THE HINDU

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Weed problem stifles Bt cotton growers

Special Correspondent

Differences between Bt cotton growers and agricultural scientists came to the fore at a meeting arranged by Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India) Ltd. here on Tuesday to discuss challenges that growers face in kharif season.

While growers accused the University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, of not providing solution to weed problem, a research scholar refuted this and accused the growers of not heeding to experts' advice in this regard.

Two farmers, who detailed the problems that cotton growers face, underlined the need for finding solution to overcome them, especially the weed problem as it was affecting the output.

Satyappa and Veeresh, progressive farmers from Raichur, said the production was higher because they were cultivating Bt cotton, but they were facing severe weed problem.

Mr. Satyappa cultivates cotton on 12 acres of land. He claimed his income had increased after he started cultivating Bt cotton. However, the challenge before growers, he said, was arranging mid-season labour for need-based weeding.

“Growers are not getting solution to the weed problem even from the UAS,” he claimed.

When asked about the role of the company that promotes the crop, in addressing the problem, he said the firm did not provide any solution for it.

Similar were the observations of Mr. Veeresh of Khanapura village who cultivates a variety of crops, including cotton.

“We spend a lot on arranging labour for weeding; it's a big challenge,” he said.

Refuted

Refuting their claim, B.T. Pujari, Research Director of the UAS, Raichur, said farmers were not heeding to the advice of agricultural experts with regard to overcoming the weed problem.

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VAT waived on fertilisers

Special Correspondent

Farmers were facing difficulties due to high tax rate

The Delhi Cabinet on Tuesday decided to waive Value Added Tax on fertilisers in order to provide some relief to the farmers.

Following a Cabinet meeting, Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit said her government had received representations from farmers calling for relief on VAT being levied on fertilisers. It was stated that farmers were facing difficulties due to the high tax rate on the same.

The farmers had claimed that due to the high tax on fertilisers, a significant difference had emerged in the prices in Delhi and Haryana. In Delhi, fertilisers mentioned in Serial No.73 and 188 of the First Schedule were being taxed at the rate of five per cent, while those mentioned in Serial No. 20 of the Third Schedule were attracting VAT at the rate of 12.5 per cent since April 1, 2010.

Henceforth, after issue of the notification, fertilisers — including pesticides, weedicides and insecticides — and bio-inputs like bio-fertilisers and micro-nutrients will not attract any VAT.

The Government said an amount of Rs.14,07,619 and Rs. 22,04,513 were collected as VAT on fertiliser in 2009-10 and 2010-11 respectively.

At the meeting, the issue of imposition of VAT on pieces of art sold through art galleries was also discussed. It was decided that the galleries will not be charged the tax for displaying the works and that VAT would only be imposed once the work is sold.

The meeting also discussed the issue of discontinuation of sale of reasonably-priced wheat flour through various government outlets. It was stated that stocks of wheat, which were being supplied by the Centre, had dried up and as no fresh stocks were available, the scheme needed to be discontinued for the time being.

- *Huge difference in Delhi, Haryana prices due to high tax: Farmers*
- *Also decided at meet: no VAT on art galleries for displaying works*

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Maize stem to be used as cattle fodder

Special Correspondent

Low-cost initiative: Kurnool Collector Ramsankar Naik examining maize stem-based fodder near Nandikotkur on Tuesday. – Photo: U. Subramanyam

During acute drought conditions, it is not just humans beings who suffer but also all other living beings, especially domestic animals.

The district administration, led by Collector Ramsankar Naik, undertook took a low-cost initiative to partially save the bovine population from hunger by converting agriculture waste into fodder.

Maize is cultivated in vast areas in Nandikotkur, Atmakur, Bandi Atmakur and Nandyal. After harvesting the cobs, farmers remove the stems and burn them. Cattle could not relish the stem in original form due to large size and roughness. If chopped in the machine to small particles, the pellet- sized pieces could be excellent fodder for the starved cattle.

The farmers offered stems free of cost to the administration as it would save on labour for its removal. The administration hired choppers and set them up at 10 places. Cutting workers would be engaged to collect the stems and transport it to chopping centres where they could be packed into gunnies after processing.

The conversion cost is estimated at Rs 1.20 paise per kg while its market cost is Rs. 6.

Mr. Naik, who visited Allur and Brahmanakotkur on Tuesday, instructed Dr. Venkata Ramana, Joint Director, Animal Husbandry, to explore innovative methods to further reduce the processing cost. Around one tonne of fodder is expected from each acre of maize field which could feed 250 animals for a day at the rate of 4-kg. per head. The chopped fodder would be brought to market yard for distribution. The revenue officers are engaged in selection of worst-affected villages in 29 drought-affected mandals.

