THE HINDU

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Project to enhance agriculture resilience to climate launched

Special Correspondent

To handle problems of alternating natural cycles such as rain, drought

mechanism unveiled: Collector T. Munusamy and P.Murugesa Boopathy, Vice Chancellor, TNAU, during the launch of the NICRA, a project of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, at Anaimangalam in Nagapattinam district on Thursday.

The National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA), a project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, to enhance resilience of Indian agriculture to climate change and vulnerability through strategic research and technology demonstration was launched at Anaimangalam village in Keezh Velur block in Nagapattinam district on Thursday.

The project implemented in association with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University was launched by T.Munusamy, Collector, in the presence of P.Murugesa Boopathy, Vice Chancellor, TNAU. The project would be executed by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Sikkal, and monitored by the Central Research Institute of Dryland Agriculture.

Fourth district in state

Nagapattinam, which is prone to be affected by natural vagaries and floods, is one of the four districts in the State where the project would be implemented.

The objective of the project is to enhance the resilience of agriculture covering crops, livestock and fisheries to climatic variability and climate change through development and application of improved production and risk management technologies; to demonstrate site specific technology packages on farmers' fields for adapting to current climate risks and to enhance the capacity of scientists and other stakeholders in climate resilient agricultural research and application.

The project consists of four components – strategic research, technology demonstration, capacity building and sponsored/ competitive grants.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr.Boopathy appealed to the farmers to adopt scientific farm practices and modern technology to improve productivity and to overcome natural vagaries.

Mr.Munusamy called upon small and marginal farmers to utilise the project well to handle the problems posed by alternating natural cycles such as heavy rains and drought.

A farmers group has been promoted at the village and they would be encouraged to adopt scientific farm practices based on weather inputs. A technology demonstration unit has also been set up at the village.

Nagai Mali, MLA, P.Kalaiselvan, Director, Distance Education, TNAU, Srinath Dikshit of Central Institute of Dryland Agriculture, T.V.Srinivasa Reddy of ICAR, R.Rajendran, head, KVK, Sikkal, and others spoke.

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Fertilizer shortage looms large

C. Jaishankar

Four traders suspended for selling fertilizers above the stipulated price

Harvest Dreams: A farmer working in a paddy field near Ramanathapuram on Thursday. – Photo: L. Balachandar

Just when cultivation of paddy gains momentum in the district, widespread complaints are being heard regarding shortage of fertilizers.

Though the seasonal rainfall has so far been good, it is the scarcity of fertilizers, particularly in cooperative societies, that is causing concern among farmers.

As against the target of 1.35 lakh hectares of raising paddy this year, according to the Agriculture Department officials, more than a lakh hectare has been brought under paddy cultivation so far. Even farmers, who rely on system tanks for irrigation have started farming process hoping that the storage level in the tanks would only improve in the days to come.

However, many claim that though stock is available with private traders, the cooperative societies in some places are reporting shortage of stock.

M. Muthuramu, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, told *The Hindu* that the cooperative societies have been denying fertilizers for non loanee farmers.

They said that the sale of fertilizers was mainly limited to farmers, who obtained loan from the societies. These farmers were invariably forced to go to private traders. Seeing the demand, the private traders were selling fertilizers at Rs. 100 more than the stipulated price, it was said.

He added that steps must be taken for equitable distribution of fertilizers through cooperative societies and private traders.

However, Joint Director of Agriculture, Rajendiran, when contacted, told *The Hindu* that enough stock was being maintained in different blocks based on requirements. As on Thursday, 753 metric tonnes of urea, 1061 MT of DAP, 191 MT of potash and 480 MT of complex had been stocked in both cooperative societies and with private traders.

During the current month so far 1463 MT of fertilizer was sold and steps have been taken to ensure uninterrupted supply of fertilizers. There were also reports that the transportation of fertilizers from Tuticorin harbour was delayed due to loading problem. R. Ramasamy Pandian, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Quality Control said that the licenses of four traders were suspended for selling fertilizers above the stipulated price and 25 traders were given warning notice for the same.Surprise raids would be taken to monitor the sale of fertilizers, he added.

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Steep increase in bus fares, power tariff, milk prices

T. Ramakrishnan

State expects to raise additional revenue of Rs. 10,000 crore annually

SUDDEN IMPACT

- Bus fare and milk price hike increase from Friday
- Power tariff revision petition filed on Thursday
- Electricity Regulatory Commission to decide within 120 days

Aimed at mopping up additional annual revenue of over Rs. 10,000 crore, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Thursday announced her government's nod for the hike in bus fares, power tariff and milk prices. She made the announcement after chairing an hour-long meeting of the Cabinet at Fort St. George.

In her address televised on a private channel, a transcript of which was later released to other media, she dwelt at length on the present financial health of the organisations concerned - Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO), a successor entity of the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB); State Transport Corporations and the Tamil Nadu Co-operative Milk Producers' Federation (‘Aavin'). “If these public sector undertakings, lying on death bed, are not given ‘oxygen' now, they will become totally dysfunctional,” she said.

Sources say that the increase in the power tariff is, on an average, expected to be Rs.1.50 per unit for different sections of consumers. It will fetch Rs.8,000 crore in a year to the cash-starved power utility. The previous power tariff hike was in August last year.

Referring to the State government's legal position on tariff determination, the Chief Minister said the government had no authority. The power utility would file a petition before the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission (TNERC), which would hold public hearings before fixing the new tariff.

Ms. Jayalalithaa made it clear that agriculturists, weavers and those covered under the one-bulb scheme – hut dwellers – would continue to enjoy free power supply, for which the State government would provide subsidy to the TANGEDCO. Except for high-end consumers, other categories of domestic consumers would get government subsidy.

In respect of bus fares, the revision has been made after a gap of 10 years, the previous instance being in December 2001. The per km ticket price of ordinary mofussil buses would go up from 28 paise to 42 paise; express and semi-deluxe buses - 32 paise to 56 paise; super deluxe - 38 paise to 60 paise and ultra deluxe - 52 paise to 70 paise.

The minimum bus ticket price in urban areas other than Chennai would go up from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 and the maximum would be Rs. 12 instead of Rs. 7. In Chennai too, the minimum fare would go up to Rs. 3 and the maximum would be Rs. 14 against Rs. 12.

State Transport Corporations, whose total losses for the current financial year are estimated to touch around Rs. 2,200 crore by the end of the current financial year, would get an additional revenue of around Rs. 2,100 crore in a year. Taking into account the prevailing factors, the Corporations are likely to achieve break-even. As on March 31 this year, their accumulated losses stood at Rs. 6,150 crore.

As regards the dairy sector, the price of toned milk per litre would be revised from Rs. 17.75 to Rs. 24. The last increase was made in September 2009. The procurement price of milk paid to dairy farmers would go up from Rs.18 to Rs. 20 per litre for cow milk and from Rs. 26 to Rs. 28 for buffalo milk.

Even after the revision, the bus fares and the milk price would be lower than those in other southern States, Ms. Jayalalithaa pointed out.The manner in which the announcement was made was itself a novelty as Ms Jayalalithaa used Jaya TV to announce her government's decisions around 3:30 p.m. Minutes later, the government released the text of her address to the media.

