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## **SRI training gives hope**

At a workshop for the farmers held on new techniques to be adopted in agriculture, speakers hoped that the district would be poised for a higher production at the end of the harvest.

Under the Agriculture Technology Management Agency, a district level training programme for the farmers in paddy SRI (system of rice intensification) was held at the Agricultural College and Research Institute here on Thursday.

Madurai East MLA K. Tamilarasan said that farmers' should take the help of the scientists available at the ACRI.

They should learn the nuances and the new technologies introduced in developed nations. Only when such techniques are implemented will the yield increase and the farmers can benefit by reaping in huge revenues, he said. He also wanted the faculty members in the institute to disseminate techniques to the farmers in simple language.

Dean of the Institute, K. Vairavan said that the Chief Minister had expressed her desire to improve the standards of living of the farmers and thus assured to double the production, which would ultimately pave way for added income for the ryots.

This would automatically bring in more area under cultivation. Problems like migration too could be prevented, he said and added that by adopting the SRI techniques, many small and marginal farmers had reaped in benefits.

Deputy Director N. D. Sampath Kumar said that the integrated farm plan for each and every farmer is being prepared. Once the booklet is ready, the details of the holdings would be made known and accordingly it would enable the field staff to monitor the produce raised in their regions.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Assistant Director (Madurai East) S. Kanagaraj stressed on practising organic agriculture and to go in for green manure, compost and bio-fertilisers, apart from adopting SRI technique.

A total of 75 farmers participated in the workshop.

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## Fertilizers seized

Special Correspondent

In a raid conducted at a private licensed mixer unit situated on the Alathur Road off Oomachikulam-Kadachanendal stretch, Agriculture Department officials' seized 15 tonnes of fertilizers, valued at Rs 1.15 lakh and stored without any valid permit. They also found that the licensee allegedly indulged in adulteration of various fertilizers. Following complaints at the farmers' grievances meeting, Collector U. Sagayam had assured action and after gathering inputs through independent sources, the Collector formed a special team led by PA (Agriculture) Jayasingh Gnanadurai.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sagayam appealed to the farmers' to check the prices of fertilisers. In case of any adulteration, they may inform Collector's chamber: 2531110 or to PA (Agriculture) mobile number: 94421-64009.

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## Plant saplings to increase forest cover



laurels: M. Asia Mariam, District Revenue Officer, presenting certificate to a student at the valediction of the wild life week celebration in Nagapattinam.

Students should play a key role in increasing forest cover in the district by planting more saplings. They should also be sensitised to protect the fauna and flora and understand the importance of environmental protection, said M. Asia Mariam, District Revenue Officer.

Speaking after distributing prizes to winners in various competitions at the valediction of the observance of the 'Wild Life Week' here recently, Ms. Asia Mariam said that as forest cover in the state was very less immediate action to increase green cover as a mass movement is necessary.

Although the district did not account for dense forests, it was a blessed sanctuary for the birds.

As the birds acted as bio insecticides, farmers should take special efforts for protecting the farm-friendly birds.

She explained the steps being taken by the Forests Department to protect the forest lands and also for increasing the cover.

K. Soundarapandian, District Forest Officer and Wildlife Warden; Nagai Mali, MLA; Ravichandran, District Panchayat president offered felicitations.

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## **Agriculture inputs given to farmers**

Staff Reporter

*Pulses to be cultivated on over 1,500 hectares*



In time: S. Murugiah, chairman, panchayat union, Melaneelithanallur distributing inputs to farmers.

As the district, especially the rain-fed areas, recently received a reasonable rainfall, horticulture as well as agriculture inputs were distributed to the farmers of Melaneelithanallur block here to enable them commence agricultural operations in time.

As far as horticultural crops are concerned, the recent rain became a blessing for banana, cashew and amla, which suffered stunted growth due to extended summer this year. Following the recent rains, it has been planned to cover over 1,500 hectares in this region under pulses.

When a meeting was organised at Melaneelithanallur recently to introduce the newly elected local body representatives to the public, horticulture inputs such as sapota grafts (PKM-1), hybrid bhendi (Us 9A) seeds were distributed to the beneficiaries under Integrated Horticulture Development Scheme, TNIAMWARM (Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water bodies Restoration and Management) schemes.

The Department of Agriculture distributed inputs like black gram seeds (VBN-4), high-yielding maize (PEMH-5) and sesame seeds (RT - 127) to the beneficiaries.

Addressing the meeting, S. Raja Mohamed, Assistant Director of Horticulture, Melaneelithanallur, briefed about the various horticulture development programmes and the quantum of subsidies given for Precision Farming, Drip Irrigation, National Horticulture Mission and Integrated Horticulture Schemes, all being implemented in the block.

He also stressed the elected local body members to identify the needy farmers in their villages and to inform them of the various subsidy schemes implemented by the Departments of Agriculture and Horticulture and to get the benefits.

S. Murugiah, chairman, Melaneelithanallur panchayat union appreciated the efforts of Horticulture and Agriculture Department officials in the block in distributing inputs to the farmers in time and assured the village panchayat presidents all possible assistance they needed.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to the farmers to interact with officials of Agriculture, Horticulture and Local Administration departments to clear their doubts pertaining to the welfare schemes and the methods of availing them.

Soil health cards were also distributed to the farmers.