Many sympathetic farmers have come forward to offer the harvested maize fields, transport vehicles and space for stocking the fodder.

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Meet discusses steps to curb illegal transport of paddy from State

Staff Reporter

Procurement process to continue for three months from Nov. 15

Good quality paddy from south Odisha is being illegally transported to adjoining Andhra Pradesh, admits administrative officials. The issue came up for discussion during a review meeting regarding paddy procurement in ten south Odisha districts held in the office of the Revenue Divisional Commissioner (RDC), southern division, in the city on Tuesday. The meeting was chaired by the RDC, L.N. Nayak, and was attended by the Collectors of Rayagada, Kandhamal, and Boudh, additional district magistrates of other seven districts, representatives of Civil Supplies Department, Food Corporation of India (FCI), regional marketing committees and cooperative societies. Anant C. Nayak, Additional Secretary of Food and Civil Supplies Department, also attended the meeting.

During discussion it was alleged that paddy procurement in south Odisha districts was being affected as good quality paddy from these districts was being transported to Andhra Pardesh by unscrupulous traders. And low grade paddy was being brought into Odisha from Andhra Pradesh in stead during the procurement season. It was decided to come up with special checkgates in Ganjam, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, and Kalahandi districts to curb the flow of good quality paddy from the State.

This year's target

Paddy procurement target for south Odisha district was lowered in comparison to last year. The reason is said to be crop failure due to low rainfall in this part of the State which drastically affected the kharif crop. This year the target is to procure 28 lakh metric tons of paddy from south Odisha. Last year, the target for paddy procurement was 32 lakh tons. But this target was not achieved because of crop loss due to untimely cyclonic rain in December.

The RDC said paddy cultivation was getting affected every year either due to floods or drought.

Paddy procurement process would commence on November 15 and continue for three months. Procurement would also be made through rural self-help groups (SHG) and cooperative bodies. The organisations interested in paddy procurement have already registered themselves through online registration process. They will be scrutinised by the Civil Supplies Department. Stocking capacity of FCI godowns and their condition was also discussed during the meeting.

- ***Officials admit transport of good quality paddy to Andhra Pradesh***
- ***Last year's target could not be achieved on account of crop loss***

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Fix MSP for paddy at Rs. 2,000 a quintal: sangha

Staff Correspondent

'Paddy growers in the State hit by increase in cost of cultivation'

The Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha on Tuesday urged the Union Government to increase the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy to Rs. 2,000 a quintal.

Speaking to presspersons here, president of the sangha Maruti Manpade said paddy growers in the State were facing severe difficulties owing to the increase in the cost of cultivation. "Paddy growers have not been able to earn a profit on account of the hikes in the price of fertilizers, increasing cost of labour and increases in petrol and diesel prices," he said.

Mr. Manpade said the Union Government had not considered the problems faced by the farmers while hiking the prices of petrol and diesel.

He expressed concern over reports of deaths of a few children in the region due to malnutrition.

"People in the rural areas of the Hyderabad Karnataka region have been suffering due to food shortages," he said. "The Government should procure paddy from farmers and distribute it among the poor in the rural areas through ration shops," Mr. Manpade said.

He said the sangha was planning to organise a divisional-level convention of farmers here soon to discuss the problems faced by paddy growers. “Farmers from all districts of the Hyderabad Karnataka region will attend the convention,” he said.

Mr. Manpade criticised the State Government's decision to conduct a Global Investors' Meet in Bangalore on December 1. “There is no point in inviting companies to set up industries in the State when the Government has not been able to ensure adequate water and power for the existing industries,” he said.

- *Divisional-level convention to be organised on problems faced by paddy growers*
- *Government's decision to organise Global Investors Meet comes in for flak*

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Farmers worried over inadequate dam storage

Staff Reporter

The farmers in different parts of the district have expressed their concern over inadequate storage of water in all the four dams including Pechipparai, Perunchani, Chittar I and Chittar II when compared to last year as the officials belonging to Public Works Department could not ensure adequate water for irrigation purpose in the second season.

The farmers have already completed harvest even in the tail-end areas except Myladi, Anjugramam, South Tamaraikulam, Arumanallur, Boothapandi and Therisanamkoppu where ripened paddy crops were still submerged in rain water.

The production of salt, brick kiln work and tapping of latex has been completely affected due to intermittent rainfall. As the Pazhayaru is in spate, the rain water has entered into the residential areas and hence residents cannot move out of their village. When informed, revenue and police officials rushed to the spot and evacuated them to safer places. The rainwater entered Parakinkal village near Ashramam. The people living on the banks of Pazhayaru have been asked to move to safer places. As few tanks have also crossed the danger mark, the officials are involved in releasing surplus water. The tourists have also been asked not to take bath in Thirparappu falls due to heavy downpour for the second day on Tuesday.

