

Muralidhara Khajane

CEC says the department circumvented forest laws

Lokayukta report mentioned the involvement of Lakshminarayana Mining Company in illegal mining

Report says that the mining company extracted about 14 lakh tonnes of iron ore during 2009-10

BANGALORE: The Forest Department, which is facing charges of not adhering to the Forest Conservation Act in issuing licences to mining companies in forest areas in the State, has been indicted by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC), appointed by the Supreme Court, for circumventing forest laws and going out of its way to favour Lakshminarayana Mining Company.

In Part 4 of its report, the CEC dealt with the illegal mining activities of the mining company and recommended immediate suspension of mining operations and transportation of ore, including ore already mined; suspension of environmental clearances and approvals granted under the Forest Conservation Act; and opening up of forest cases.

Cases should be dealt under the supervision and direction of Principal Chief Conservation of Forests (PCCF) and a decision should be taken on the iron ore seized by the Forest Department, the report said.

Action taken

Following the CEC's recommendations, the Forest Bench of the Supreme Court on May 6 suspended the mining operations of the mining company and shelved transportation of mined ore till further orders.

The Lokayukta had, in its report submitted in 2008, mentioned the involvement of the mining company in illegal mining and its encroachment of 41.93 hectares of forest area.

As a follow-up action, the Forest Department registered cases under the Forest Offence Act against the lease holder.

The CEC report said that the mining company had extracted about 14 lakh tonnes of iron ore during 2009-10, much higher than the 5.1 lakh tonnes extracted during 2008-09.

No effort has been made to ascertain the quality and value of illegally mined ore. The Forest Department had allowed destruction of evidence by not acting against the mining company when it filled up the pit.

The company was allowed to remove the overburden without verifying whether it contained saleable iron ore, the report observed.

Recommendations

Considering the gross violations committed by the company, the CEC recommended setting aside the order of the DCF Bellary Circle of combining forest offence cases registered against the mining company, and instead deal with each under the supervision and direction of the PCCF, besides taking an immediate decision on the iron ore seized by the Forest Department.

It also said the State Government should assess the quality of iron ore illegally extracted by the mining company.

It also recommended to the court to consider imposing exemplary compensation equal to five times the normative market value of the iron ore extracted illegally by the mining company.

Date:23/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/23/stories/2011052357740300.htm>

Science-based innovations for farming

Mohamed Nazeer



Proactive: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Kannur.

KANNUR: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Kannur (KVK) of Kerala Agricultural University has developed a computer software to enable farmers to prepare a location-specific action plan.

The KVK has initiated the preparation of club-wise annual action plan of 80 farmers' clubs under the Federation of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)-KVK Farmers' Clubs in the district using the software.

KVK head and professor K. Abdul Kareem has said the objective of the software is to enable free flow of science-based innovations from the KVK to every nook and corner of the district through the farmers' club network within the shortest time possible.

“After making a scientific diagnosis of problems prevailing in their areas of activity, farmers are able to determine the interventions to solve the prioritised problems and make the action plan using the software for timely implementation,” he said.

The action plans are prepared by the farmers themselves and the software can be used by even those who have no computer literacy. Action plans of nine clubs that belong to nine blocks of the district were prepared on the first day of its launching a few days ago. Computer printouts of the plan can be generated immediately after finalising the plan. After analysing the existing situation, prioritising the problems, and determining the thrust areas, a club may take not more than 30 minutes to come out with the printout of the action plan in Malayalam/English.

According to KVK authorities, the remaining clubs will prepare their respective action plans within a week.

Higher goals

The action plans prepared in this way by the farmers have components including on-farm testing for technology assessment and refinement, frontline demonstration of technologies, training programmes for practising farmers, including women and youths, in production technologies and market-oriented technologies, and other extension programmes such as seminar, fairs, and exhibitions.

The KVK authorities hope that the plan prepared using the software would enable the farmers to realistically determine in advance the requirement of planting materials and technological inputs so that they can be made available in time.

The preparation of the action plans is the first step towards KVK's goal of creating and proliferating model farmers, model farms and, ultimately, model villages in the district, they say.