District panchayat vice-chairman N. Dharmaraj, T. Senthur Kumar, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Melaneelithanallur block, S. Jeyachandran, Horticultural Officer, P. Arivalagan,

Agricultural Officer and V. Selvarajan, Block Development Officer (Village Panchayats) were present.

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### **Modern machinery training programmes for farmers**

Special Correspondent

The State government has decided to conduct four training programmes for farmers through the Department of Agricultural Engineering on modern agricultural machinery and equipment for harvesting of paddy and sugarcane, and equipment pertaining to drip irrigation, sprinkler irrigation and crop protection in 2011-12. The training programmes will be conducted during the current month in Vellore, Walajapet and Tirupattur.

According to a release from the Vellore Collector, the duration of each programme would be one week, and 20 farmers would be selected for each programme. Stipend and transport/food/accommodation allowance would be paid to the trainees as per the rates fixed by the government.

Interested farmers have been requested to approach the offices of the following officials in person and submit their applications:

Assistant Executive Engineer, Agricultural Engineering, opposite to Government Polytechnic, Bagayam, Vellore-632002; Assistant Executive Engineer, Agricultural Engineering, Anaicut Road, Walajapet; Assistant Executive Engineer, Pudupet Road, Tirupattur.

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### **76,000 ha in State under certified organic farming**

Special Correspondent

*Trade fair showcasing organic products begins in Bangalore*

The area under certified organic farming in Karnataka has increased to 76,000 hectares, according to Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda.

At the inaugural ceremony of BioFach India 2011 – a three-day international organic trade fair organised by the Karnataka Agriculture Department in association with the International

Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture (ICCOA) and Nurnberg Messe of Germany in Bangalore, Mr. Sadananda Gowda said this was a significant increase as the State had a few thousand hectares of certified organic farming in 2004-05.

He attributed the increase to the right kind of support from the Government, including setting up of organic farming mission in 2008, to create awareness among farmers about the need to switch over to organic farming.

An annual budget of Rs. 200 crore had been allocated to the mission, he pointed out.

Mr. Sadananda Gowda called upon international companies to take part in the Global Agri Investors' Meet to be organised by the State Government from December 1 to 2.

Agriculture Minister Umesh Katti, Horticulture Minister S.A. Ravindranath, D.B. Chandre Gowda, MP, and representatives from ICCOA and Nurnberg Messe of Germany addressed the gathering.

At the trade fair, 170 stalls are showcasing organic products. Nine companies from Germany, Switzerland, Netherland and Italy are participating. And, people of 12 States from the country are also taking part. In addition, Tea Board, Coffee Board and Spice Board are participating.

The event includes seminars and workshops besides a buyer-seller meet.

Another attraction at the fair is the organic food court where visitors can taste various organic food products.

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### **'Traders' lobby behind crash in cocoon prices'**

Special Correspondent

The State Government has blamed north India's traders lobby for the crash in the prices of cocoon in the local markets and decided to provide a distress relief of Rs. 30 for every kg of cocoon sold for a price less than Rs. 160 during the auction.

Sericulture Minister B.N. Bache Gowda told presspersons here on Thursday that the Union Government was apathetic to the demands of the silk growers of the State. The silk traders' lobby in the north India had forced the Centre to reduce import duty on silk from 31 per cent to 5 per cent in the last year's budget.

Traders were only consumers of raw silk and the Centre succumbed to their pressure, he said.

In a letter to him, Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee too defended the north India traders' demand to reduce import duty on silk, Mr. Gowda said. The Government had released Rs. 5 crore to provide distress relief and it would arrest fall in the prices of cocoons in the Channapatna-Ramanagaram region. The distress relief would burden the exchequer Rs. 120 crore, he said.

### **Protest**

Sericulture farmers staged a protest on Bangalore-Mysore road last Sunday and blocked the movement of vehicles for several hours.

The cocoon prices had dipped from Rs. 150 to Rs. 170 per kg to Rs 30 to Rs. 40 a kg last Sunday. Cocoon prices which were Rs. 350 a kg last year nosedived to Rs. 120 a kg on Thursday, the Minister said.

The country's raw silk requirement is estimated to be around 28,000 tonnes while the production is 18,000 tonnes. The balance is made good by imports from China. Karnataka accounts for almost half the country's silk production.

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### **Cane farmers threaten to step up agitation as talks fail**

Staff Correspondent

*Another round of discussions to be held today on price for sugarcane*

The deadlock between the State Government and sugarcane farmers continued on Thursday with the second round of talks on prices between the two parties failing.

Setting Friday as the deadline, farmers' organisations threatened to intensify the agitation if the Government does not accept their demands.

Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana, under the leadership of MP Raju Shetty, had launched an agitation demanding Rs. 2,350 a tonne of sugarcane.

Mr. Shetty is on hunger strike in Baramati, the hometown of Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar's hometown, for the third day.

On Thursday, two other farmers' organisations, Shetkari Sanghatna led by Raghunath Patil and Shetkari Sanghatana led by Sharad Joshi joined the agitation. All three organisations held talks with the state government on Wednesday night and Thursday afternoon in Sakhar Sankul in Pune.

The talks would resume on Friday afternoon after consultation with Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, State Cooperatives Minister Harshawardhan Patil who was heading the talks on behalf of the government said.

