

GM crops need to be monitored



The Hindu Governor K. Rosaiah (third right) conferring degrees of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) on Revenue, Relief, Rehabilitation, and Urban Land Ceiling Minister of Andhra Pradesh N. Raghuvendra Reddy (fifth right), and Chairman and Managing Director of Thiru Arooran Sugars Limited R.V. Tyagarajan (fourth right), at the 32nd convocation of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in Coimbatore on Wednesday. Photo: S. Siva Saravanan

Based on the important lessons learnt from the Bt brinjal case, it is important to systematically and constantly monitor genetically modified (GM) crops. There is need for an independent agency to evaluate and engage with public groups to assure complete transparency of relevant information and comprehensive evaluation and compliance, Member of the Planning Commission K. Kasthurirangan, said here on Wednesday.

Delivering the 32nd convocation address of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, he said though Bt cotton, the first GM crop approved for commercial cultivation in India, was grown on 80 per cent of the area under cotton in the country, much debate and controversy arose when approval was sought for commercial cultivation of Bt brinjal.

“The opposition came from a section of the scientific community itself, besides some environmental groups, pointing to risks in terms of presence of an unwanted transgene, which

encodes resistance to certain antibiotics. Several lacunae were pointed out with the evaluation process. The controversy culminated in an indefinite moratorium for commercial cultivation,” Mr. Kasthurirangan said.

Pointing out major problems that continue to be of great concern in agriculture, he added that problems brought with them new opportunities and challenges. For many problems, solutions could be found from gene sources available in germplasms.

“Although we succeeded in raising the genetic yield level of major food grain crops through hybrid technology, we have failed in fully realising their inherent potential. Though many new technologies have been developed for rainfed regions, yield gaps continue to be very large. Our scientists must therefore work intensively to accurately assess the felt needs of our country,” he said.

Revenue, Relief, Rehabilitation, and Urban Land Ceiling Minister of Andhra Pradesh N. Raghuveera Reddy, and Chairman and Managing Director of Thiru Arooran Sugars Limited R.V. Tyagarajan, were conferred degrees of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) by Governor K. Rosaiah, who presided over the convocation.

Agriculture Minister S. Damodaran instituted six new endowments. As many 678 candidates received Ph.D., post-graduate and graduate degrees.

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Simple traditional practices can help control rising prices

M. J. Prabu



Prof. Anil Gupta, Vice Chairman, National innovation Foundation. Photo: Sandeep Saxena

Will the government disregard lobby pressures and back these methods?

In the last few years the prices of almost all agricultural commodities shot up by more than sixty per cent.

Prof Anil Gupta, Co-ordinator, Sristi and Honey Bee Network, and Executive Vice Chair, National Innovation Foundation, Ahmedabad in his [blog](#) mentions one clue on why this problem is becoming intractable - we are too focussed entirely on output prices as a balancing exercise.

Need more attention

We do not pay enough attention to reduction of cost in most commodities. We need to aim at reducing unit cost of all goods and services in manufacturing as well as agriculture sector.

Farmers also will not plead for higher prices every year if the cost of their inputs can be controlled and reduced, according to him.

He adds that it is alright for the agricultural minister to say that to pay farmers well, society should bear the inflationary burden.

But that is not the right or understanding attitude towards the poor who suffer the most, nor towards farmers who do not care about prices as much as profits.

Convincing problem

He even wonders how to convince the wise people in the planning commission considering the inflation, and adding cost of ten per cent or so to every unit cost.

He gives the example of growing cotton. The crop consumes almost forty per cent of the country's chemical pesticides followed by paddy at 20 per cent.

What are we doing?

"What are we doing to reduce the cultivation cost of cotton? Farmers like Mr. Lakhra Bhai of Surendra Nagar in Gujarat used the idea of growing lady's finger around cotton crops to trap the cotton pests nearly 20 years ago," he says.

If that did not work, they sprayed jaggery or sugar solution to attract black ants which controlled the pests.

Prof Gupta was requested by the Government to look into the problem of farmers' suicides in India. "While recommending establishment of village knowledge management systems, I pointed out a great tragedy confronting the children of farmers who committed suicides.

“I asked them whether they knew about any low cost or non-monetary technologies for reducing pest in cotton, since that is what pushed their fathers to the extreme step with no hope of coming out of their debt. The answer was a loud and repeated NO,” he rues.

Ironically, farmers from another district of Maharashtra which he visited, shared a traditional practice (also found in many other parts of India) that lady’s finger as border crop acts as a good trap crop.

It belongs to the same family as cotton and flowers earlier than cotton.

Wrong practice

“Has any experiment been done to prove that the above simple traditional method is wrong in India or Africa or central or West Asia?” he asks.