Date:23/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/23/stories/2011052356050300.htm>

Healthy coconut palms in 100 ha

Staff Reporter

'Elite' saplings distributed to farmers



For better yield: Principal Agriculture Officer V.K. Raju distributing coconut palm saplings tolerant

of root wilt disease at the CARD-KVK centre at Thelliyoor in Pathanamthitta. The centre had conducted a survey in seven panchayats in the district to identify root wilt-resistant trees.

PATHANAMTHITTA: A project to grow coconut trees tolerant of root wilt disease in 100 hectares of Pathanamthitta district has been launched by the Christian Agency for Rural Development (CARD)-Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), a farm science centre of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for the district.

KVK project coordinator P.C. Robert said distribution of wilt-tolerant 'Elite' palm seedlings to farmers of select panchayats had been under way at the CARD-KVK centre at Thelliyoor near Thiruvalla from last week.

"The project is part of the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) scheme," he said.

The root wilt disease was detected in 1982 in Kaviyoor and Kallooppara panchayats of Pathanamthitta.

The disease was prevalent in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, and Thrissur districts.

He said the KVK had made extensive survey in root wilt-affected areas to identify trees that were healthy, high-yielding and not affected by wilt.

Some coconut trees in Kaviyoor and Kallooppara panchayats were found to be resistant to the disease. If a palm of higher age showed no symptom of disease even in the midst of highly diseased palms, that too in the place of origin of the disease, it could be a disease-resistant palm.

These palms were utilised to collect nuts to produce quality planting materials for large-scale distribution.

Low productivity

The productivity of coconut tree was very low in Pathanamthitta (28nuts/ palm/year) mainly due to root wilt disease. More than 96.5 per cent of the trees surveyed by KVK in seven major coconut growing panchayats of the district had this disease, he said.

According to Mr. Robert, the area under coconut cultivation in the district is fast declining, mainly owing to low productivity, low price of the produce, high cost of production, and labour shortage (especially for climbing). Steady increase in the price of rubber had been tempting farmers to switch over to rubber plantation in many parts of the district, he said.

192 fit trees

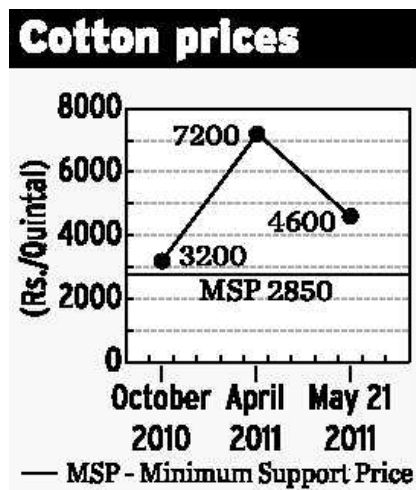
Vinod Mathew, principal investigator of the project, said the survey was carried out in the seven panchayats of Nedumpuram, Kaviyoor, Kallooppara, Kuttoor, Perigara, Kadapra, and Niranam and out of 8,540 plants selected in the survey, only 192 trees were fully compliant with the criteria of selection of root wilt-tolerant palms. Principal Agriculture Officer V.K. Raju inaugurated distribution of seedlings to farmers of Pandalam and Peringara panchayats on Thursday. He said 3,000 seedlings had been kept ready for distribution among farmers.

Date:22/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/22/stories/2011052252030700.htm>

Cotton prices revive on hopes of nod for exports

M. Soundariya Preetha

Increase by about Rs.2000 per candy



COIMBATORE: Prices of cotton have increased by about Rs.2,000 a candy (for Shankar – 6 - variety) during the last couple of days in the hope that Government may again permit exports.

According to a cotton trader here, the increase is not based on an increase in transactions. Ginners are having heavy stocks and have appealed to the Government to permit export of about 15 lakh bales of cotton. The prices are going up as the trade expects exports to resume. Since October 2010, about 55 lakh bales of cotton have been exported.

Prices of cotton went up to more than Rs.60,000 a candy in March 2011 and slumped to nearly Rs.43,000 a candy. However, the prices have revived during the last two days.

According to K.N. Viswanathan, secretary of South India Cotton Association, the demand and prices for cotton yarn has declined in the domestic and international markets. There are no buyers for yarn at any price. Demand for cotton will start looking up only when the yarn market revives. "The whole situation depends on the yarn market," he says. Even if the Government permits cotton exports, the international demand is low for cotton and yarn now.