### **'Constructive'**

"We had a constructive discussion but no final decision was reached. Even though I have been appointed to hold the talks, I will have to consult the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister before taking any decision to ensure that whatever is promised here will be implemented properly later. I appeal to the farmers to be patient," Mr. Patil said.

The farmers' organisations were unsatisfied with the State Government. "There is no unity within the Government. Today, it looked like they were ready to come to a conclusion but Mr. Patil backed off. Tomorrow's meeting will be the last," Sadabhau Khot of the Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana said.

Mr. Raghunath Patil said: "It is obvious that the Government is trying to protect the sugar factories that are owned by Ministers. The Government has cheated us again. We will launch a Statewide rasta roko from tomorrow. If there are any violent incidents then the Government will be held responsible."

### **Demands**

Mr. Khot said the officials had stated that there was a possibility of accepting the demands. "The officials told us that they could give between Rs. 2,100 to Rs. 2,400 depending on the rate of recovery of sugar from the cane. They could have accepted the demands today. It shows that the government is not at all serious about considering our demands," Mr. Khot said. He said the Government had agreed to waive off the purchase tax on sugarcane, which amounts to Rs. 1,055 a tonne. Meanwhile, Baramati witnessed a bandh on Thursday.

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- *Farmers have been demanding Rs. 2,350 per tonne of sugarcane*
  - *There is no unity within the government, say farmer leaders*
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## Decision on water release for rabi left to government

Staff Reporter

*No consensus at Irrigation Advisory Committee meet on the issue*



**MAKING A POINT:** MLA Pilli Subhash Chandrabose arguing with Ministers and officials at the Irrigation Advisory Committee meeting in Kakinada on Thursday.

Even as paddy farmers from many parts of the district are getting ready for the rabi crop, the district Irrigation Advisory Committee that met here on Thursday failed to take a decision on water releasing into the delta for the second consecutive time. As the committee, consisting of elected representatives, officials, and chairmen of water users' associations, failed to come to a consensus on water release for the rabi season, it was decided to leave the decision to the State government. However, the committee's stand evoked sharp criticism from elected representatives and farmer leaders, as it could delay the paddy transplantation further.

Ministers P. Viswaroop and Tota Narasimham convened the meeting in which the issue of providing irrigation to the entire ayacut came for a lengthy discussion, as the State government had already announced that irrigation could be provided to only 50 per cent of the ayacut, as the water levels in the Godavari were extremely low. MLAs Pilli Subhash Chandrabose and Kurasala Kanna Babu argued that it was not a tedious task to allocate water to the entire district, as the officials were not taking into account the extent of agriculture land being diverted for non-agricultural purpose. They also argued that though the farmers from the district had set a record of cultivating 11,000 acres with one TMC water, it was calculated only 8,700 acres with the same quantum of water.

However, the officials said that only 22 TMC of water was available in the Godavari and another 36 TMC of water would be released from Siler.

After deducting evaporation losses and drinking water, it was estimated that 53 TMC of water would be available for the rabi crop with which irrigation could be provided to 1.42 lakh acres of the total 2.64 lakh acre eastern delta.

They also said that closure of one of the canals could pave way for the commencement of the delta modernisation works.

### **Proposal opposed**

It was proposed to close completely either the Kakinada canal or Mandapeta canal, which was vehemently opposed by elected representatives concerned. Mr. Kanna Babu argued that closure of Kakinada canal would deprive the farmers from Karapa of irrigation, where the lands were saline and the area was in a permanent zone. Mandapeta MLA Vegulla Jogeswara Rao faulted the officials for not taking the decision at least a month in advance and announcing it. He said that most of the farmers from Mandapeta area had already started transplantation and it was not possible to stop water supply to them.

Following a series of heated arguments, it was decided to leave the issue to the State government.

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- *Committee's stand evokes criticism from elected representatives*
  - *Meeting witnesses heated arguments*
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### **A farmers' fair focused on the future**

Mohammed Iqbal

Innovative agro-technology and new equipment for gainful farming were showcased at a unique farmers' fair organised at Grameen Haat in Bharatpur this past weekend with agricultural scientists and experts calling upon the farmers to take up organic farming and diversify their crop patterns.

The three-day Eastern Rajasthan Agricultural Science Fair and Agricultural Industries Exhibition-2011 was organised in the divisional town with the support of various agencies working in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry and rural livelihood as well as different departments and research institutions of the Rajasthan Government.

The theme “Farm technologies for enhanced productivity and income” provided the background for demonstration of new technologies and display of value-added products which would help the farmers get a better crop yield.

New aspects of irrigation and water management were also highlighted during the event.

Inaugurating the fair, Bharatpur Divisional Commissioner Rajeshwar Singh said farmers must take up agriculture-based activities in addition to farming to enhance their income. He suggested that the research institutions train agriculturists in packaging of their products to meet the market demands.

In addition to the farmers from Bharatpur and neighbouring districts, inquisitive cultivators from Agra and Mathura districts of Uttar Pradesh also flocked to the fair in large numbers. The exhibition highlighted new technologies of drip irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, food processing, post-harvest management, soil quality, agricultural marketing and rural retailing.

Other attractions at the fair were display and sale of bio-fertilizers, cattle and poultry feed, pesticides, high-yielding varieties of vegetables, pulses, grains and spices, arrangements for on-the-spot soil and water sample testing and demonstrations on vermi-compost and bee-keeping.