But will these practices ever reach the masses?

“No. because then farmers will become self reliant and sustainable. Will the department of agriculture share this disregarding the pressure from the pesticide lobby, I doubt it, as for twenty years they did not do it,” he voices his point emphatically.

Free for all

“These kinds of solutions are available on sristi.org web site in open source for decades. When the cost of failure is low, and chances of success high, only inertia can explain the indifference to such bottom-up grassroots solutions for decades.

“These solutions will reduce cost, check inflationary pressure, and make the poor better off too as they will not suffer from exposure to chemicals. I hope technocracy will prove that we are wrong,” he concludes with a chuckle.

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Crop science innovation meeting

A meeting on Innovations for Industry in crop science was organized recently by the Zonal technology management - business planning and development (ZTM-BPD) unit, South zone, Kochi along with the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM) Hyderabad at Rajendranagar, Hyderabad for showcasing the innovations from seven

prestigious crop science research institutions under Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Business incubation

The meet was organized as part of the business incubation drive designed for the agricultural sector to promote entrepreneurs with the help of latest R&D facilities and vast knowledge available with ICAR.

The event planned to bring together innovators and entrepreneurs in agriculture on the same platform.

The technologies presented at the meet were improved crop varieties and hybrids suited to the diverse agro-ecologies and situations, technologies for eco-friendly and sustainable crop production and protection, crop improvement, health management, bio-resource utilization, bio-safety, value added products, bioinformatics, genomics, biotechnology, farm machinery, land use diversification and energy management.

These technologies were exposed to interested private sectors keen on taking up business ventures.

Exhibition

An exhibition on innovative showcase of technologies was also conducted providing an opportunity for the private sector to witness a wide range of knowledge based and entrepreneur ready technologies.

ICAR started the business incubation drive, designed specially for the Indian agricultural sector to promote agribusiness, by utilizing the vast research and development facilities, and knowledge available with its research institution.

The World Bank funded National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) has given a renewed boost to the agricultural research scenario of India through agribusiness promotion.

The ICAR through NAIP has developed the R&D system through new ways of doing business in agriculture and allied fields.

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Farm query: Fish gunabajalam

What is fish growth hormone? Where can I get details about it?

P. Chandralekha

Puducherry

Fish *gunabajalam* (extract in Tamil) or fish growth hormone is a traditional method which is practised by some farmers in Kanyakumari district.

Several farmers in the region who use this extract vouch for its efficiency in controlling pests and helping good crop growth. They use this hormone for growing their rose, chilli and paddy crops.

For more details on how to make and use it readers can contact farmer Mrs. M. Thangam, Kozhikoottupothai, Kumarapuram thoppu P.O., Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu, mobile: 9952607450.

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VC sees scope for farmers earning Rs. 3 lakh per ha

Special Correspondent

Numerous technologies available for enhancing crop productivity

Tamil Nadu Agriculture University (TNAU) has released 756 crop varieties, more than 1,000 technologies, 149 farm implements, said P. Murugesu Boopathi, Vice Chancellor, at Needamangalam in the district recently.

At the fifth advisory council meeting of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at Needamangalam, the Vice Chancellor asked the KVK and line departments to work together for socio-economic development of the delta farmers. Lots of technologies like SRI, sustainable sugarcane initiative (SSI), precision farming, and integrated farming systems (IFS) are available for enhancing the productivity of crops.

Scope

"There is a great scope for farmers to earn Rs.3 lakh per hectare a year in delta districts through IFS," he said.

TNAU has developed various ICT facilities like video conferencing, market intelligence, weather forecasting, agri-portal, and e-education for the benefit of students, department officials and farmers. For the first time in India, TNAU has started an Undergraduate course on Bachelor of Farm Technology (B.F.Tech), to farmers who have passed out tenth standard and aged more than 30 years.

Dr.T.V.Srinivasa Reddy, Senior Scientist, Zone eight, Bangalore, P.Kalaiselvan, Director of Extension, TNAU, K.Jayaraj, Director of Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute (TRRI), Aduthurai and T.Senguttuvan, Programme Co-ordinator of KVK, Needamangalam also spoke.

Line department officials, K.Mayilvahanan, Joint Director of Agriculture, Tiruvarur District, M.Arulmani, Regional Joint Director, Animal Husbandry department, K.Elangovan, Deputy Director of Horticulture participated in the meeting, said a KVK press release issued here on Wednesday.

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Sunny time for sunflower farmers in Raichur district

Staff Correspondent

Sunflower farmers in the district are upbeat with the rise in prices of the crop. The price of sunflower seeds this year currently ranges from a minimum of Rs. 2,000 to a maximum of Rs. 3,131 per quintal while prices of the crop last year ranged between Rs. 1,790 and Rs. 2,830 per quintal.