The Cotton Advisory Board had estimated the closing stock of cotton (carry over stock for next year) to be 27.5 lakh bales.

However, with the slump in demand from textile mills, the closing stock may increase. So far, about 290 lakh bales of cotton have come into the market and the production for this year (October 2010 to September 2011) is likely to be 312 lakh bales, as estimated by the board, or slightly lower, he says.

Date:22/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/22/stories/2011052251830500.htm>

Farmers given tokens

Staff Reporter

Efforts on to streamline paddy procurement

— Photo: Thakur Ajay Pal Singh



Long wait: Farmers waiting in queues to collect tokens for selling their paddy produce at the agricultural marketyard in Karimnagar on Saturday.

KARIMNAGAR: In the wake of huge arrivals of paddy produce to the agricultural marketyard in Karimnagar, the authorities have decided to streamline the system of farm produce arrivals to the marketyards and started distributing tokens to the farmers from Saturday onwards.

The farmers have formed serpentine queues to collect the tokens by showing their pattadhar passbooks to the authorities concerned. The agricultural market committee authorities have issued tokens to the farmers mentioning date and time for the arrival at the marketyard for the procurement of the same to avoid confusion and delay.

However, the farmers were issued tokens only for the procurement of 100 bags for each farmer on a stipulated date. The farmers were informed to come for another time to secure token for the procurement of the same at the marketyard.

Orders to rice millers

Minister for Civil Supplies D. Sridhar Babu visited the agricultural marketyard in Karimnagar on Saturday and instructed the rice millers to procure the farmers produce. He warned the millers of action if they fail to procure the paddy by providing minimum support price.

When the farmers brought to his notice about the millers paying only Rs. 980 per quintal, he said that Joint Collector M.A. Azeem would look into the issue and take necessary steps. He informed the authorities to deploy more labourers for loading and unloading at the marketyard.

Karimnagar MP Ponnampalapati Prabhakar, Collector Smita Sabharwal, Joint Collector M.A. Azeem, market committee chairman A. Bhaskar Reddy and others were also present.

Date:22/05/2011 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/22/stories/2011052257530300.htm>

Farmers hit hard by cotton merchants' stir

Firoz Rozindar

Traders have stopped buying cotton for the past 15 days

Government urged to reduce VAT to 2 per cent from the present 5 per cent 'Commerce Ministry ready to allow export of 15 lakh bales of cotton'



HUGE LOSS:A large number of cotton bales lying at the APMC yard in Chitradurga.

Chitradurga: The ongoing indefinite Statewide agitation by the Cotton Merchants' Association has hit cotton growers hard as the merchants have stopped purchasing the produce for the past fortnight.

While cotton growers are unable to sell their produce, labourers in various Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) yards are also affected since they are unable to earn.

“The State Government has increased VAT to 5 per cent, which is still at 4 per cent in Andhra Pradesh. The APMC cess here is 0.5 per cent more than what is prevailing in Andhra Pradesh,” said V.P. Linganagoudar, State president of the association. He said that the market price of cotton had come down to Rs. 3,000 a quintal after the ban. It was Rs. 6,500 a quintal before, he said. The hike in cess by 0.5 per cent had also affected State's revenue and urged the Government to reduce VAT to 2 per cent. To a question, he said that on May 19, a delegation of merchants had met Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Textiles Minister Dayanidhi Maran and urged them to lift the ban on export. “Although they promised to speak to the Prime Minister and the Commerce Minister in this regard, nothing was given in writing. Meanwhile, the Commerce Ministry has said that export of cotton could be permitted only up to 15 lakh bales,” he said. However, Mr. Linganagoudar insisted that the ban should be completely lifted, without any conditions.

“Even after meeting the entire demand of the domestic market, the country will be left with 60 lakh bales of cotton. The Government can allow export of this excess quantity,” he said.