While O. P. Rajput of Balwant Singh Agricultural College, Agra, threw light on the traditional methods of farming, horticulture expert Phool Singh said the excessive use of fertilizers affects the productivity of land and degrades the quality of produce.

Lupin Human Welfare and Research Foundation executive director Sita Ram Gupta said agricultural input costs should be drastically reduced and farmers trained in optimum use of irrigation waters. “Realistic and useful interventions” could help enhance the share of agriculture in the national economy, he added.

Farmers visiting the fair evinced a keen interest in the new products displayed at the stalls put up by agricultural equipment manufacturers from across the country. The technical sessions were devoted to subjects such as inputs for higher production of rabi crops, public-private partnership in agriculture sector, resource conservation, crop protection and crop diversification.

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## **There seems to be no end to these farmers' troubles**

N. Dinesh Nayak

*After the setback last season, they are hoping for rain to take up rabi sowing*

“The kharif crop was completely lost and there are no signs of rain now to take up rabi sowing. Forget repaying the loan, it is difficult to pay even the interest,” said Krishnappa Badrur, a farmer here.

Mr. Badrur who was badly hit by the drought during the kharif season, has taken a loan of Rs. 1 lakh expecting good rain this time.

He has ploughed his land, but cannot take up sowing due to lack of moisture in the soil.

Mr. Badrur is one of many farmers who are worried about the possibility of another drought.

The condition is worsening in nearly 30 villages of Hubli and Kundagol taluks which have not yet received rain.

In Kundagol, of the targeted 42,500 hectares, sowing has been completed in 23,430 hectares.

In Hubli, of the targeted area of 36,000 ha, sowing has taken place in 18,080 ha.

The rabi sowing season concludes by November 15.

The non-commencement of drought relief works by the Government has only added to the farmers' woes.

Even though one month has passed since the Government announced the drought-relief package, it is yet to be implemented.

All these factors have resulted in several other problems.

### **Migration**

The most worrisome development is mass migration in search of employment.

About 200 people have already migrated, according to farmers in Yerinarayanpur and Yaraguppi villages in Kundagol taluk.

Moreover, because of the acute shortage of fodder there is a possibility of farmers in some areas indulging in sale of cattle.

“ Farmers are somehow managing their cattle now. But if they are compelled to sell their cattle, it will lead to other social problems,” said Nagappa Mensinakai, member of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC), Kundagol.

“Drought-relief work is confined to statements in the media. Even crop loans have not been paid and works under MGNREGA too have not started. It will give relief to farmers if crop insurance is paid and the start of relief work will help in checking migration,” he said.

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- *A month has passed, but the Government is yet to implement the drought-relief package*
  - *About 200 people have already migrated, say farmers in Yerinarayanpur and Yaraguppi villages*
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buzz

*By Athul Lal A G*

*11 Nov 2011 03:03:07 AM IST*

### **Wayanad farmers' seeds of destruction**

KALPETTA: Until a few months ago, ginger was a perfect prescription for prosperity for the agri-folk in Wayanad. The other crops had failed to deliver and the recurring losses had bogged them down. The future lay in ginger and ginger alone, so they believed...

However, the farmers were ill-prepared for a nightmare. Ginger prices plummeted steeply. The crop, which they thought would fetch them gold, eventually cost some of them their lives.

Huge profit from a single crop was what prompted farmers to undertake ginger farming.

Thousands, mainly from Bathery, Kalpetta and Mananthavadi, have invested Rs 50,000 to several lakhs in ginger cultivation this year in Karnataka and in some parts of Goa taking money from private financiers at high interest rates.

While some are doing the business on their own, others are engaged in partnerships and they

are suffering the most.

Ilavukunnu Ashokan of Pulpally, one among the three farmers who committed suicide, had done ginger farming in Kudaku on a partnership basis. Apart from the decline in prices, a major portion of his crop got damaged due to a disease. P S Varghese, the other deceased farmer from Thrikkaipatta near Kalpetta, had cultivated an acre in Chikmagalore with ginger but had to abandon it following fall in prices.

C P Sasidharan, the third farmer, who had leased 1.7 acres in Mothakkara more than 30 km from Kalpetta, shared the same tale. Farmers had bought ginger seeds at a cost ranging from Rs 2,000 per sack (60 kg) to Rs 2,500. "For farming in an acre of land, it requires around 30 sacks of seed. The majority of them took land for lease in Karnataka for an amount of Rs 35,000 per acre (lease amount ranges between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 in Wayanad).

Almost the same amount has to be paid additionally if the land had a borewell. Altogether, a farmer invested an amount between Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 3 lakh along with the labour charges for doing cultivation in an acre in parts of Karnataka this season," says Dileep Raj of Bathery, who has been doing ginger cultivation in Karnataka for the past five years.

This year he did farming on an acre of land at Hasan. Usually, one acre will have a yield of more than 375 sacks of ginger and farmers expect the same price for each sack at which they had bought the seeds, that is between Rs 2,000 and Rs 2,500 per sack. Now, one sack of ginger costs Rs 500 in Karnataka and Rs 400 in Wayanad which means they will only get less than Rs 1.4 lakh. Of this, one third will go as labour cost for harvesting. The wages for a labourer is Rs 400 a day in which he will make three sacks of ginger ready for supply.

In short, the farmer's return from the venture will be less than Rs 75,000, which is only one-fourth of their investment.