A total of 52,225 quintals of sunflower seeds have arrived in the last three months. The crop was cultivated on over one lakh hectares before 2008. The cultivation of the crop has been declining in the last three years on account of widespread pest attacks.

Floods in 2009 also destroyed a large number of sunflower fields. The crop was grown on 25,800 ha in 2009 as against the targeted area of 54,500 ha. This year, however, the crop has been cultivated on 20,180 ha as against the target of 17,000 ha, according to sources.

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Experts moot policy on ornamental fish

Special Correspondent

Scientists, researchers, and fisheries experts participating in a one-day workshop organised by the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, here on Monday stressed the need to make Green certification mandatory for the collection, trade, and breeding of ornamental fish in Kerala.

The workshop held in connection with the World Fisheries Day has recommended a policy on ornamental fisheries for Kerala to ensure sustainable exploitation of resources.

Stating that there was tremendous scope for ornamental fish trade in Kerala, the speakers advised caution in the trade of wild-caught species, especially those in the threatened category.

The list of the endangered fish from the Western Ghats included 38 species from Kerala. Among this, 26 species were actively traded. Of these, the population of 14 species was decreasing and the current population trend of 11 species was unknown. The workshop stressed the need for assessing the population status and trade database to ensure sustainability in trade. It called for suitable strategies and legal measures to maintain the population of freshwater fish at a sustainable level.

Ban proposed

One of the major recommendations was the introduction of a clearance-issue system for export of fish to ensure that no wild-caught species in the threatened category were being traded. The workshop also proposed a strict ban on the trade of endangered and critically endangered species.

“Based on the population status, trading agencies such as Kerala Aqua Ventures International Ltd (KAVIL) must be able to ban the trade of a particular species,” according to the recommendations.

“There is a felt need to develop commercial breeding technology for ornamental species,” the speakers said.

Observing that wild-caught fish from Kerala were taken to neighbouring States for export, speakers called for steps to regulate cross-border transport of fish. They also highlighted the need for research institutions and universities to take up research on development of captive breeding technology to facilitate export of ornamental fish without affecting the native population.

Strengthening of extension facilities at research institutions and faster technology transfer mechanisms were proposed.

Online data

The workshop urged the government to encourage participatory processes like PPC (Private Public Community) partnerships for breeding of fish and to avoid stress on wild populations.

Several speakers pointed to the importance of publishing official data on commercial exploitation of fish and wild population on websites. They suggested that the Fisheries Department notify the closed season, quota for fish catch, and other regulatory measures to protect and manage the resources.

The workshop also stressed the need for diversification of the industry by selecting more fish and developing indigenous technologies. It recommended advanced training facilities for local farmers to become more competitive by breeding specific groups of fish for the global market.

More community-based training programs and extension activities to develop the socio-economic status of fishermen and other stakeholders, promoting entrepreneurship in ornamental fish breeding through women's self-help groups, and the development of value-addition to introduce new varieties into the market were among the proposals.

KAVIL managing director A. Gopalakrishnan Nair inaugurated the workshop.

They want Green certification made mandatory for collection of and trade in ornamental fish.

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Kharif: paddy growers hoping for the best

G. Nagaraja

Hectic activity going on in the areas where the crop is ready for harvesting



Tough times: Farm workers harvesting paddy near Sriparru in West Godavari district. — Photo: A.V.G. Prasad

The paddy growers are hoping for the best over the kharif prospects in West Godavari district. The harvest has commenced in the upland tracks, the ayacut under the Krishna-Eluru canal and parts of the Godavari western delta.

It is a hectic activity in the areas where the crop got ready for the harvest.

A good number of harvesters started rolling into the district from far-off places such as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana areas to help the farmers overcome the shortage of farm hands in the harvest. The machines, however, failed to make their presence felt in the delta fields which are marshy by nature in which they tend to get stuck up.

The farmers went in for the kharif operations against all odds.

The transplantation was delayed by a month in the delta due to the delay in release of canal water as a result of the reported slowdown in the modernisation works. Most of the fields in the upland areas under borewells were subjected to withering due to the continued dry spell conditions and erratic power supply.

The month-long Sakala Janula Samme in the Telangana region had turned the situation from bad to worse for the farmers since it had an adverse bearing on power generation and supply.

The tail-end fields in the delta failed to receive adequate water supplies from the canals.

Impact on yield

The farmers in around 10,000 acres have observed crop holiday in Narsapur and Bhimavaram areas seeking a better deal for their produce. "It is all likely to have an impact on the yield", says B. Balaram, president of the district committee of the Andhra Pradesh Rytu Sangham.

The average yield might not cross 20-25 bags per acre in most of the areas, he added.