Meanwhile, Minister for Agriculture Umesh V. Katti told The Hindu on the phone that the State Government had already requested the Union Government to lift the ban. About VAT, he promised to request Chief Minister to roll back the hike.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Monday, May 23

Max Min

38.8° | 26.6°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 75%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 5:42

Sunset: 18:29

Barometer: 1005.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Tuesday, May 24

Max Min

37° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

May 25



37° | 29°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday

May 26



37° | 29°

Partly Cloudy

Friday

May 27



37° | 28°

Sunny

Saturday

May 28



37° | 28°

Sunny

Sunday

May 29



37° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Hailstorms hit paddy, vegetables

May 23, 2011 11:15:06 AM

PNS | Ranchi

Hailstorms and strong winds with quick spells of showers have adversely affected the plantation in the city and adjoining areas. On May 19, heavy thundershowers, strong and hailstorms were seen in Ranchi and outskirts of the city, damaging the crops extensively.

Farmers of Ranchi and its nearby areas like Pithoria, Kane, Bariatu etc suffered due to the hailstorm. Farmers have planted vegetables in their field but the hailstorm and strong winds have spoiled the entire plantation namely, cauliflower, onion, capsicum, tomato, spinach, gourd, brinjal, french beans, coriander etc.

“Farmers who have planted vegetables during this time have suffered a lot from the hailstorms and strong winds. Also, those farmers who had planted kharif crops late will be the real sufferers. Farmers planting valuable crops should also arrange for a shelter belt to protect their crops from the natural disasters. A chain of big trees on the north-western side of the farming land could have protected their crops from the strong winds,” said Professor Wadood.

But the constant rain shower would have been beneficial for those land owners who would have treated left their land vacant after cutting the crops. The water will be absorbed by the land and will help during the next production season.

The loss of farmers during this hailstorm and quick spells has been a setback for them with the crop almost ready, but the weather spoiling everything. Dean, Agriculture of Birsa Agriculture University, AK Sarkar said: "The loss is high for the farmers because the crops were almost ready to be sent to the market. The crops have bent from the rains showers and an estimated loss if of around 20 per cent of the total crops. Meanwhile, the wind speed has resulted in 40 per cent of loss to the crops and also to the trees. Few farmers have also suffered the loss of their kidney bean and rice farming."

CM orders review of cotton crop

May 23, 2011 11:17:17 AM

PNS | Chandigarh

Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Sunday ordered a special assessment exercise to review the damage caused to the recently sown cotton crop besides loss to the kinnow and fodder crop in Bathinda, Muktsar and Abohar regions due to the untimely rains and hailstorm.

Rains and hailstorm had lashed Bathinda, Muktsar and Abohar in Punjab on Saturday and had flattened the recently sown cotton crop in thousands of acres besides damaging kinnow plants in a large number of orchards.

Badal has directed the Financial Commissioner (Revenue) AR Talwar to issue detailed instructions to the concerned deputy commissioners to immediately carry out assessment exercise in areas lashed by rain and hailstorm to ascertain damage caused to cotton, fodder and kinnow crops on the priority.

"Adequate compensation as per the Government's norms would be given to the affected farmers," Badal said.

He also assured the farmers that the Government is committed to protect the interests of the

farmers against natural calamities and would do every thing possible to compensate them for the losses suffered due to the current spell of recent rains and hailstorm in the State.

Badal has also condoled the death of five persons who were killed as lightning struck them on Saturday evening. He also announced an ex-gratia grant of Rs 1 lakh each for the next of the kin of the deceased who were killed in the lightening.

He directed the concerned deputy commissioners to further instruct the district health authorities to extend all possible help and free treatment to the persons injured by the lightening.

Though the rains in Punjab and Haryana have brought much-needed respite from the heat wave, the farmers in Punjab are worried as they had recently sown cotton crop.

Heavy showers (15.7 mm) lashed Ludhiana in Punjab, while Patiala, Mohali, Balachaur and Muktsar were among other places in the State which also witnessed downpours. The maximum temperature in the region has dropped by 4-10 degrees Celsius below normal after the rains for two consecutive days. Besides damaging the thousands acres of sown cotton crop land, the hailstorm and rains also resulted in disruption of power supply in several pockets of the region. Hundreds of trees were uprooted in the region. The rains are likely to delay the lifting of wheat bags that have been lying in various centres of this region.

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Business Standard

Monday, May 23, 2011

Govt may allow further cotton export

Komal Amit Gera / Chandigarh May 23, 2011, 0:34 IST

Following the sharp drop in prices of cotton in the past couple of months, the Union government is reviewing the commodity's export policy.

It had capped export for the current year at 5.5 million bales (170 kg). The industry wants export, given the low domestic demand and the resulting drop in prices.