"Largescale farmers can overcome this situation as they usually have income from other crops but those like Ashokan who invested everything in it have no option to recover from the crisis. They are dejected, doomed and disappointed as their expectations were very high. They ventured into ginger farming, borrowing money and taking gold loans. Now, they have not enough money to do further farming and should have to repay the debts. They are, in fact, between the devil and the deep sea," says dairy farmer Benny of Thrikkaipetta near Kalpetta, who has been doing ginger farming in Karnataka as a side business for some years now.

*By Express News Service*

*11 Nov 2011 03:11:38 AM IST*

## **Babu asks farmers to revolt against government**

NALGONDAa: The lull in the Telangana movement has led to a surge of support for Telugu Desam chief and leader of the opposition N Chandrababu Naidu in Nalgonda district on Thursday.

A large number of women tried to interact with Naidu during his padayatra in the Suryapet Assembly constituency. Even youths, farmers and members of weaker sections waited in hordes on the roadside for the arrival of Naidu who was three hours behind the schedule at most places.

Naidu covered 18 km by walk on the day during his Rytu Poru Bata and inspected the driedup cotton, paddy and red gram crops at Chinnayapalem, Bejunaik Tanda, Pillalamarri and other villages which are mostly dominated by STs and SCs.

Naidu observed that farmers were up in arms against the state government which totally neglected the farming sector. "Do not resort to suicides. I am here to support you. Leave your farms and come into streets to fight against the government," the former chief minister called upon the farmers in distress. Even though large parts of the state were reeling under drought, there was no minimum response from chief minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy, Naidu alleged and said, "I will convene a meeting before the Parliament session and draw the attention of the nation to the farmers' woes in the state." He said farmers' agenda should become the agenda of any government and assured ninehour free power supply to farmers if the TDP was voted to power.

Demanding a compensation of `20,000 per acre for driedup cotton and `10,000 for paddy, Naidu reiterated his demand for implementation of the MS Swaminathan Committee's recommendations and for making agriculture viable and cultivation profitable.

He said the oneruppee rice scheme would be useless as long as the prices of other essential commodities like tamarind and red gram continued to soar.

## Seeking ways to lease unused land for farming

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KOCHI: Finance Minister K M Mani said the government was examining the feasibility of leasing out unused land on the outskirts of cities for agricultural purposes.

“The project will be implemented via the respective Krishi Bhavans after identifying unused land in panchayats located on the outskirts of the city,” Mani said. At the inaugural function of the Kerala Chamber Entrepreneur Awareness Cell (KCEAC), launched under the auspices of the Kerala Chamber of Commerce and Industry Youth Forum, in Kochi on Thursday, Mani said the government had earmarked Rs 1,000 crore through the Kerala Financial Corporation for entrepreneur training. “Under the Scheme, 50,000 youths from various panchayats will be trained and this will enable them to set up their own business ventures,” he said.

“The government will provide interest-free loans up to Rs 20 lakh to individuals and societies for setting up small and medium enterprises. It is expected that the scheme will make 1 lakh youths in the state employed,” he said. The entrepreneur awareness cell will assist aspiring entrepreneurs and businessmen by providing them with guidelines. For details log on [www.keralachamber.in/kceac.php](http://www.keralachamber.in/kceac.php)

Federal Bank MD and CEO Shyam Srinivasan delivered the key note address. KCCI chairman Deepak L Aswani, Hibi Eden MLA, Federal Bank director Abraham Chacko, Kerala Chamber Ladies Forum convenor Jasmin Karim and Kerala Chamber Youth Forum joint convenor K K Shafique Ahamed spoke.



## Sugar mills to take UP government to court

Virendra Singh Rawat & Dilip Kumar Jha / Lucknow/mumbai November 11, 2011, 0:45 IST

Peeved at the state's insistence that there should not be any delay over the commencement of crushing of cane this season, private sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh are set to drag the government into a legal issue. The UP Sugar Mills Association (UPSMA) is filing a case in the Allahabad High Court tomorrow against "coercion" from the Mayawati regime.

Basically, the mills will be seeking interim relief from the court over cane prices as provided in 2007-08, when the government had exorbitantly raised the state advised price (SAP) for the crop to Rs 125 a quintal. That time, the court ordered interim relief for the mills by announcing SAP of Rs 110 a quintal. UP has 103 of its 125-odd sugar mills in the private sector.

For now, these mills want to avoid pressure from the state machinery regarding the commencement of crushing. Reason: the procurement quantity of cane from farmers is unviable, given the current SAP, according to a senior UPSMA official.

### MILLERS UP IN ARMS

- More than 100 private sugar mills may file suit against the Uttar Pradesh government by Friday
- Seek interim relief from coercion from state machinery to start crushing even as they have been opposing high cane prices
- UP Sugar Mills Association has written to CM Mayawati
- At the current SAP, cost of production will go up by

over 15%

- Mills fear the current cane SAP may erode working capital, if retail price does not rise in sync

The association had, in a letter to chief minister Mayawati yesterday, asked the government to “stop coercing” the mill owners. The millers claim the local administration was pressurising them to sign Form ‘C’ (an agreement between a sugar factory and the cane society) and start marking SAP on indents (issued at the time of cane procurement). “In case the factories have to sign the ‘C’ Forms and mark SAP on the parchies under pressure, it will be without prejudice to the rights and contentions of the factories before the court,” the letter reads.