The farmers, who were subjected to severe market vagaries in the last rabi, are optimistic about the market conditions in the present season. The district administration has announced to open 100 Indira Kranti Padham (IKP) centres for paddy purchase from the growers across the district and the IKP volunteers are undergoing training over the nitty-gritty of paddy trading. The millers from the Seemandhra and the Telangana regions, who met at Tadepalligudem a few days ago, resolved to bury their differences and come under a single umbrella in the run up to the paddy harvest. This development is likely to have an adverse bearing on the bargaining power of the farmers, says M.V. Suryanarayana Raju of the Godavari Delta Parirakshana Samithi.

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- *Farmers in around 10,000 acres have observed crop holiday*
 - *IKP volunteers undergoing training over nitty-gritty of paddy trading*
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Farmers demand water for rabi crop

Hundreds of farmers staged picketing at the Irrigation Department divisional office here on Wednesday in protest against the problems faced by them in getting water for rabi crop. Addressing the farmers, Vemuru MLA N. Ananda Babu said the government was not bothered about the Krishna delta modernisation works. Its negligence was causing problems to farmers in sourcing water from other parts of the delta. Adverse weather has already taken a heavy toll on the agriculture sector and farmers could no longer bear the consequences of the government's indifference to their plight. If the rabi crop is not given water in time, the farmers would intensify the agitation, Mr. Ananda Babu warned.

Former MP Yadlapati Venkata Rao, CPM leader K. Sambhi Reddy and Ch. Singa Rao of CPI and others took part.

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End protests, Chavan urges cotton growers

Staff Reporter

The demand for increased support prices for cotton and other agricultural produce was a serious issue and the government would be announcing its decision on giving assistance to farmers in the upcoming winter session of the Maharashtra legislature, Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan told a press conference here on Wednesday.

The government on Wednesday held an all-party meeting on the cotton issue in the backdrop of a raging *andolan* of farmers in Vidarbha and north Maharashtra and reports of a spate of farmer suicides. In places, the week-long protests led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Shiv Sena were also marked by incidents of violence.

On Wednesday, the State highway along the Chandrapur-Yavatmal road was blocked for two hours by a group of farmers numbering around one thousand.

“The andolan is on and some have also gone on a hunger strike. The government has taken the issues very seriously,” Mr. Chavan said on the sidelines of the two-hour-long all-party meeting. He also met representatives of farmers' organisations.

Owing to the model code of conduct currently in effect ahead of the local body elections in the State, Mr. Chavan said the government was bound by the State Election Commission's directive of not making an announcement on the issue.

However, he said the government was looking at providing assistance “per hectare” as in its previous moves, as opposed to giving help “per quintal”.

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End protest and start selling, Chavan urges cotton growers

Staff Reporter

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Farmers have been demanding a support price of Rs. 6,000 per quintal of cotton, Rs. 3,000 for soya beans and Rs. 2,500 per quintal of paddy. The Chief Minister said applying the quintal criteria for these crops was “not possible” as much of the cotton had been sold. Anticipating a “per quintal” price hike, some farmers had not sold their cotton in the market.

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Thu, Nov 24, 2011 | Updated 05.51AM IST

24 NOV, 2011, 05.22AM IST, JAYASHREE BHOSALE, ET BUREAU

Nod for 1 million tonne sugar export cheers industry

PUNE: A government decision allowing export of one million tonne sugar and lifting the ban on stockholding limit was cheered by the sugar industry.

Wholesale prices at the Vashi market went up by Rs 1.50/kg on Wednesday while the commodity for delivery in January gained Rs 17, or 0.58%, to Rs 2,967 per quintal on NCDEX.

“Domestic sugar prices will stabilise now as more sugar will come into the market. Exports will

help mills to improve their cash flows and in turn control the cost of production," said Abinash Verma, director general, Indian Sugar Mills Association. But an exporter from Maharashtra said, "We will get export parity only when domestic prices come down and the fee of buying export quotas from mills declines."

He said exporters may not have to discount the price due to the volatile movement of the rupee because international prices are already low. Though the current export prices are less than the London prices, a few better-managed mills from Maharashtra have started discussions with international buyers at prices higher than the London price.

London sugar price was at \$619/tonne freight-on-board (f.o.b) on Tuesday but mills are getting positive response for offers up to \$650/tonne f.o.b.

Brazilian sugar is not available in global markets now and Thai sugar will come in from January onward. With the rupee weakening against the dollar, exporters will get Rs 1,200 more per tonne.

Bigger mills that export their production on their own want the smaller ones to pool their quotas and hand the quantities over to bigger mills. The central government has also lifted quota restrictions and mills are happy that this will improve the lifting of sugar.