A delegation of the Gujarat Cotton Ginners Association (GCGA) that met the Union finance minister, textile minister and political secretary to the Congress party president earlier this week were told the Cotton Advisory Board would examine the situation.

Following this reason for hope, prices in the Mumbai market rose in the past two days. Prices of the benchmark Shankar-6 variety went up from Rs 43,000 per candy (356 kg) to Rs 45,000.

GCGA president Dilipbhai Patel said textile Minister Dayanidhi Maran said the CAB would meet next week. "This process may take about three weeks and by that time the monsoon would arrive. So, we explained to Ahmed Patel, political secretary to the Congress chief Sonia Gandhi

(and who's from Gujarat) that the decision should be taken in five-seven days, else it will not be useful. He indicated for a positive result in a week's time," said the GCGA head.

According to the president of Ginners Association of Punjab, Bhagwan Bansal, about 4.5 million bales are estimated to be with traders, ginners and exporters and another two million bales of raw cotton are lying unsold with farmers in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. "So, even if an additional quota of 1.5 million bales is allowed, we would have sufficient stocks," he said.

Room is needed, emphasise for fresh crop arrivals, to commence in September/October. In the absence of corrective measures, prices would further crash due to excess supplies, said a cotton trader. He added prices in the international market are not as lucrative as last year but it is still viable to export. With spinning mills planning to cut output by a third from Tuesday (they are closed on Monday in protest at unfavourable government policies), there may be a further drop in demand for cotton.

Ginners and traders are using the argument that the farmer would be hit if prices and demand continue to sag. Said Dhiren Shah, president of the Cotton Association of India: "Cotton acreage, which has seen a rising trend in India in recent years, will receive a setback if farmers do not receive fair prices." Global cotton prices are 30 per cent higher compared to prices prevailing in the country and farmers will soon have to take a call on sowing, Shah sai. Adding: "If exports are not allowed, huge carryover stock will result in further lowering of prices before the new crop comes."

Paddy procurement at 2.8 mn tonnes in 2010-11 Kharif season

BS Reporter / Kolkata/ Bhubaneswar May 23, 2011, 0:09 IST

The paddy procurement in Orissa has been to the tune of 2.8 million tonnes in the kharif season of 2010-11.

Of the total procurement of 2.8 million tonnes, the state food supplies department has procured 2.4 million tonnes, Markfed (135,000 tonnes), Nafed (150,000 tonnes), Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation- TDCC (38,000 tonnes) and Food Corporation of India-FCI (9000 tonnes).

Chief Secretary B K Patnaik said, "The rice procurement in the kharif season of 2010-11 has been around 24 lakh tonnes. There is likely to be a shortfall of two lakh tonnes in rice procurement but we hope that a good procurement during the Rabi season will help to tide over this deficit?"

The state government had set a paddy procurement target of 3.15 million tonnes in 2010-11, including the kharif and rabi season. During the current Rabi season, the paddy procurement is expected to be in the range of 600,000-700,000 tonnes.

The Chief Secretary on last Friday reviewed the status of paddy procurement. It may be noted that there are 2716 paddy procurement centres spread across the state.

THE HINDU Business Line

Eco-friendly chemical for toxic algae control

Ahmedabad, May 23:

Researchers at the Central Salt Marine and Chemical Research Institute have standardised a new, cheaper and eco-friendly process to deal with toxic marine algae which can be fatal to fish as well as humans who eat seafood.

The process uses 'amino acid derived ionic liquid surfactants' (AADILSes). They are eco-friendly compounds, having an edge over the conventional liquid organic solvents like benzene, toluene and chloromethane.

AADILSes also find use in drug delivery processes, making of bio-molecular devices and nano-material synthesis.

"We have standardised a process to convert natural amino acids into ionic liquid surfactants which are very versatile in nature and highly bio-degradable," said Dr Arvind Kumar, a scientist at the Bhavnagar-based institute.

"The ionic liquids are ten times more surface-active compared with the conventional surfactants. They have been found suitable for removal of harmful algae from sea water," Dr Kumar said.

“We exposed AADILSs to a toxic marine algae — Amphidinium Cartarae — to test its ability to prevent algal bloom. The results show that small concentration of it was enough to kill algae without side-effects on the surrounding environment.”