On her part, the chief minister, while announcing the SAP for the current year, has asked the mill owners to start crushing immediately so that farmers could vacate the field for wheat sowing. This year too, the government raised the SAP by nearly 20 per cent, resulting in a huge financial burden on the ailing sugar mills.

The SAP was increased by Rs 35 to Rs 240 a quintal for normal variety, which accounts for over 60 per cent of the total cane production. Each of the early and rejected varieties of cane account for roughly one-fifth of the production. The rejected variety would now sell for Rs 235 a quintal -- a rise of Rs 35 from the previous year. The early variety will cost Rs 240 a quintal this year; it's a rise of Rs 40 from the previous year.

Ideally, the mills commence crushing only after the government announces the SAP of sugarcane. Since, the announcement this time came only two days ago, the mills would now gradually start crushing for the current season.

In western Uttar Pradesh, some 15 mills have already started crushing for the current season. After an interval of 7 to 10 days, the crushing activity starts in central and eastern Uttar Pradesh. This would, even otherwise, start in the third week of this month, according to Abinash Verma, secretary general of the Indian Sugar Mills Association.

Since the crop has not matured in central and eastern Uttar Pradesh, the cane would not lose quality. “In any case, there is no crushing within the stipulated 10 days’ time,” he added.

With the SAP hike, the government now expects a total sugarcane payments of Rs 15,000 crore to farmers during 2011-12 crushing season vis-à-vis Rs 13,000 crore last year. The millers estimate a 17-18 per cent rise in average cost of production to Rs 33-34 a kg, from Rs 27-28 a kg, affecting their profitability.

An industry official said working capital of the sugar mills would erode in two months, if they were forced to crush cane at the current SAP. "Also, the farmers' arrears would start piling up to reach new record this year," he added.

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### **Cotton farmers fear crop crisis**

**D Gopi / Chennai/ Guntur November 11, 2011, 0:41 IST**

Cotton farmers in the state are worried about a major crisis due to crop failure in the current season. While lack of rains and power failure had brought down the yield, the increase in input cost made them to invest more. The fall in the yield is likely to hit them hard in addition to the low minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 3,300 a quintal.

Though the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has opened purchase centres, it is yet to procure a single quintal. On the other hand, farmers are selling the yield to private traders at Rs 3,700 a quintal while it was Rs 9,100 in the last season that made several farmers shift to cotton in the current season. However, the bad weather had brought down the yield while the absence of export orders keep the prices at low.

In Guntur district, farmers have cultivated the crop in over 1.64 hectares, mostly in the Palnadu region. However, the weather had watered down their expectations with the yield coming down by 3 to 4 quintals a hectare. Similarly, in Krishna district farmers have cultivated in over 56,000 ha in the upland areas, while those in Prakasam district have cultivated the crop in over 52,000 ha.

In addition to the drought conditions, farmers were badly hit by the Telangana strike, which had reflected in power cuts. They had to engage diesel engines to supply water to the crop, an addition expenditure on them.

"The investment in the crop had increased in this season due to weather and power failures,

besides the input cost. The prices in the market too are discouraging,” said a cotton grower from Macherla in Guntur district.

Andhra Pradesh Cotton Association president, G Punnaiah Chowdary, said they had expected over 6 million bales (each bale is 175 kg) for the current season, while it is now estimated to be around 4.5 million to 5 million bales.

The Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham, a farmers’ wing of the Communist Party of India, had asked the government to make the CCI to purchase cotton from the farmers at Rs 6,000 a quintal as against the MSP of Rs 3,300. It had also asked the government to pay Rs 15,000 compensation to each farmers per acre.

Meanwhile, Union Minister of State for Textiles, Panabaka Lakshmi, said the CCI would open over 275 purchase centres across the country, of which 75 would come up in Andhra Pradesh. She said farmers were getting Rs 3,800 a quintal from private buyers and the CCI’s intervention was not needed now. Even the CCI is also not in a hurry to enter the market and offer higher prices. The CCI is waiting for farmers to bring their product at Rs 3,300 a quintal, while the farmers are running around private buyers to pay at least Rs 3,700 a quintal. No farmer is willing to go to the CCI purchase centre to lose Rs 400 a quintal at this stage.

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## THE HINDU Business Line

### **Govt may allow more duty-free import of skimmed milk powder, fat**

Harish Damodaran & Shishir Sinha

*Don't raise Tariff Rate Quota for milk powder imports, say domestic dairies*

New Delhi, Nov.10:

The Government is considering allowing further duty free import of skimmed milk powder (SMP) and fat (butter oil) under the tariff rate quota (TRQ) regime.

This is even as when the domestic dairies are seeking preference over imports in supply of SMP.

### **Milk availability**

On Friday, the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying is convening a meeting with representatives of private dairies, including Parag Milk Foods, Dynamix Dairy Industries, Sterling Agro Industries, VRS Foods and Bhole Baba Dairy Industries, and Mother Dairy to gauge the overall milk availability and SMF/fat stock position ahead of the winter season, which is the peak period for procurement. Last week, the Department held a similar exercise with the cooperative dairies.

“We are waiting for the Department's assessment. Depending on what it has to say, we will decide whether or not to further augment the existing TRQs,” a senior Government official told *Business Line*.