"We asked for an extension of domestic sale sugar quota for the last 5-6 months because there was very less lifting of sugar quota. The decision of removing the quota limit will help to improve ex-mill sale," said a miller from Maharashtra.



Soon, agriculture university for Bundelkhand

Express news service Posted online: Thu Nov 24 2011, 04:51 hrs

New Delhi : With an eye on the Assembly elections in UP early next year, the Congress-led UPA government has decided to honour its commitment to set up a central agricultural university in Bundelkhand region. Sources revealed that the Union Cabinet is slated to consider a proposal to set up a central agricultural university through an Act of Parliament. To be headquartered in Jhansi, the proposed university is slated to have four different colleges, for Agriculture and Horticulture, Forestry, Animal Sciences, and Fisheries.

While two of the colleges — Agriculture and Horticulture, and Forestry — is slated to be in Uttar Pradesh part of Bundelkhand region, the other two colleges would be in Madhya Pradesh part of the region. Fully funded by the Central government, the university is likely to require about 300 acres of land, and would need an investment of about Rs 500 crore.

Business Standard

Thursday, Nov 24, 2011

UP cane crushing gains pace

Virendra Singh Rawat / Lucknow November 24, 2011, 0:27 IST

Sugarcane crushing in Uttar Pradesh, the country's largest producer of the cash crop, is slowly gaining momentum, with about 60 per cent of the 125 sugar mills functioning.

Till date, 76 mills, including 65 in private sector and rest being cooperative units, had started, primarily in the western and central regions. So far, the mills had crushed nearly 2.9 million tonnes (mt) of cane, producing 230,000 tonnes of the sweetener.

The state government had directed the respective district officials and magistrates to ensure early crushing by mills to allow farmers to empty their fields for wheat.

Sugar futures hit upper circuit

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai November 24, 2011, 0:23 IST

With govt allowing 1 mt exports, global prices fall on expectation of increased supply from India.

The price of sugar hit the upper circuit in futures trading on commodity exchanges to their highest level in 11 months, following the government's okay to export of a million tonnes.

All sugar contracts reported a three-plus per cent rise in prices on India's second largest commodity exchange, the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange.

GETTING SWEETER			
Sugar M-NCDEX Futures (Rs/qrtl)			
Contracts	Nov 22, 11	Nov 23, 11	% Chg
Dec '11	2946	3012	2.24
Jan '12	2961	3010	1.65
Feb '12	2974	3028	1.82
Mar '12	2988	3080	3.08
Apr '12	3002	3096	3.13
May '12	3045	3137	3.02

Source: NCDEX. Compiled by BS Research Bureau

Total turnover from this segment also shot up 200 per cent, the highest in a year. Sugar for delivery in May gained three per cent to Rs 3,137 a quintal on Wednesday, while profit booking on highs pulled the price down for other contracts. Still, the commodity for delivery in December witnessed a rise of 2.2 per cent.

Total turnover across all sugar contracts shot up to Rs 148 crore on Wednesday, from Rs 49 crore yesterday.

“Although export to the tune of one million tonnes is very low, it is still higher from the market participants' expectations of 500,000 tonnes in the first tranche. Indian sugar prices are expected to gain further by Rs 150-170 a quintal from the current level on the decision.

Crushing (of cane), delayed by almost a month in Uttar Pradesh on the back of cane price disputes, is expected to commence in full swing in the coming weeks. Thus, the sharp gains

may be capped in the longer term, owing to sufficient supplies in the domestic markets,” said Naveen Mathur, associate director of Angel Broking.

The sweetener jumped 3.4 per cent to Rs 3,050 a qtl in spot trade at Kolhapur, Maharashtra. Meanwhile, Vinay Kumar, managing director of the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd, has urged the government to allow an additional million tonnes of sugar exports.

The worry of extra supply from India has reduced the price globally.

On the New York Mercantile Exchange, the benchmark raw sugar futures traded down 0.6 per cent at 23.29 cents a pound in early morning trade, while Liffe white sugar March futures fell 0.7 per cent to \$609.6 a tonne on a free on board (FoB) basis. The price in India, however, was quoted at \$630 a tonne for white sugar delivered to a domestic port.

“Also, if global prices decline sharply on supply pressure from India and Thailand, then Indian exports might turn unviable, thus restricting a major upside in prices.

Sugar prices in the Indian markets are expected to trade in the range of Rs 2,900-3,200 a qtl in the coming month. If the government allows further exports, then prices may breach even Rs 3,200 a qtl in the long term,” said Mathur.

The Indian Sugar Mills Association (Isma) has reiterated its demand for allowing the price of sugar in the physical market to be at par with the cost of production.