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Increase minimum support price for sugarcane: Sangam

Highlighting issues: Farmers staging a demonstration in Erode on Thursday. — PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

Members of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam staged a demonstration here on Thursday urging the Central and State governments to increase the minimum support price for sugarcane.

The sugarcane growers should be given at least Rs. 2,500 per tonne, excluding the cutting charges, the agitators said.

They urged the governments to convene a meeting with the participation of representatives of sugar mills, growers and officials to determine the minimum support price. They also wanted the State Government to instruct a private sugar mill in Erode district to pay the arrears to the growers immediately.The members also appealed to the government to fix a minimum support price for turmeric. The drastic fall in the prices of yellow spice had affected the growers in the country. The turmeric prices, which stood around Rs. 18,000 a quintal last year, fell to Rs. 4,500, leaving farmers to suffer heavy losses, they said.The members wanted the Centre to initiate concrete efforts to control prices of fertilizers.

There was a shortage of fertilizers in the market and the sharp increase in the prices had affected the farming community severely. The government should take steps to ensure adequate supply of fertilizers at affordable price, they said. Association State president K. Venkatachalam led the protest.

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Officials asked to verify stock of fertilizers

In agriculture extension centres, agriculture cooperative societies

On site: Collector S. Madhumathi inspecting a noon-meal centre at St. Joseph Higher Secondary School at Saral in Kanyakumari district.

The Collector, S. Madumathi, has directed the officials concerned to verify the stock of fertilizers and pesticide in all agriculture extension centres and agriculture co-operative societies.

Surprise checks

The Collector made a surprise check at Karavilai primary agriculture co-operative society fair price shop and fertilizer sales godown, Agriculture co-operative society administrative office, Kurunthancode agriculture co-operative society, Saral fair price shop, Saral Anganwadi and Saral-St. Joseph Higher Secondary School noon meal centre on Thursday.

She also verified the rice, dal and kerosene stocks and also checked the quality of essential commodities in all these fair price shops.

She also enquired with the people if they were getting the essential commodities regularly without any delay.

Ms. Madhumathi checked the fertilizers stocks, distribution register, stock register at Karavilai agriculture co-operative society.

She also enquired about the functioning of the society to the members of self help groups and the farmers.

The Collector said that the officials have been directed to ensure distribution of all essential commodities through the fair price shops without any complaints.

For Kanyakumari district, 6000 tonnes of chemical fertilizers would be needed in the second season.

But around 7,151 tonnes of chemical fertilizers have been stocked in all agriculture co-operative societies and agriculture extension centres.

Additional 2500 tonnes

In addition to that, 2500 tonnes of fertilizers were expected to arrive in future for the district to be distributed to the farmers.

The officials would undertake surprise checks in all the agriculture co-operative societies to ascertain the presence of fertilizers and they would also verify the stock registers to ensure uninterrupted distribution of fertilizers to the farming community, said the Collector.

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Farmers seek reduction in fertilizer prices

Special Correspondent

The Tamil Nadu Farmers Association, Vellore district, has urged Chief Minister Jayalalithaa to urge the Union government to reduce the prices of fertilizers, which have shot up steeply in the last one month.

In a release, K. Kannaiah Naidu, district president of the association, said the Centre has reduced the fertilizer subsidy and allowed the prices of fertilizers to soar. The price of DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) has risen from Rs.668 per 50-kg bag to Rs.910, potash from Rs.342 per bag to Rs.565 and that of complex from Rs.536 per bag to Rs.746. However, the price of urea has come down from Rs.278 to Rs.268 per bag, thanks to the abolition of sales tax by the State government, he said.

The association requested the Chief Minister to persuade the Centre to include farm activities among works that could be undertaken by labourers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. It wanted the National Crop Protection Scheme to be amended to provide for insurance against damage caused to the crops of individuals.

The association requested the Chief Minister to fulfil the electoral promise of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam to increase the procurement price of sugarcane to Rs.2,500 per tonne.It also pleaded for steps to make the sugar mills bear the labour charges for cutting sugarcane.

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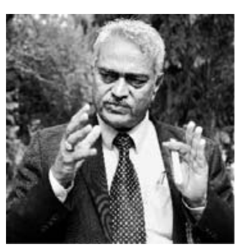
‘Need to turn farming into a profitable venture'



The University of Agricultural Sciences-Bangalore has decided to use the services of innovative farmers in its extension wing to ensure that its programmes effectively reach the farming community.

Disclosing this during in an interview with **B.S. Satish Kumar** , UAS-B Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda said the university, which is honouring innovative farmers, would list these awardees as innovative farmers. He said the university would bring out a book containing detailed profiles of all the awardees as part of its efforts to use their services.

Excerpts from the interview:

Question: What was the intention behind organising the krishi mela on a national scale?

Answer: As the agriculture sector and agri economy are facing crisis, there is a dire need for turning farming into a profitable venture. The problem in agriculture sector will seriously affect other sectors, especially food security, if we do not take steps to instil confidence among farmers. For this, we need to adopt appropriate and innovative methods at various levels. The best way to do it is to learn from best practices and innovations from other parts of the country through the farmers who have tested those methods.

Will the university do a follow-up of krishi mela by trying to monitor if farmers have been able to effectively use the technologies showcased by it?

It is a difficult task going by the huge number of farmers. But we have decided to make continuous efforts to reach out to farmers through our programmes and technologies.

What is the purpose behind introducing taluk-level awards for farm youth?

The entire country as well as the world is now witnessing a phenomenon of youngsters from the farming families quitting agriculture as they feel that it is not a profitable venture. We are trying to instil confidence among young innovative farmers. Honouring them would improve their social status and inspire their friends and contemporaries to take up agriculture.

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Trip abroad helps farmers find new markets

Farmers from Dharwad, Belgaum, Gadag and surrounding districts may soon form a cooperative association to be eligible to export commercial crops such as chilli.

Their proposal comes after their recent visit to Sri Lanka and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries of Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to find out about farm practices there and the market in those countries for agricultural produce from here.

Vice-president of the Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Andanappa Sajjanar and honorary joint secretary C.N. Karikatti spoke to presspersons here on Thursday about the visit of the 42-member group of farmers. Mr. Karikatti said they had learnt about a potential market for chilli in Sri Lanka and the possibility of growing palm groves in north Karnataka. “While in Colombo, we were invited to the Sri Lanka Expo scheduled for March 2012 and we invited them for Incomex-2012 in Hubli in February,” he said.

Raghunathgouda Kempalinganagoudar said several importers in Colombo spoke of the demand for chilli, onion and mango pulp.

“Farmers are keen to form a group so that we will be able to supply chilli in bulk to Sri Lankan importers. We will also seek help from the Export Promotion Cell of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, in this regard,” he said. Farmers were also interested in growing palm groves along the streams in the region. They interacted with a private firm in Davangere, which expressed willingness to procure the crop for producing palm oil, he said, and added, “We plan to take it up on a trial basis.”Mahadevappa Yadavannavar said that after their visit they had developed an interest in cultivating flowering plants that did not require much care but could be grown in mango orchards.

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hindustantimes

HT Correspondent , Hindustan Times
Email Author

New Delhi , November 17, 2011

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Food prices ease: is rate relief in sight?

Is there light at the end of the inflation tunnel, finally?