Currently, the Government allows duty-free imports of up to 50,000 tonnes of powder (both skimmed as well as whole) and 15,000 tonnes of fat (butter oil, white butter and anhydrous milk fat) under the TRQ.

Imports beyond these attract higher customs duty of 60 per cent (on powder) and 30 per cent (on fat).

Meanwhile, domestic dairies are seeking preference over imports in supply of skimmed milk powder (SMP) to the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)-owned Mother Dairy.

“The Government should give preference to SMP produced from our own milk rather than that coming out of New Zealand or European farms,” said the Managing Director of a Delhi-based private dairy company.

### **COSTS**

According to him, buffalo milk containing 6.5 per cent fat and 8.5 per cent solids-not-fat is today landing in northern dairies at around Rs 30 a litre.

At this price, 100 litres or 103 kg of milk, from which it would be possible to produce 6.7 kg of fat (ghee) and 8.75 kg of SMP, would cost Rs 3,000.

If to this, one adds a manufacturing cost (inclusive of labour, energy and packing charges) of Rs 14/kg for ghee and Rs 20/kg for SMP, the total cost of procuring and processing 100 litres of milk would now be close to Rs 3,270.

“This is a bare manufacturing cost exclusive of salary, administration and marketing overheads or financing and depreciation charges,” the company official pointed out.

## **Revenue**

On the revenue side, dairies are currently realising roughly Rs 250 a kg on sale of ghee, which, on 6.7 kg, translates into Rs 1,674.

Therefore, even to cover basic milk procurement and processing costs, the realisations from SMP would have to be Rs 1,596. On 8.75 kg, this would work out to Rs 182 a kg. “This is the minimum price I need to be in a position to pay Rs 30 a litre for buffalo milk.

The alternative is to pay less and depress prices for farmers. It is for the Government to take a call on whether it wants us to do that,” the official added.

“Today, imported SMP from New Zealand is quoting at \$3,150 a tonne, which, after adding freight and port handling charges, will cost not more than Rs 165 a kg.

That makes it cheaper for Mother Dairy to sell milk in Delhi or Chennai using imported material rather than sourcing SMP based on milk from Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

We hope the Government will not make India a dumping ground for dairy imports the way it has happened in edible oils,” the official said.

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***Domestic dairies are seeking preference over imports in supply of skimmed milk powder to the NDDB-owned Mother Dairy***

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## High prices



Vanishing crop land: The season's grapes have descended at Hyderabad's Gaddiannaram fruit market at Kothapet from tropical regions of Nashik, Sangli, Solapur, Satara and Osmanabad in Maharashtra. Traders are charging high prices in the nearby districts of Ranga Reddy and Mahbubnagar as there is hardly any produce this season due to lands being sold away for real estate. The Anab-e-Shahi variety is selling between Rs 70-90 a kg. — P.V. Sivakumar

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## Fisheries institute detects deep sea squids in Arabian Sea

V. Sajeev Kumar

Kochi, Nov. 10:

Detection of abundant deep sea squids in the central Arabian Sea by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi, has opened up new opportunities to export these high value seafood delicacies on a larger scale.

Using funds from the World Bank aided National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP), Dr K. Sunil Mohamed of CMFRI and his team have been able to map the abundance of this largely unexploited deep sea squid which inhabits depths ranging between 1000 and 4000 meters in the central Arabian Sea. According to Dr Mohamed, the concentration of this species is on an average five tonnes a square km, and in some areas during the post-monsoon season, as much

as 90 tonnes a square km. Because of its abundance and dominance in a major part of the Arabian Sea, these squids are called the 'Master of the Arabian Sea'.

Through repeated trials in the Arabian Sea for over a year, Dr Mohamed and his team have standardised specialised techniques for its capture called squid jigging. Using micro-processor controlled automatic squid jigging machines and powerful metal halide lamps, these squids are first attracted to the surface during night and then the colourful and barbless jigs are lowered and raised serially in a jigging motion to capture squids. Other fishing methods such as gillnetting and purse seining have also been successful for capture of these squids.

Consortium partners of CMFRI in the project, the National Institute of Fisheries Post Harvest Technology and Training (NIFPHATT), Kochi have developed ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook products from these squids which have passed through domestic trials successfully.

Considering the high demand and prices for oceanic squids in the international market, there is great scope for exploiting this resource on a massive scale, Dr Mohamed said.

In recent times, Indian seafood exports have been witnessing steady growth in value terms, though in volume terms the growth has been tardy. Added to this, almost 75 per cent of the seafood processing plants in the country have idle capacity during the lean season. It is in this context the news about the abundance of this untapped marine resource, the oceanic flying squids ( *Sthenoteuthis oualaniensis*), in the Arabian Sea assumes added importance.

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### **Malaysian cues firm up edible oils**

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Nov. 10:

A sudden spurt in crude palm oil (CPO) futures on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives (BMD) firmed up edible oils on Thursday. Supportive palm oil production, exports and stocks data buoyed the futures market in Malaysia.

Local refiners raised the price of palmolein by Rs 8-9 for 10 kg. The Bombay Commodity Exchange and futures markets were closed due to Guru Nanak Jayanti.



Market sources said groundnut oil, rapeseed oil, soya oil, sunflower oil and cotton oil were mostly unchanged while palmolein rose by Rs 7-8 in the resale market. Volume was negligible on lack of demand. Resellers sold palmolein at Rs 543-544.