“We are saying that with the massive hike in cane prices and general increase in other inputs, our cost of production in Uttar Pradesh in 2011-12 is estimated to be Rs 33-34 a kg and Rs 29-30 a kg in Maharashtra. Hence, ex-mill prices should be allowed by the government to stabilise at these levels. Anything less would mean losses to mills and cane price arrears by January 2012 itself,” said Abinash Verma, secretary-general of Isma. In the last sugar season (October 2010- November 2011), the government allowed total export of 2.6 mt of sugar, including unrestricted shipments of 1.5 mt under Open General Licence. Total sugar output is estimated to remain at 26 mt this year against consumption of 22 mt. With around five mt of carryover stock, the market is expected to remain in heavy oversupply this year.

S. Indian vegetables tempt palates in the Gulf, Europe

K.V. Kurmanath

Hyderabad, Nov. 23:

After colourful flowers and lip-smacking fruits, vegetables from the four southern States have begun attracting agri-exporters, with exports to the Gulf and Europe turning out to be encouraging. Green chillies, okra (*lady's finger*), curry leaf and beans are hot favourites for importers.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is in the process of quantifying value of exports from vegetables clusters that are operational in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

“APEDA is promoting four clusters each in the four southern States to make the region [a] hub for vegetable exports,” Mr R. Ravindra, Assistant General Manager, in charge for Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh told *Business Line*.

In Andhra Pradesh, APEDA is promoting clusters in Rangareddy, Medak, Visakhapatnam and Nizamabad.

Good alternative

While agreeing that exports of mangoes and grapes faced challenges, he pointed out that vegetables could be a good alternative for farmers. APEDA intends to identify other potential markets for Indian vegetables.

“We will take inputs from experts and exporters and advise farmers what varieties to grow to suit the market needs in the markets abroad,” he said.

The Central agency, which works under the Ministry of Commerce, is in the process of quantifying value of vegetable exports.

“After compiling details, we will sell the idea to exporters who have good networks abroad,” Mr Ravindra said.

He held a meeting here on Tuesday with agri-exporters, farmers and officials of the State Horticulture Department to take stock of the situation and take suggestions to improve exports.

“We welcome project proposals from stakeholders on building good ecosystem for promoting exports. We will clear them within 15-20 days after studying them,” Mr Ravindra said.

kurmanath@thehindu.co.in

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 24, 2011)

Tea volume continues to be high at Coonoor auction

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, Nov. 23:

A volume of 16.69 lakh kg will be offered at Sale No: 47 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions to be held tomorrow and Friday, reveals an analysis of brokers' listing.

It is 24,000 kg less than last week's offer but as much as 4.28 lakh kg more than the offer this time last year.

Of the 16.69 lakh kg on offer, 12.16 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.53 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 15.61 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 1.08 lakh kg, orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 0.61 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 11.55 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.47 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 4.06 lakh kg, CTC.

In the 16.69 lakh kg, fresh teas account for 14.42 lakh kg. As much as 2.27 lakh kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions. Last week, prices averaged Rs 62.26 a kg.

This was the lowest price since September 8 when prices averaged Rs 61.18. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 40-48 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 80-115 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 45-50 for plain dusts and Rs 85-137 for brighter liquoring dusts. On the export front, Pakistan bought in wide range – Rs 48-70 a kg and the CIS Rs 46-70.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 24, 2011)

Profit booking saps rubber futures

Our Correspondent

Kottayam, Nov. 23:

The spot rubber market closed unchanged on Wednesday. Sentiments were neutral as the domestic futures lost early gains probably on profit booking at higher levels. Sheet rubber finished steady at Rs 191 a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to traders and the Rubber Board. Transactions were low.

In futures, the December series declined to Rs 190.97 (193.12), January to Rs 192.25 (194.60), February to Rs 195.25 (197.38), March to Rs 197.50 (199.99), April to Rs 200.25 (202.25) and May to Rs 202.00 (204.75) a kg for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs 174.57 (171.22) a kg at Bangkok. The Tokyo Commodity Exchange remained closed owing to 'Labor Thanksgiving Day'.

Spot rubber rates/kg were RSS-4: 191 (191); RSS-5: 188 (188); Ungraded: 181 (181); ISNR 20: 172 (172) and Latex 60 per cent: 111 (111).

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Tamil Nadu launches initiative to improve sugarcane yield

Our Bureau

SUSTAINABLE PACKAGE

Chennai, Nov. 23:

The Tamil Nadu Government has launched 'Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative', aimed at promoting a novel cultivation system to enhance crop productivity and efficiency in sugarcane.

The initiative will be implemented initially over 7,500 acres at an initial cost of Rs 12.93 crore..

The State Government has announced a package including fiscal incentives such as a subsidy of Rs 10,000 an acre for encouraging fertigation, application of fertilisers in solution through drip irrigation systems, and using a nutrient known as sugarcane booster.