India’s food inflation rate eased to 10.63% for the week-ended November 5, from 11.81% in the previous week, rekindling hopes that the price monster may well be on the verge of being tamed. But there is new fears: if the rupee weakens further, it an make crude and other imported commodities dearer, bringing back the spectre of high inflation.

The trend of falling inflation rate, if it sustains over a period, will offer cheer to policy makers battling between sliding growth and rising prices, giving them elbow room to ease interest rates.

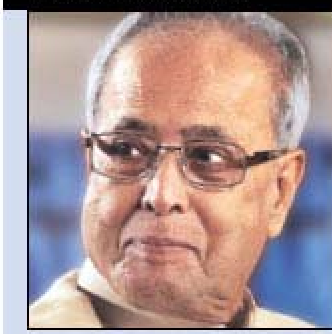
“At least on the food front, we may expect to have some relief if this trend continues,” finance minister Pranab Mukherjee said.

Consumers, caught between the big squeeze of rising interest rates and higher cost of living, may also look for succour from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which may finally press the pause button on the policy of raising key rates, which it did to choke demand and cool prices.

The Reserve Bank has raised the signal policy rate 13 times in the past 19 months to tame inflation.

The latest data came on a day when the RBI released minutes of the last meeting of its advisory committee that showed that members of the panel had opposed a rate hike that took place six days later.

READY TO SMILE



“If this trend of food inflation continues, then it is a good sign. At least on the food front, we may expect some relief if this trend continues.”
—PRANAB MUKHERJEE
Finance minister

-22.89% Drop in onion prices during the week compared to a a fall of 19.31% in the previous week

11.73% Increase in prices of egg, meat and fish , down from 12.74% in the previous week

10.74% Increase in prices of milk compared to 11.79% in the previous week

“On monetary measures, while one external member suggested an increase in repo rate by 25 basis points (0.25 percentage points), other five external members were of the view that repo rate should not be changed,” said minutes of the October 19 meeting of RBI's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on Monetary Policy.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/770609.aspx

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express buzz

By Express News Service

18 Nov 2011 02:09:10 AM IST

Farmers cheer as rains lash delta districts

THANJAVUR/NAGAPATTINAM: Heavy rains lashed the delta districts of the State on Thursday. According to Met officials, Tiruvarur district received an average rainfall of 28mm, with Tiruthuraipoondi receiving a maximum of 45mm. The authorities declared holidays for schools. In Thanjavur, schools and other education institutions functioned as usual. Students in Koradasery and Tiruthuraipoondi faced hardships as they came to know about the holiday announcement while they were halfway through or after reaching their schools. In some areas, school authorities themselves had asked students to leave. Tiruvarur recorded 27.5 cm in a single day, leading to inundation and waterlogging in low-lying areas.
Thiruthuraipoondi received a maximum rainfall of 45mm, affecting normal life. The district officials are in a state of alert after a cyclone warning was issued to the coastal districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam. Many parts of Nagapattinam and Karaikal experienced moderate to heavy rains. During the 24-hour period ended 8.30 am on Thursday, Karaikal recorded 51 mm rainfall. In Nagapattinam, Thalaignayar recorded 62.8 mm, followed by Tarangambadi (60 mm). Farmers feel that the rains would benefit samba cultivation.

Food inflation eases to 10.63%

Agencies Posted online: Thu Nov 17 2011, 12:24 hrs

New Delhi : Food inflation eased to 10.63 per cent for the week ended November 5 even as prices of agricultural items, barring onions and wheat, continued to rise on an annual basis.

Food inflation, as measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), stood at 11.81 per cent in the previous week ended October 29. The rate of price rise of food items stood at 11.41 per cent in the corresponding week of the previous year.

As per data released by the government today, onions became cheaper by 22.89 per cent year-on-year, while wheat price were down 3.63 per cent.

However, all other items became more expensive on an annual basis during the week under review.

While vegetables became 27.26 per cent costlier, pulses grew dearer by 14.44 per cent, milk by 10.74 per cent and eggs, meat and fish by 11.73 per cent.

Fruits also became 5.99 per cent more expensive on an annual basis, while cereal prices were up 3.53 per cent.

Inflation in the overall primary articles category stood at 10.39 per cent during the week ended November 5, as against 11.43 per cent in the previous week. Primary articles have over 20 per cent weight in the wholesale price index.

Inflation in non-food articles, including fibres, oilseeds and minerals, was recorded at 5.33 per cent during the week under review, as against 6.41 per cent in the week ended October 29.

Fuel and power inflation stood at 15.49 per cent during the week ended November 5, as compared to 14.50 per cent in the previous week.The continued rise in food prices is likely to exert further pressure on the government and the Reserve Bank to tackle the situation expeditiously.Concerned over the inflationary spiral, the government had yesterday said it is taking steps to remove supply bottlenecks and expects prices to ease from December."We are taking care to remove the supply constraints and I do hope from the month of December, inflation pressure would be moderate," Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee had said yesterday.Headline inflation, which also factors in manufactured items, has been above the 9 per cent-mark since December, 2010. It stood at 9.73 per cent in September this year.The RBI has hiked interest rates 13 times since March, 2010, to tame demand and curb inflation.

In its second quarterly review of the monetary policy last month, the apex bank said it expects inflation to remain elevated till December on account of the demand-supply mismatch, before moderating to 7 per cent by March, 2012.

DECCAN Chronicle

Published on *Deccan Chronicle* (http://www.deccanchronicle.com)

Food inflation at 10.63% for week ended Nov 5

Food inflation eased to 10.63 per cent for the week ended November 5 even as prices of agricultural items, barring onions and wheat, continued to rise on an annual basis. Food inflation, as measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), stood at 11.81 per cent in the previous week ended October 29. The rate of price rise of food items stood at 11.41 per cent in the corresponding week of the previous year. As per data released by the government today, onions became cheaper by 22.89 per cent year-on-year, while wheat price were down 3.63 per cent. However, all other items became more expensive on an annual basis during the week under review. While vegetables became 27.26 per cent costlier, pulses grew dearer by 14.44 per cent, milk by 10.74 per cent and eggs, meat and fish by 11.73 per cent. Fruits also became 5.99 per cent more expensive on an annual basis, while cereal prices were up 3.53 per cent. Inflation in the overall primary articles category stood at 10.39 per cent during the week ended November 5, as against 11.43 per cent in the previous week. Primary articles have over 20 per cent weight in the wholesale price index. Inflation in non-food articles, including fibres, oilseeds and minerals, was recorded at 5.33 per cent during the week under review, as against 6.41 per cent in the week ended October 29. Fuel and power inflation stood at 15.49 per cent during the week ended November 5, as compared to 14.50 per cent in the previous week. The continued rise in food prices is likely to exert further pressure on the government and the Reserve Bank to tackle the situation expeditiously. Concerned over the inflationary spiral, the government had yesterday said it is taking steps to remove supply bottlenecks and expects prices to ease from December. "We are taking care to remove the supply constraints and I do hope from the month of December, inflation pressure would be moderate," Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee had said on Wednesday. Headline inflation, which also factors in manufactured items, has been above the 9 per cent-mark since December, 2010. It stood at 9.73 per cent in September this year. The RBI has hiked interest rates 13 times since March 2010 to tame demand and curb inflation. In its second quarterly review of the monetary policy last month, the apex bank said it expects inflation to remain elevated till December on account of the demand-supply mismatch, before moderating to 7 per cent by March 2012.