Fish can die on consumption of Amphidinium Cartarae, such is its toxicity. Further, the seafood with traces of this algae can make humans sick, mainly with stomach-related ailments. The researchers used natural amino acids such as glycine, alanine, valine, glutamic acid and proline to produce the eco-friendly AAIDLSes, which are cheaper than bio-surfactants derived from micro organisms.

“The amino acids which we used cost around Rs 1,000 per kg, which is cheaper than the bio-surfactants available for prevention of growth of harmful marine algae,” Dr Kumar said. Bio-surfactants such as phospholipids are difficult to obtain and expensive to produce.

“The process of deriving bio-surfactants takes weeks or even more, whereas deriving ionic liquid surfactants from amino acids only takes a few hours,” he said. A lot of research is currently underway to find ways to replace hazardous chemicals in various chemical processes with ionic liquids, the researchers at CSMCRI said.

Interest in oil palm cultivation rises as global vegoil market rallies



Chennai, May 22:

Two and a half years ago, Mr Kumarasamy Reddiar of Vikaravandi village in Tamil Nadu's Villupuram district decided to cultivate oil palm. He chose to replace paddy, casuarina and sugarcane and today, he gets 20 tonnes of fresh fruit bunch (FFB) of oil palm a year on the nine hectares.

"If this is what he gets within four years, then in the coming years he can get a higher yield compared with productivity in Malaysia," says Mr R.R. Govindan, Vice-President, Godrej Agrovet Ltd, that helps him in cultivating the crop.

Godrej Agrovet buys the FFB from farmers such as Mr Kumarasamy and crushes them at Cauvery oil mill in Ariyalur, about 100 km away. Godrej has a majority stake in the mill owned by Cauvery Oil Palm that has been floated by Dr V. Krishnamurthy.

Mr Kumarasamy is one of the many farmers in Tamil Nadu who have taken to oil palm cultivation in the last three years, helping to raise the area under the crop to over 7,500 hectares now.

"At least 5,000 hectares have been added in the last three years. Some 2,500 hectares are older than four years and of this, only 500 hectares are older than eight years," says Mr Govindan. This year, there is a potential to add another 2,500 hectares under oil palm, he says.

Godrej Agrovet has 38,000 hectares under the crop totally in the country. It is the leading firm in oil palm cultivation ahead of the Ruchi group. Of the total oil palm area with Godrej, 50 per cent is in Andhra Pradesh, 19 per cent in Tamil Nadu, 15 per cent in Mizoram and the rest in Orissa, Gujarat, Karnataka and Goa.

Budgetary allocation

Last week, the Agriculture Ministry said 60,000 hectares would be brought under oil palm this fiscal. The Union Finance Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, has allocated Rs 300 crore oil palm development in the Budget. Overall, oil palm is grown on 1.71 lakh hectares.

According to the Ministry, the allocation for oil palm development has been made for eight States with Andhra Pradesh getting Rs 192 crore, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Rs 33.6 crore

each, Orissa Rs 17.76 crore, Mizoram Rs 14.8 crore, Gujarat Rs 4.8 crore, Maharashtra Rs 96 lakh and Chhattisgarh Rs 48 lakh.

During the current fiscal, domestic oil palm production could be around 1.40 lakh tonnes. "This is less than one per cent of the country's requirement," says Mr Govindan.

yield

Oil palm farmers get a yield of 20 tonnes a hectare from mature gardens. A couple of years ago, the yield was 17 tonnes. "Some enterprising farmers get a yield of 30 tonnes against the Malaysian yield of 35 tonnes a hectare," Mr Govindan says.

In Tamil Nadu, most of the farmers are getting around 17.5 tonnes as their plants are yet to mature.

An oil palm tree begins to yield after three years and it takes seven years before the production peaks. From then on, the production could be sustained for another 20 years or so.

"We plan to more than treble our crude oil production in the next three years. By that time, production in the country could rise to 2.7 lakh tonnes," he says.

With labour availability an issue for farming, there are growers who are now willing to switch over to oil palm and wait for three years before they can begin reaping gains.

Palm oil rally

With palm oil prices rallying in the global market, growing oil palm has turned attractive. In Tamil Nadu, prices for FFB of oil palm are fixed once in three months. Currently, farmers are paid Rs 5,250 for a tonne of FFB plus Rs 250 as subsidy by processors. Andhra Pradesh, which has a nodal agency to look at oil palm sector, pays a higher price of over Rs 7,000.