The Tamil Nadu Government has also announced 100 per cent subsidy for small farmers to set up micro irrigation facilities and 75 per cent subsidy for other farmers. The Tami Nadu Agriculture University will provide the training for this method of cultivating sugarcane.

The Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative involves application of specific techniques beginning from the seed stage through the duration of cultivation up to harvest.

This includes use of drip irrigation, application of precise levels of nutrients and other agronomic practices including wider spacing between sugarcane plants to enable healthier growth.

The objective is to increase yields and sugar content in the cane, while bringing down costs to augment farmers' income.

Higher yield

According to Agriculture Department officials, sugarcane booster is a nutrient in solution form developed by the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University.

It helps increase yields of a range of crops.

A major saving for the farmers is in the seed stage itself.

In the conventional system farmers use three node lengths of sugarcane with 2-3 buds, known as a sett, as a seed to raise sugarcane.

So several tonnes of sugarcane are used as seeds.

But in the new system, a single bud is chipped off, raised in a nursery like a sapling, and then transplanted to the field.

This assures survival of the cane in the field while saving on the quantity of sugarcane used as a seed.

When followed up with the recommended systems of cultivation, farmers get sugarcane yields significantly higher than the 105 tonne a hectare recorded in Tamil Nadu.

Yields can go up to 180 tonnes. With mills paying farmers around Rs 2,000 a tonne, the increase in yield will mean a substantial growth in farmers' income, the officials said.

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Export move perks up demand for sugar

M.R. Subramani



Chennai, Nov. 23:

Sugar prices increased across the country following the Empowered Group of Ministers' decision to allow exports of 10 lakh tonnes of sugar in the current season that began in October.

The mood turned bullish after the announcement, though the industry feels the Centre can allocate more for exports.

In central Uttar Pradesh, price of sugar produced last season increased to Rs 3,100 a quintal from Rs 3,050 on Tuesday. Sugar produced this season was quoted at Rs 3,200 against Rs 3,150.

In eastern and western Uttar Pradesh, sugar from the new season ruled at Rs 3,250 and the one from the old season was quoted at Rs 3,150.

"With the Centre allowing exports, mills in Maharashtra will be looking to export more. They produce sugar with an eye on exports and they also enjoy freight advantage," said an Uttar Pradesh sugar industry source.

This, however, buoyed sugar in States such as Uttar Pradesh since buyers from eastern India, especially from Kolkata, hunted for sugar there.

"Kolkata buyers were active in Uttar Pradesh. Till now, they had bought from Maharashtra and Karnataka," the source said.

Apart from Kolkata buying, local demand led to a firm trend in Uttar Pradesh prices.

In Maharashtra, the export decision led to rush from bulk traders and stockists. Mills, too, raised their auction price.

S-30 grade sugar increased to Rs 3,151-3,231 against Rs 3,050-3,100 on Tuesday, while M-30 grade sugar was up at Rs 3,202-3,361 against Rs 3,156-3,261.

The Centre's decision to allow sugar exports had a negative effect on the global market with white sugar prices falling to a six-month low of \$610.80 a tonne in London. Raw sugar ruled at 23.33 cents a pound.

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Higher sowing to cap castor in the long term

Our Correspondent



Rajkot, Nov. 23:

Castorseed rose on Wednesday as stockists and traders bought at lower prices to increase holdings, market sources said. Besides, supplies were restricted and stocks are low in the local market, they said. Export demand is likely to go up.

Sources said long-term gains are unlikely as the new crop is expected to be higher than last year. Sowing acreage under castorseed is likely to go up by 3.9 lakh hectares to 12.7 lakh hectares this year, they said. As a result, the output might touch 17-18 lakh tonnes. Moreover, new supplies of castorseed from major mandis in Gujarat and Rajasthan are likely to begin from mid-December, traders said.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, castorseed's December contract gained Rs 42 at Rs 3,980 a quintal with an open interest of 12,840 lots, while the January contract increased by Rs 16.50 to Rs 3,762a quintal with an open interest of 3,250 lots.

On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange, its December contract was up by Rs 18 to Rs 3,843 a quintal. However, the new March contract was down Rs 30 to Rs 3,579 a quintal (Rs 3,609). Spot castor increased by Rs 20 to Rs 3,895 a quintal on the exchange.

While 16,000-17,000 bags arrived in Gujarat and sold at Rs 770-790 for 20 kg, 800-900 bags arrived in Saurashtra and fetched Rs 745-770 for 20 kg.

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Chana falls on poor demand, higher sales

Our Correspondent



Indore, Nov. 23:

Chana fell on sluggish demand and higher selling.