Source URL: http://www.deccanchronicle.com/channels/business/market/food-inflation-1063-week-ended-nov-5-068 the pioneer

Food inflation ebbs to 10.63%; a good sign, says Pranab

THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2011 21:45

PNS | NEW DELHI

Softening its stance for the week ended November 5, food inflation eased marginally to 10.63 per cent, prompting Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee to say it is a “good sign” and the common man will get some relief if the trend continues.

Food inflation, as measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), declined by 1.18 percentage points in the week under review from 11.81 per cent in the previous week ended October 29. It stood at 11.41 per cent in the corresponding week of the previous year.

“If this trend of food inflation continues, then it is a good sign. At least on the food front, we may expect some relief if this trend continues for some more time,” Mukherjee told reporters here.

The marginal decline, however, has not brought much relief to the common man at present, as prices of most commodities -- with the exception of onions and wheat -- continued to remain firm.

On the positive side, onions became cheaper by 22.89 per cent year-on-year, while wheat prices were down 3.63 per cent.

Vegetables, however, grew dearer by 27.26 per cent, pulses by 14.44 per cent, milk by 10.74 per cent and eggs, meat and fish by 11.73 per cent.

“We expect prices to display a moderate decline in the coming weeks. Overall, food inflation is expected to moderate to single digits in November, 2011, on account of a moderation in demand subsequent to the festive season, and ease substantially in December, 2011, reflecting the base effect,” ICRA economist Aditi Nayar said.   Inflation in the overall primary articles category stood at 10.39 per cent during the week ended November 5, as against 11.43

Foodgrains movement may witness further disruption

THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2011 23:00

PNS | CHANDIGARH

Movement of foodgrains from storage-starved Punjab to other States may continue to witness further disruption, with employees of Food Corporation of India (FCI) extending their work-to-rule agitation till December 20 in protest against non-acceptance of their demands.

Though central procurement agency, FCI, is trying hard to get foodgrain transportation activities on track, about three lakh tonne of foodgrain has not been lifted for the past two weeks on account of the employees' agitation.

"We have decided to extend our work-to-rule agitation from November 16 till December 20 as our demands have not been met by the management of FCI," said FCI Executive Staff Union regional secretary Megh Raj.

Under the work-to-rule agitation, employees do not work beyond office hours, as a result of which loading and unloading of wheat and rice is affected adversely after working for hours.

The latest move of the FCI employees assumes significance as Punjab, the food bowl of the country, has been complaining of an acute shortage of space for the storage of foodgrains, which could lead to wastage of wheat and rice in the 2011-12 kharif marketing season.

Punjab contributes 30 per cent of the total rice and over 50 per cent of total wheat procurement for the central pool.

The Punjab Government blamed the Centre for tardy movement of foodgrain stocks.

Employees met senior official of FCI on November 15, but their demands were not accepted by the management, Raj informed. However, agitating employees have deferred a proposed two-day-long strike, scheduled for November 17-18, till December 20.

FCI employees across the country have been demanding fringe benefits for third and fourth class employees, new recruitment, overtime and pension schemes.

With foodgrains movement getting hit because of the employees' agitation, FCI had to fork out a whopping `18-20 lakh as demurrage charges for delayed movement of rail rakes.

Ex-DG ICAR shares tips to promote agriculture in India

THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2011 22:36

SUNIL SRIVASTAVA | PANTNAGAR

Agriculture in India will become optimally beneficial only when efforts are made keeping in mind the new geographical and global conditions. Sectors including land management, crop production and marketing have to be strengthened in order to achieve this. The former director general of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and current agriculture advisor to the Bihar Government, Mangala Rai said this while addressing a gathering at the inauguration of the two-day function organised to mark the 51st Foundation Day of the GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology.

Speaking on the occasion Rai said that considering the consistent and alarming decrease in agriculture land and natural resources in India, the present system of agriculture cannot provide food for the growing population of the nation. Farmers are abandoning agriculture because they receive less than one-third of the market rate for their agricultural produce after working hard whereas middlemen are earning most of the profit.

To tackle this problem, he suggested measures like production of hybrid seeds for all crops, facilitating use of new techniques in the farms, land and water management, establishing balance between environment and agriculture, strengthening processing and storage facilities to prevent wastage of fruits, vegetables and food grains, making barren land fit for cultivation, preventing pollution and ensuring that farmers receive the proper price for their produce.

GBPUAT Vice-Chancellor BS Bisht said that the university had played a vital role in bringing about the first green revolution in the nation which made India self reliant in agriculture. Considering the changed conditions, the university is committed to facilitating development of agriculture-based sectors and developing farming in to a knowledge based business through higher education, research and publicity in addition to preparing quality human resources, seeds and planting material.

The former VC of GBPUAT Anand Swarup, former V-C of Kumaon University, RC Pant and the head of the Asian Agri-History Foundation, YL Nene also shared their thoughts on the need for drafting a broad-based and integrated plan for agriculture in view of altered conditions. Former GBPUAT professor RN Trikha, progressive farmer Arun Bhakku and Ashok Agrawal of KL Rice were felicitated for their contribution to agriculture on the occasion.

Business Standard

Friday, Nov 18, 2011

Onion export price cut 26%

Ajay Modi / New Delhi November 18, 2011, 0:16 IST

MEP brought down to $350 a tonne from $475 to lend support to falling domestic prices.

The government has decreased the minimum export price (MEP) of onion by $125 a tonne to $350 a tonne, to boost sagging exports and lend support to falling domestic prices. However, prices of certain southern varieties have been kept at $400 a tonne. Prior to this, a price of $475 was applicable for all varieties. The MEP was raised from $300 to $475 a tonne in early September, when retail prices had touched Rs 25 a kg.

“A review meeting on onion was held yesterday in the commerce ministry. It was agreed that onion MEP needs to be reduced. A decision to this effect has been taken and it will be notified soon,” said Rajeev Gupta, managing director, National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation, a canalising agency for onion exports.

Gupta added the month-wise export of onion had been lower for all months of the current financial year, except September. In the period between April and October, the country exported 855,984 tonnes of onion valued at Rs 1,108 crore. The quantity is lower by 17 per cent compared to last year’s corresponding export of 1.38 million tonnes. During the last financial year, 13,40,000 tonnes of onion valued at Rs 2,159 crore were exported. Major export markets for onion are Bangladesh, UAE, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

According to the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation, the country is expected to produce 15.13 million tonnes of onion, up four per cent from last year’s 14.56 million tonnes. Of the total annual production, 10-15 per cent is during the normal kharif season and another 30-40 per cent in late kharif. The rest comes from the rabi season.

A little over 15 per cent of the total output is from Maharashtra. Other major producers are Gujarat, Orissa, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Punjab and Rajasthan.

“Farmers should also get a remunerative price. If prices crash, farmers will grow less onion next year and prices will shoot up, thereby impacting consumers. A healthy balance is the key,” said Gupta.

According to the price monitoring cell of the department of consumer affairs, the retail price of onion in the capital has decreased from Rs 23 a kg in early September (when MEP was raised) to Rs 21 now. Arrival of the late kharif crop will start next month and could further depress prices.