"Things will change soon in other States as interest is picking up. For now, any price above Rs 5,000 is good. Farmers face loss only if the price drops below Rs 3,500," said Mr P. Balasubramaniam, President of Tamil Nadu Oil Palm Farmers Association.

ICRISAT germplasm gives birth to 735 seed varieties

Hyderabad, May 22:

International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) says its germplasm is going places. "A total of 735 nutritious and drought-tolerant crop varieties developed using our germplasm and breeding materials has been released in 78 countries," Dr William D Dar, Director-General of ICRISAT, said.

Of the 735 varieties, 242 were in sorghum, 163 in pearl millet, 145 in groundnut, 120 in chickpea and 65 in pigeon pea. Asian countries took the lion's share with 347, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa with 319 and 136 in West and Central Africa. Rest of the world developed 69.

India, which ranged fourth position globally in terms of seed production, developed 198 varieties. "Using our germplasm, India developed 35 varieties in sorghum, 80 in pearl millet, 36 in chickpea, 21 in pigeon pea and 26 in groundnut. Both Government agencies and private companies had a role in this," he said.

He claimed that hybrid pigeon pea increased yields by 33 per cent. "This will revolutionise the production of the high-protein 'poor people's meat' crop across India, Myanmar and China in the coming years," he said.

Earlier-maturing, heat-tolerant chickpea varieties from ICRISAT had more than doubled yields, from 600 to 1400 kg a hectare in Andhra Pradesh, triggering a four-fold increase in sown area from 1.60 lakh ha to 6.30 lakh ha.

22% tea unsold at Coonoor auctions

Coonoor, May 22:

Around 22 per cent of the year's second highest offer of 15.12 lakh kg at Sale No: 20 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions remained unsold. Teas worth about Rs 1.95 crore were withdrawn for want of buyers despite shedding Rs 3 a kg.

“Orthodox leaf lost Rs 2-3 a kg. High-priced CTC leaf irregularly gained and lost up to Rs 3, while plainers suffered withdrawal even after shedding Rs 2-3. Some cleaner blacker grades, however, managed to be steady. Primary orthodox dusts lost Rs 5-10.

Among CTC dusts, high-priced sorts eased up to Rs 5 and plainers lost Rs 2-3 with withdrawals”, an auctioneer told *Business Line*.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped CTC market when Raj Traders bought for Rs 151 a kg. Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 138, Shanthi Supreme Rs 134, Blue Monte Estate Special and Professor Rs 130 each. Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 198, Curzon Rs 147, Havukal Rs 142, Kairbetta Rs 141 and Mailoor Rs 130. On the export front, Pakistan gave strong support for select grades in a wide range of Rs 42-79 a kg. The CIS bought for Rs 42-58 a kg. There was some buying for European ports.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 40-43 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 80-130 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 44-47 for plain dusts and Rs 85-130 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Mettur dam to be opened for irrigation on June 6

Chennai, May 22:

The State Cabinet on Sunday departed from past practice of opening Mettur dam for irrigation on June 6 and decided it would be on June 12, acceding requests from farmers associations.

This is the first time since the country became a Republic that the reservoir would be opened before June 12, an official press release said here.

The cabinet also decided to reopen schools on June 15 as it would take time to print textbooks.

It held that the proposed uniform syllabus system in school education “will not help improve the quality of education” and resolved to form an expert committee to find ways to improve it.

Bihar plans steps to boost organic farming

Patna, May 22:

The Bihar Government has decided to invite farm scientists from across the world to popularise organic farming in the State.

“The Government has decided to invite experts from France, England, Cuba and some European nations for international seminar in June at Patna,” the Principal Secretary Agriculture, Mr A.K. Sinha, told PTI today.

The June 22-24 meet is aimed at exploring how organic farming can be promoted in context of Bihar's ecology. Mr Sinha added that besides agriculture scientists, people engaged in manufacturing of vermicompost and international agencies granting approval to its production have also been invited. The effort is part of preparation of a progressive agriculture road-map for the State for the next five years, he added.

While popularising chemical-free farming, utmost care would be taken that productivity and profit are not compromised, he said.