Chana (kanta) slumped to Rs 3,400 a quintal. Similarly, chana (desi) declined to Rs 3,300 a quintal (Rs 3,325). Chana dal continued to slide on weak demand, with chana dal (average) declining to Rs 4,175-4,200 a quintal, chana dal (medium) to Rs 4,275-4,300 a quintal and chana dal (bold) to Rs 4,400-4,425.

Dollar chana or chickpea was firm at Rs 8,200-8,400 a quintal on steady local demand even as arrivals rose to 1,400 bags (1,000).

Tur and its dal were unchanged on steady demand. Tur (Maharashtra) sold at Rs 3,650 a quintal and tur (Nimari) at Rs 2,300-2,800. Tur dal was unchanged despite subdued demand,

with tur (marka) quoting at Rs 6,350-6,400 a quintal, tur dal (full) at Rs 5,600-5,700 and tur dal (*sawa* no.) at Rs 4,800-4,850 a quintal.

Masoor (bold) declined to Rs 2,800-2,825 a quintal on sluggish demand and masoor (medium) quoted at Rs 2,600-2,650. Masoor dal remained unchanged. Masoor dal sold at Rs 3,225-3,250, masoor dal (medium) at Rs 3,350-3,375 and masoor dal (bold) at Rs 3,450-3,75 a quintal. Moong declined marginally on weak demand, with moong (best quality) being quoted at Rs 4,100-4,350 and moong (medium) at Rs 3,600-4,000. Arrival of moong in local mandis declined to 500 bags. Moong dal, however, was unchanged.

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Rice market subdued on sluggish offtake

Our Correspondent



Karnal, Nov. 23:

The rice market witnessed a mixed trend on Wednesday, with low buying. Aromatic rice varieties witnessed a downtrend, while non-basmati varieties managed to maintain their previous levels.

Mr Amit Chandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told *Business Line* that sluggish domestic demand led the market down. There is no support from the export front as new contracts have not been signed. Old contracts are being executed, he said.

Rice millers are not interested in selling their stocks at current levels, as the market is ruling at the lowest level of the season and they are waiting for some improvement, said Mr Chandna.

Prices of Pusa-1121 (steam) decreased by Rs 20 and quoted around Rs 4,330 a quintal while Pusa-1121 (sela) was at Rs 3,450-3,475 a quintal, Rs 25 down.

For the brokens of Pusa 1121, Tibar ruled at Rs 3,300, Dubar was at Rs 2,900-2,950 while Mongra was trading at Rs 2,300 a quintal.

Pure basmati (raw) eased by Rs 50 at Rs 4,550 a quintal while basmati sela sold at Rs 3,500-3,550 a quintal.

Sharbati (steam) quoted at Rs 2,900 while Sharbati (sela) was at Rs 2,750-2,800 a quintal.

PR-11 (sela) sold at Rs 2,100-2,200 a quintal, while PR-11(raw) quoted at Rs 1,900-2,150 a quintal.

Permal (sela) sold at Rs 1,800-1,950 a quintal, while Permal (raw) was around Rs 1,900 a quintal.

Around 85,000 bags arrived at the Karnal grain market terminal. Around 45,000 bags of PR arrived and sold at Rs 950-1,070.

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Turmeric traders shy away from building stocks

Our Correspondent



Erode, Nov. 23:

Heavy arrivals continued to pound turmeric as prices dropped further by Rs 200 a quintal on Wednesday.

“The root variety turmeric is witnessing demand for the past one week in Erode markets with north Indian buyers placing fresh orders. But prices of the root variety have not improved.

Overall, both varieties of turmeric decreased by Rs 200 a quintal on Wednesday due to arrival

of 11,000-odd bags,” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said that only 50 per cent of the farmers agreed to sell at prevailing prices. Traders, too, were unhappy, so they bought limited stocks to fulfil their commitment.

Traders usually make large purchases, store stocks and sell when prices improve, usually within a week. But this time, uncertainty is prevailing and they are not interested in building huge stocks.

All stocks of the hybrid variety were sold due to good quality. The variety saw an increase of Rs 200 a quintal. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,409-4,689 a quintal; the root variety at Rs 3,209-4,475 .

Salem crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,159-5,459, root variety at Rs 4,589-4,719 a quintal. Totally 2,472 bags of turmeric arrived for sale, of which 247 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,769-4,829, root variety at Rs 3,719-4,638. Out of 404 bags of turmeric that arrived for sales, 324 were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,000-4,819, root variety at Rs 3,986-4,621. About 1,124 bags were sold against the arrival of 1,140.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety fetched Rs 4,089-4,851, the root variety Rs 4,036-4,639. Out of 1,620 bags of turmeric that arrived for sales, 1,082 were sold.

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