No more crops under 'support' list for now

Anindita Dey / Mumbai November 18, 2011, 0:19 IST

The government has decided not to include any more crops under the minimum support price (MSP) list for the time being, owing to increasing pressure of rising MSPs on subsidy burden of the government and food prices.

While it was a recommendation of the ministry of agriculture in its national policy for farmers, the cabinet secretary recently held meeting with all ministries concerned to work out an action plan for agriculture development. The meeting had been called at the behest of the prime minister as a run-up for preparing the agriculture survey and an action plan for agriculture.

The agriculture survey will be a parallel document to the economic survey presented during the Budget.

Meanwhile, the ministry of agriculture has been asked to give its recommendations for the Budget, which could supplement the action plan agenda, said officials.

“The ministry wanted to take up most of its recommendations based on the national policy for farmers. Cabinet officials are of the view that most of the recommendations have to be kept on hold due to increasing inflationary pressures on food prices and subsidy burden on the government.

The ministry will work out recommendations that are more medium-term in nature and not short-term, to avert the inflationary pressures, said an official source.

Based on the recommendations of the national policy for farmers, the ministry of agriculture has been advocating review of the methodology for arriving at the MSP for crops and to cover more crops. Other demands raised in the inter-ministerial meeting included ensuring timely supply of fertiliser, water and power, besides a strong pitch for rise in diesel subsidy for farmers.

Citing inflation and rising food prices to be a priority for the national agenda, the Cabinet has also decided not to adopt any changes in the methodology adopted by the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices for calculating MSP, for the time being .

The national policy for farmers, a vision document of the ministry of agriculture, had suggested MSP to be worked out as a 50 per cent mark-up over the weighted average cost of production in general.

The government recently fixed MSP for rabi crops of the 2011-12 season which was 20-25 per cent higher than last year, barring wheat, amid concern raised by the food ministry on the impact of MSP on rising food prices and consequent inflation.

Chodavaram to start cane crushing from Nov 21

VDS Rama Raju / Chennai/ Visakhapatnam November 18, 2011, 0:24 IST

Despite farmers’ reluctance to supply sugarcane at the current price, the Chodavaram Cooperative Sugar factory here is gearing up to start the crushing season from November 21. Recently, sugarcane farmers of Chodavaram started agitating for better price for their crop.

The management last season paid Rs 1,800 per tonne sugarcane, but this year farmers are demanding a minimum Rs 2,500 due to increase in inputs cost and labour charges.

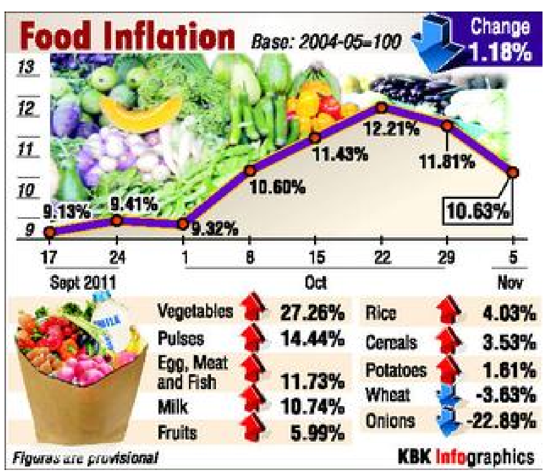
"Last season we received 546,000 tonne sugarcane and the company paid the entire amount to farmers with out any dues. The season too we are expecting 550,000 tonnes," T Poorna Sivaram Prasad, managing director of Chodavaram super factory, told Business Standard.

During last fiscal, the company earned Rs 5.30 crore as profit, and so may announce Rs 100-200 as bonus per tonne sugarcane to farmers apart from the already paid amount Rs 1800 per tonne as minimum price, he added."We produced 51,600 tonne sugar last season, of which we have sold 41,600 tonne so far. The remaining stock is at our godowns. We have generated 24,000 tonne molasses and sold 21,000 tonne," he said.Last year, the prices were very attractive for molasses. The company got Rs 5,000 on each tone, but this year they have fallen to Rs 1,500 due to government restrictions on molasses usage and transport to other states.

He said though the farmers demand was not viable, if factories do not offer this price, the cane crop would become a burden on farmers and lead to fall in crop area next season. "Hence, we are looking for a via media to solve the current issue," he said.

THE HINDU Business Line

Food inflation ebbs to 10.63%; Pranab sees some relief



New Delhi, Nov. 17:

Food inflation showed a sharp decline in early November, with items such as cereals, onions, milk and poultry products seeing a dip in year-on-year price levels. Non-food inflation too eased a bit, even as the fuel index climbed sharply.According to data released by the Government on Thursday, the annual WPI-based food inflation rose 10.63 per cent, down from the previous week's annual rise of 11.81 per cent.Sequentially, the ‘Food Articles' group index declined by 0.9 per cent. Inflation in fuels climbed 15.49 per cent in the week ended November 5, sharply higher than the 14.50 per cent in the previous week.Responding to the dip in food inflation estimates by over a percentage point, the Finance Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, said if the trend continues some relief could be expected on the price front soon.During the latest week, inflation in onions eased by 23 per cent year-on-year, while wheat was down 4 per cent. However, most other items surged on an annual basis during the week. Notably, vegetables were up 27 per cent, pulses up 14 per cent, milk by 11 per cent and eggs, meat and fish by 12 per cent.Annual inflation in non-food articles, including fibres, oilseeds and minerals, was recorded at 5.33 per cent during the week under review against 6.41 per cent in the week ended October 29.Fuel and power inflation clocked in at 15.49 per cent compared with 14.50 per cent in the previous week.In its second quarterly review of the monetary policy last month, the RBI had said it expects inflation to remain elevated till December on account of the demand-supply mismatch, before moderating to 7 per cent by March.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Flavour of the season

Neighbour's pride: A worker sorts the season's fresh oranges at the Jambagh Market in Hyderabad. Oranges have begun arriving from Nagpur in Maharashtra and the rate is Rs 3.50 a piece.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

How Brazilian cotton made it to the top league

M.R. Subramani

Mr Haroldo Cunha, Executive President, Brazilian Cotton Association. — M.R. Subramani

Recently in Mumbai:

For a country that was languishing in cotton production, Brazil has come a long way to become the fifth largest producer in the world. Since 1994, its production has quadrupled, while exports have touched 800,000 tonnes from zero.

According to Mr Haroldo Cunha, Executive President of the Brazilian Cotton Institute, cotton production in the South American country has undergone fundamental changes in the last one decade.

“We have shifted cotton cultivation from the south and south-western parts of our country to the central and western parts,” he said.

This helped because the climate and soil in the central and western parts were conducive to grow cotton in the Cerrados that is like the Savannahs. “More than these, only small farmers had been planting cotton in south and south-western parts of the country, while large growers took to cotton once it was taken up in central and western parts,” said Mr Cunha.

A cotton producers association was formed to take up various issues of growers with the Government. The association also created a foundation for research that would work in tandem with growers. The growers' body tells the research association of its needs and the latter works accordingly. The Government, too, on its part supports research. Growers contribute $30 a hectare for research.

“It helped to increase productivity from 770 kg lint (processed cotton) a hectare to 1,450 kg now,” said Mr Cunha.

Interestingly, the growth in cotton production has not been boosted by genetically modified cotton varieties.