Liberty offered palmolein at Rs 547-548 for November delivery, super palmolein at Rs 568 and soya refined oil at Rs 612. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 545 for November delivery, soya refined oil at Rs 608 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 675 for delivery between November 20 and 30. Allana offered palmolein at Rs 538 for delivery between November 20 and 30.

In Saurashtra and Rajkot, groundnut oil declined by Rs 5 to Rs 1,275 for a *telia* tin and to Rs 825 for loose (10 kg). Cotton (wash) oil was at Rs 580-582 (Rs 600). **Malaysia's BMD CPO's** December contracts closed at MYR3,136 (MYR3,044) and January at MYR3,119 (MYR3,034) a tonne. Soya oil November contracts closed at Rs 620.50 and December at Rs 618.70 on National Board of Trade in Indore.

**Rates of edible oils in Mumbai market (Rs/10 kg):** groundnut oil — 840, soya refined oil — 605, sunflower exp. ref. — 620, sunflower ref. — 675, rapeseed ref. oil — 700, rapeseed expeller ref. — 670, cotton ref. oil — 605, and palmolein — 544.

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### **Turmeric falls below Rs 5,000 a quintal**

Our Correspondent

Erode, Nov. 10:

With prices dropping by Rs 200-350 a quintal, spot turmeric fell below Rs 5,000 a quintal on Thursday on lack of new orders from North India.

“Most traders were disappointed as no new order was received from North Indian merchants, so they quoted lower prices at the spot market in Erode. The traders purchased 40-45 per cent of the turmeric arrivals to fulfil their pending orders. Some traders purchased few bags to stock them to compensate their previous loss. To balance the price, they purchased the same, selling it to local spices and other firms,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankarm, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

The new futures contract starts from Friday. If the increased price is quoted in the new contract, the local price might go up slightly.

But arrivals should be less than 10,000 bags. Traders expect that on Friday arrivals will be high and the price will fall further by Rs 200 a quintal.

On Thursday, the yellow spice decreased by Rs 358 a quintal in the Regulated Marketing Committee and Rs 200 a quintal in the remaining three markets. The price of the hybrid root variety also decreased sharply below Rs 5,000 a quintal, but sales were encouraging.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, farmers retained 520 bags from the 1,404 bags that arrived. Sales were poor in the other three markets as well.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety turmeric was sold at Rs 3,309-4,884 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 3,150-4,391 a quintal.

**Salem Crop:** The finger variety was sold at Rs 4,981-5,418 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 4,611-4,888 a quintal. Out of the 3,525 bags that arrived, only 734 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 3,769-5,009 a quintal and the root variety Rs 3,569-4,620 a quintal. All the 253 bags which arrived were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,809-4,959 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 3,769-4,569 a quintal.

Out of the 1,402 bags that arrived, 1,257 bags were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety fetched Rs 4,110-4,699 a quintal and the root variety Rs 4,079-4,633 a quintal.

Out of the 1,404 bags that arrived, 884 bags were sold.

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### **Low supply pushes up desi wheat**

Our Correspondent

Karnal, Nov. 10:

The wheat market witnessed a mixed trend on Thursday. Desi wheat varieties rose on low availability, while dara managed to maintain its previous levels.

Mr Sewa Ram, a wheat trader, told *Business Line* that following steady demand, dara prices were range-bound. Wheat arrivals have also been low since the beginning of this month, and traders expect that market may witness a price rise in the near future, he added. Wheat prices have remained almost unchanged since last weekend.

In the physical market, dara prices continued to stay around previous levels at Rs 1,150-1,165 a quintal. Around 55 tonnes of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and the stocks were directly offloaded at the mills. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,150-1,155 a quintal while delivery at *chakki* was at Rs 1,160-1,165 a quintal.

On the other hand, low availability pushed desi wheat prices upwards. Samrat increased by Rs 50 at Rs 1,920, Lal Quila went up by Rs 20 at Rs 1,840 and Lok-1 was at Rs 1,850 a quintal.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for November delivery increased by Rs 8.60 to Rs 1,145 a quintal. On the MCX, wheat for December delivery was Rs 1,149.80 a quintal.

Despite a steady trend in wheat, flour prices decreased by Rs 5 at Rs 1,160 for a 90-kg bag. Among brands, Lal Quila sold at Rs 155 and Ashirwad at Rs 210 for a 10-kg bag each.

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### **Weak trend in spot rubber**

Our Correspondent

Kottayam, Nov. 10:

Spot rubber nosedived on Thursday. The market opened weak and fell further following an almost panic selling from dealers.

According to reports, Asian physical rubber prices dropped weighed by heavy losses in TOCOM futures which lost nearly 5 per cent on concerns over the global economic outlook and subsiding demand.

Meanwhile, the National Multi Commodity Exchange remained closed owing to Gurunanak Jayanti.

Sheet rubber surrendered to Rs 185 (195) a kg according to traders.

The grade declined to Rs 186 (196) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi as per Rubber Board.

RSS 3 (spot) closed weak at Rs 165.87 (174.70) a kg at Bangkok.

The November futures for the grade declined sharply to ₹244 (Rs 157.05) from ₹264 a kg during the day session but then recovered partially to ₹248.1 (Rs 159.69) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 185 (195); RSS-5: 181 (193); ungraded: 172 (183); ISNR 20: 171 (177) and latex 60 per cent: 108 (118).

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