“At least 75 per cent of the area under cotton in Brazil is under traditional varieties. Bt cotton makes up 10 per cent, Roundup Ready makes up eight per cent and the rest [is made up] by Bt Roundup Ready,” he said.

Cotton this year has been cultivated on 1.4 million hectares (from 0.84 million hectares) with the production being estimated at 1.8 million tonnes. Of this, 800,000 tonnes are expected to be exported. Next year, Brazil hopes to produce 2.2 million tonnes cotton.

“But the increase in area will depend on soyabean prices. Higher cotton prices had led to shift from soyabean and area under the fibre crop increased 67 per cent this year,” Mr Cunha said.

“We have done a lot to market our cotton in other countries. We have to export since our textile industry is weak, unable to compete against China and India,” he said. “We are not able to compete due to high labour and social costs, besides the currency factor. But our marketing efforts have made us a quality supplier,” he said.

Brazil's credibility in cotton trade is also high as it has set up an organisation to ensure that contracts entered into are executed. The organisation called Ethics Committee has representations from producers, textile industry, brokers and exporters. “The committee's mandate is to solve problems concerning commercial contracts,” Mr Cunha said.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

‘Global Tea Diary 2011' released

P.S. Sundar
Coonoor, Nov. 17:

The “Global Tea Diary 2011” (GTD) compiled, edited, printed and published by Mr Rajesh Gupta, Director, Global Tea Brokers (GTB) has come out. The 164-page publication is a storehouse of statistics on global tea covering area, yield, production, exports, imports, prices and consumption of different varieties of tea. It also provides information on tea grades, tasting terminology and glossary.

“We are dedicating this first edition of ours to tea industry and trade on the occasion of GTB entering its second decade of tea auctioning. This edition documents statistical data of tea world for 2001 to 2010 and up to July 2011. Henceforth, we will publish this annually,” Mr Rajesh Gupta told *Business Line*.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Spot rubber improves on short supply

Our Correspondent
Kottayam, Nov. 17:

Spot rubber turned better on Thursday. Covering purchases at lower levels kept the prices firm as the market seemed to be experiencing short supplies even in the midst of the peak production season. Sheet rubber improved to Rs 190 (188) a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board.

An overall improvement in global markets was seen, ahead of the two-day meeting of Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia starting on November 18 to discuss measures to stabilise natural rubber market. Reports that Thailand plans to buy 1,00,000 tonnes of natural rubber to build up inventories and rubber growers in the southern provinces of Thailand agree to reduce supplies by 25 per cent boosted the market mood.

The December series slipped to Rs 191.80 (192.73), January to Rs 193.50 (194.77), February to Rs 195.25 (197.21) and March to Rs197.25 (197.50) while the April series firmed up to Rs 201.00 (200.50) and May to Rs 202.72 (199.72) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) increased to Rs 173.73 (171.24) a kg at Bangkok. The November futures finished marginally higher at ¥ 254.08 (Rs 167.88) from ¥ 257.00 a kg during the day session and then remained inactive in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates/kg for RSS-4: 190 (188); RSS-5: 187 (186); Ungraded: 182 (179); ISNR 20: 172 (171) and Latex 60%: 113 (113).

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Soya oil gains marginally

Our Correspondent

Indore, Nov. 17:

Despite marginal gain, trading in soya oil remained sluggish on slack buying interest and weak foreign markets. Soya refined in direct sale ruled at Rs 606-608 for 10 kg against Rs 604-607.

Though some plants quoted soya refined prices as high as Rs 610 for 10 kg, there was lack of buying interest at this rate.

In resale, soya refined fetched Rs 604-606 for 10 kg. Soya solvent, on the other hand, ruled at Rs 575-578 for 10 kg against Rs 570-75 on scattered buying interest. In futures, soya oil traded lower on weak global cues and slack buying support.

Soya refined December contract on the NBOT closed Rs 1.60 lower at Rs 642.10.

Soya seeds, on the other hand, ruled at Rs 2,070-2,120 a quintal against Rs 2,070-2,140.

Arrival of soyabean in State mandis was recorded at 3.50-4 lakh bags against 10,000 bags in Indore mandis. Plant deliveries in soyabean gained marginally at Rs 2,190-2,220 a quintal.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Farmers switch on to customised mobile info advisory services

Information includes weather, disease, water and price alerts

New Delhi, Nov. 17:

With ICT emerging as a buzzword in agri-biz to cash-in on the farmer's perennial need to cut costs and raise yields, a number of mobile-based agri-information providers have thrown their hat into the ring.

The paid agri-advisory services provided by them include weather, disease and water alerts, latest crop price trends, best time for planting and when to sell, and agri-finance and credit information. These are communicated through SMS and mobile-based IVRS in local language.

But are farmers biting the bait? More important, are they willing to pay for such services?

According to Mr Vijay Pratap Singh Aditya, CEO of Ekgaon Technology, which has been hawking a farm advisory service package called ‘Onefarm' in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu for the last three years, the answer is a qualified yes.

“Farmers are willing, if the information is customised to their specific soil, crop and weather conditions, besides alerts on stuff such as how much water would be released by the local dam authorities and when it would to reach their respective fields,” he added.

Personalising package

But what is critical is convincing farmers on the utility of such services. “Initially, farmers were unwilling to pay, as the package being offered was very generic with standardised weather and agricultural information sourced through central level bodies. But personalising, localising and specialising the advisory service, coupled with the right pricing points, increased their willingness to pay,” said Mr Aditya.

With 12,000 farmers presently under its fold, Ekgaon plans to grow this to 15 million in five years, which would generate revenues of about Rs 100 crore (last year, the company managed a paltry Rs 1.57 crore). Besides attracting new farmers, it is also important to retain existing ones. “Our retention rate is almost 50 per cent”, he said.

Apart from the likes of Ekgaon, there are also established corporates such as Tata Consultancy Services (mKrishi), the Nagarjuna Group (ikisan), Reuters Market Light (RML) and Nokia (Life Tools) that have created mobile agro-advisory platforms.

“You always have to allow farmers to try it out first. The willingness to pay comes from their own personal experience of using the service”, noted an official from mKrishi.

Mr Girish Mishra, a farmer from Salon in Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareli district, used a free service card from Ekgaon for the kharif paddy season this year. “I wouldn't mind paying up in the future as long as it costs under Rs 200 for a three-month season”, he said.

UTILITY

So, what is the information that he found useful enough to consider worth paying for? “Earlier, I had not idea about when it would rain, making it difficult to decide whether to water my fields now and make arrangements for diesel accordingly. But their accurate weather alerts has helped me pre-plan and save 70 litres of diesel on my 10 acres of paddy. Since I knew when it would rain, there was no need to irrigate, thereby saving on the labour cost of watering the field as well”, he pointed out.

According to Mr Mishra, the weather info from newspapers or radio are normally for only one day, “whereas I need it for the next four days or more”.

Mr B.V. Natesh, Head of Emerging Markets Services at Nokia India, claimed that farmers who subscribe to the company's agri-service, are willing to pay for useful information.

They even consider the fee paid towards this as a component of their overall investment in a farming season.

“This is a positive response that we received from farmers themselves in a pilot project we carried out in Maharashtra”, he added.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Basmati can be grown in AP too

Ch. R.S. Sarma
Vijayawada, Nov. 17:

Cultivation of basmati rice need not remain confined to the North, and it can be grown in Andhra Pradesh, too, said Mr P.S.R. Das, General Secretary of the Krishna district unit of Kisan Service Organisation.

He said that an attempt to grow the rice in Krishna district began at Gudivada, a paddy-growing belt, and the yields and the aroma were good. “We brought breeder seed from JN Krishi Vidyalaya, Jabalpur, and there was also a buy-back arrangement with a local rice miller. The crop was grown on 270 acres during the last kharif season. Farmers could get Rs 1,200 or a bag (of 75 kg) against Rs 850-900 for the local varieties of rice. The yield was in the range of 20-25 bags an acre," he said.

Mr Das said the cost of cultivation was around Rs 10,000 an acre, much less than that for the paddy varieties grown here.

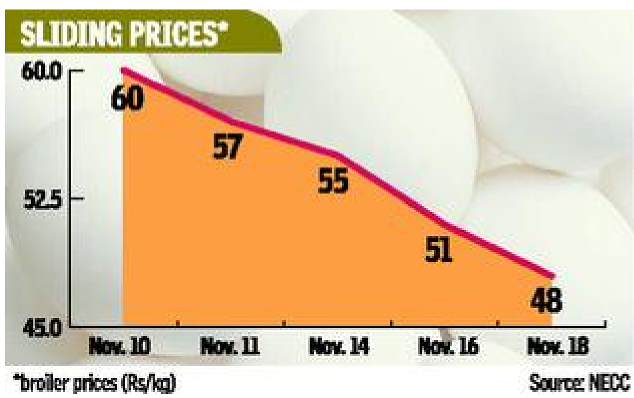
He said paddy farmers in the State should switch over to the cultivation of long grains. They should strive for value-addition and maximising returns. Basmati cultivation, he believed, would be of great help to farmers in the area.

He said his organisation was trying to educate local farmers and promote basmati cultivation in the area.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Broiler chicken falls ahead of Sabarimala season

Our Bureau



Chennai, Nov. 17:

The price of broiler chicken has been cut to Rs 48 a kg from last week's Rs 60 on account of slack offtake and the approaching Sabarimala season, when demand drops.

Industry sources said the broiler price is likely to be pruned in the coming days because of the Sabarimala season in the South, a major consumer. Earlier this March, the broiler price peaked to Rs 75 a kg.

Meanwhile, egg rose by three paise from last week's Rs 2.91 a piece surpassing the Rs 2.90 reached during the same period last year. Egg price is slowly inching up to touch a record (Rs 3.10 reached in January this year) with the onset of winter and torrential rains lashing Tamil Nadu and Kerala. A cut in production, too, has sent the egg price moving up across the country.

The National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) has hiked the rate of layer birds (for birds of 1.3 kg) to Rs 46 a kg (Rs 44). Namakkal and Palladam prices are the benchmarks for eggs and chicken in the country.

“We want to increase the prices gradually. If we raise the prices, we may face consumer resistance and piling up of stocks,” said an NECC spokesperson.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Weak rupee lifts edible oils

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Nov. 17:

Most edible oils shot up on Thursday by Rs 5-10 for 10 kg, as local refiners increased prices after the rupee weakened against the dollar.

Crude palm oil (CPO) futures on the Bursa Malaysia Derivatives (BMD) Exchange closed lower amid profit-taking. Local refiners increased prices of palmolein and soya refined oil by Rs 2-7 for 10 kg. According to the Bombay Commodity Exchange, soya refined oil and palmolein rose by Rs 8 for 10 kg each, cotton refined oil and rapeseed oil by Rs 5 for 10 kg each and sunflower expeller refined oil by Rs 10 for 10 kg. Groundnut oil was unchanged despite prices rising by Rs 15-20 for 10 kg in Saurashtra on new demand from brand makers. Resellers quoted palmolein at Rs 565-566. Liberty offered palmolein at Rs 587-589, super palmolein at Rs 605 and soya refined oil at Rs 632. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 575, soya refined oil at Rs 630 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 685 for delivery between November 25 and December 5.

Malaysia's BMD CPO's December contracts settled at MYR3,229 (MYR3,254) and January at MYR3,218 (MYR3,246) a tonne. Soya oil for December delivery closed at Rs 640.50 (Rs

639.80) while for January closed at Rs 646.50 (Rs 644.50) on National Board of Trade in Indore.

Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil — 835 (835); soya refined oil — 625 (617); sunflower exp. ref. — 635 (625); sunflower ref. — 685 (685); rapeseed ref. oil — 719 (714); rapeseed expeller ref. — 689 (684); cotton ref. oil — 615 (610); and palmolein — 570 (562).

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Thin local, export demand drag jeera

Our Correspondent

Rajkot, Nov. 17:

Higher arrivals and lower local and export demand dragged jeera down on Thursday.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), jeera's December contract decreased by Rs 52 to Rs 1,3621 a quintal with an open interest of 16,242 lots while January contracts declined by Rs 82 to Rs 13,929 a quintal with an open interest of 11,367 lots. Stocks in NCDEX-accredited warehouses dropped by 51 tonnes to 11,461 tonnes.

Jeera traded lower by Rs 15-20 at Rs 2,150-2,600 for 20 kg at the agricultural produce committee in Rajkot, where 700-750 bags arrived. In the Unjha mandi, arrivals were up 500 bags to 3,500 bags on Thursday while demand decreased to 7,000 bags from 8,500 bags on Wednesday. Jeera quoted at Rs 1,955-2,971 for 20 kg in Unjha.

According to the Spices Board, exports during April-September stood at 16,000 tonnes as compared to 18,800 tonnes in the same period in 2010-11, down by 15 per cent.

Higher sowing in the producing regions put pressure on jeera futures. Sowing in parts of Gujarat has begun slowly.

According to Kedia Commodity, support for jeera is seen at Rs 13,506, below which it could be tested at Rs 13,343. Resistance is now seen at Rs 13,903, above which it could see a resistance at Rs 14,137.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Heavy inflow pounds turmeric

Our Correspondent

Erode, Nov. 17:

Spot turmeric fell by Rs 200-300 a quintal on Thursday on higher arrivals and limited buying.

Only 45 per cent of the over 12,700 bags that arrived were sold, according to Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. Farmers retained a third of the stocks they brought to the Regulated Marketing Committee as prices fell.

Encouraged by the gains the spice made on Wednesday, farmers brought stocks only to be disappointed as there were no new orders from North Indian merchants, said Mr Ravishankar. They still had to sell as the new crop will start arriving by the beginning of January, he said. Farmers can not but sell as they have carryover stocks of over 13 lakh bags.

There are few orders for the finger variety from West Bengal, Odisha and Gujarat and for the root variety from Delhi at present, he said.

The hybrid variety decreased by Rs 200 a quintal because of poor demand.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety fetched Rs 3,506-4,891 and the root variety Rs 3,406-4,695.

Salem Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 4,594-5,411 and the root variety at Rs 4,356-4,881. Only 561 bags of the 2,637 that arrived were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Regulated Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,400-4,961 and the root variety at Rs 3,117-4,769. Out of the 769 bags that arrived, 654 were sold.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Dara wheat dips as arrivals rise a tad

Our Correspondent

Karnal, Nov. 17:

After witnessing a good rally earlier this week, *dara* witnessed some correction while *desi* wheat remained unchanged on Thursday amidst lukewarm trading in the market.

Mr Sewa Ram, a wheat trader, told *Business Line* that marginal increase in arrivals pulled *dara* prices marginally down. Only the Food Corporation of India's call of selling wheat under open market sale scheme can pressurise the market and prices may fall. “Till then we are unlikely to see any major alteration in prices,” he said.

Domestic demand is good and traders expect that market may witness good levels in December, said Mr Ram.

In the physical market, after witnessing an uptrend earlier this week, *dara* prices marginally decreased by Rs 5-10 a quintal and ruled between Rs 1,160-1,170 a quintal. Around 56 tonnes of *dara* variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and the stocks were directly offloaded at the mills. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,160-1,165 a quintal while delivery at *chakki*was at Rs 1,170 a quintal.

Desi varieties were flat. Samrat quoted at Rs1,920 and Lal Quila at Rs 1,840 a quintal.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for November delivery increased by Rs 1.80 to Rs 1,145.40 a quintal. At the MCX, wheat for November delivery was Rs 1,162.30 a quintal.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Money grows on organic manure

M.J. Prabu

Villages in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, have turned away from chemical fertilisers to reap healthy profits.

Natural choice: NGO SANDS shows villagers in Tirunelveli how to prepare organic manure; (right) healthy banana trees. M.J. Prabu

Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu is famous for its soaring temple towers, a hugely popular *halwa* shop opposite Nellaiappar temple that opens only for limited hours in the evening, the bustling train junction, and the swift waters of the Tambaraparani river.

About 45 km south of this bustling town is a clutch of villages in which a quiet transformation is on.

The area is largely isolated — there are no government bus services, no schools or health centres function here. For any emergency, villagers have to travel nearly 20 km to the neighbouring town of Thisayanvilai. The men work in farms, while the women roll beedis for income.

Until a few years ago, many farmers in this drought-prone region were forced to sell their land or leave them barren. Today, however, more than 40 villages here are successfully growing crops ranging from sunflower to chillies, using their own inputs.

Recalling the tough times, farmer T. Anthony says, “Till a few years ago, due to drought, much of the land in our village lay fallow. We walked several kilometres every day in search of potable water. The situation turned worse during summer. Though a few big farmers carried on with some farming, a severe shortage of fertilisers forced them to give up too.”

Nearly everyone in the village owed thousands of rupees in debt to the retail fertiliser shops in town.

“Monsoon failure and yield loss made repayment difficult, and increased the interest rate further. If we do not repay in one year, the amount doubles the following year. For even small crops such as chillies or tomatoes, we were dependent on credit from the shop owner,” farmer M.D. Annadurai recollects.

But all that has changed now. “Today, despite acute water scarcity and power cuts, we are successfully growing sunflower, plantains, paddy, chilli and groundnut. Some farmers have earned nearly Rs 1 lakh from growing small onions as intercrop in chilli fields,” says another farmer, S. Jayalaxmi.

So how did this dramatic improvement come about?

“We felt that the solution lay in finding an alternative to costly fertilisers. Initially, we trained about 1,000 farmers to make their own farm inputs,” says J.H.S. Ponnaya, the 80-year-old head of the NGO Sands (Suviseshapuram and Neighbouring Development Organisation) in Tirunelveli.

The farmers now use *panchagavya* (a combination of milk, ghee, curd, fruits) and other manure made from locally available organic farmyard inputs. Not only is this helping them save money but also boosting their yield.

Farmers in Kazhuvoor, Eranthai, Vijayanarayanam and Vijayaachambadu villages in Nanguneri taluk and Perunkannankulam and Vadivammanpatti villages in Radhapuram taluk are among those who have switched from chemical fertilisers to organic manure for over a year now.

Says Ranjitha Packiyam, a farmer in Kazhuvoor: “I used my own inputs for my paddy crop in an acre plot and found it helps good growth. Previously I spent more than Rs 1,500 for buying these inputs. But now I am saving on the money by making manure on my own.”

T. Suyambu Rajan from Vijayanarayanam village concurs: “I applied this manure to my three-acre plantain crop and found them growing well.”

“We are happy to hear farmers say they are able to save some money with this method. Our country's agriculture is going through a critical phase today. A cure for this can be surely found if both media and society become more sensitive to the farmers' problems and take a proactive stand on the issue,” says Ponnaya.

The past decade saw two remarkable developments in the country — the emergence and growth of the IT sector and, an increase in the number of farmer suicides.

“In spite of the claim that rural India shines in prosperity, several villages today continue to suffer from power cuts, drought, lack of proper sanitation facilities, absence of medical centres and schools. But these have not deterred the will of many villagers. They have been able to succeed financially by growing a vast variety of crops using their own inputs and they serve as inspiration of many,” says Ponnaya.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

Sugar up Rs 200 a quintal in 17 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT

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Mumbai, Nov. 17:

Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market shot up further by Rs 35-40 a quintal on Thursday, taking the total price rise this month to Rs 190-200. Naka rates increased by Rs 20-50 while mill tender rates went up by Rs 5,060 due to a sharp jump of Rs 100 witnessed in the futures market till noon.

Traders claimed that 17 lakh tonnes free sale quota was sufficient to meet the physical demand this month, but speculators were pushing up futures prices on the hope of increased exports. In the physical market, demand has eased after Diwali, and there is no reason why prices should rise so rapidly as there is ample stock available.

Mr Mukesh Kuwadia, Secretary of Bombay Sugar Merchants' Association (BSMA), told *Business Line*, “During October, when the free sale quota was 17 lakh tonnes, the market was range-bound at Rs 2,800-3,000 despite the higher festival demand. In November, with the same free sale quota and with no festival or other demand… the prices are rising daily only because of speculative trading in futures markets.”

He further said that the Government may allow sugar export once crushing starts at the national level. “As we are carrying about 55 lakh tonnes of opening stocks and production is expected at about 260 lakh tonnes in the current year, we will have sufficient surplus stocks after meeting an estimated 230 lakh tonnes domestic requirement. But more exports should be allowed only after assessing the production, stocks and domestic price.

Bitter-sweet Bull Run

A wholesaler said sugar was tracking the speculative Bull Run in the domestic futures market. Sugar prices in the national-level commodity exchange rose by nearly Rs 250-300 last week. Physical market traders blamed the futures market for the sudden and sharp rise. In the futures market, speculators are betting on hopes for more sugar exports. The weak Indian rupee is further aiding the bullish sentiment.

In Vashi market, volume remained at the usual middle-month level. On Wednesday, about 17-18 mills offered tenders and sold about 65,000 to 70,000 bags at Rs 2,890-2,990 (Rs 2,840-2,940) for S-grade and Rs 3,000-3,070 (Rs 2,940-3,040) for M-grade. Arrivals numbered 50-51 truckloads and local despatches, 45-46 truckloads.

Bombay Sugar Merchants' Association rates:

Spot rates: S-grade Rs 3,021-3,100 (Rs 2,986-3,061) and M-grade Rs 3,101-3,231 (Rs 3,061-3,191).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,000-3,040 (Rs 2,980-3,000) and M-grade Rs 3,100-3,180 (Rs 3,050-3,150).

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