The farmers in some part of the district have already started raising nurseries. Transplantation of paddy crop is going on and the agriculture department has adequate stock of certified seeds and fertilizers except potash.

However widespread rain lashed the catchment areas on Tuesday. Heavy rain lashed different parts of the district on Monday night and all the rivers are in spate. Rainwater flowing like river on the roads is a common sight.

The water has entered into a few houses in Nagercoil, Vadiweeswaram and Parakkamadam. Moreover almost 50 houses throughout the district are flooded.

As the stagnant water from paddy fields entered into the houses, people could see snakes and poisonous insects inside their houses. It was a sleepless night to the people living in Nagercoil, Vadiveeswaram and Parakkamadam. They again in the morning had to remove the rainwater from their houses. The Tahsildar of Agastheeswaram, Bruce, visited the flood-affected areas and assured those affected all kind of assistance.

Similarly rainwater entered Eesanthimangalam, Veranarayanamangalam and the surrounding areas and more than 25 houses were inundated. Eesanthimangalam panchayat office and primary health centre were also surrounded by rainwater. As many as 20 houses were submerged at Thirumalaipuram near Thovalai and 2 houses were partially damaged in Kadukkarai. Six houses in Vilavancode taluk and 11 houses were partially damaged in Kalkulam taluk. A temporary bridge built across Paraliyaru was washed away by the flash floods.

The maximum rainfall of 126 mm was recorded at Nagercoil and rainfall recorded in the other centres (in mm) are: 86.1 in Boothapandi, 69.4 in Surulode, 57.4 in Kannimar, 52.6 in Aralvoimozhi, 24.3 in Balamore, 40.4 in Myladi, 92.6 in Kottaram, 18 in Nilapparai, 27.4 in Eraniel, 46 in Anaikidanku, 18.6 in Colachel, 18.4 Kurunthencode, 63 in Adayamadai, 43 in Kozhiporvilai, 90 in Thiruvarrar, 48.6 in Mullankinavilai, 32 in Puthen dam., 25.4 in Pechipparai, 32.4 in Perunchani, 45 in Chittar I and 47 in Chittar II.

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 23.10 feet, it was 50.50 feet in Perunchani, 3.90 feet in Chittar I, 4 feet in Chittar II and 1 feet in Poigai dam.

hindustantimes

Lucknow, Press Trust Of India

November 08, 2011

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Uttar Pradesh hikes state cane price by Rs 40/quintal

With an eye apparently on the forthcoming Assembly elections, the Uttar Pradesh government today hiked cane price by Rs 40 to a maximum of Rs 250 per quintal. "In the interest of the farmers the government has decided to hike the State Advisory Price (SAP) of the cane by Rs 40 per quintal," chief minister Mayawati told reporters in Lucknow.She said that now the cane price of different varieties of cane would be Rs 235 per quintal, Rs 240 and Rs 250 respectively. "The decision will benefit more than 40 lakh cane farmers in the state," she said. In the last crushing season, the government had fixed the SAP between Rs 205 per quintal and Rs 210 per quintal. Mayawati said that sugar mills have also been directed to start crushing within next three days at all cost. "As compared to previous regimes, the government has hiked SAP by 65 per cent in the last four years," she said. Mayawati said that the SAP announced by the government was higher than Punjab where cane price has been fixed at Rs 220, 225 and 230 per quintal for different categories.Mayawati termed the fair and remunerative price of Rs 145 per quintal fixed by the Centre for the current crushing season as insufficient. "In wake of insensitive approach of the Centre, the state has decided to fix the SAP. The state has decided to give better price to the farmers from its limited resources," she said.

She said that in western UP mills had started crushing cane three weeks back. "All the private and government mills have been directed to start crushing on time so that farmers get their fields for Rabi season," the Chief Minister said. "For the remaining mills it has been directed that crushing should start within next three days. Strict warning has been given that in case of laxity in cane purchase or crushing cane stern action would be taken," she said.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/766340.aspx

the pioneer

There is more to mulberry than just sericulture!

TUESDAY, 08 NOVEMBER 2011 22:59

PARITOSH KIMOTHI | DEHRADUN

Scientists of the Forest Research Institute have recommended that the mulberry should also be used as a plantation species in stead of being limited to horticulture and sericulture. The multiple uses of this plant make it an ideal species for plantation due to its benefits for humans and fauna.

According to the head of FRI Botany division, Dr Subhash Nautiyal, the mulberry plant has broad range and grows in different soil types and climate ranging from the coastal areas to the Himalayas. “Considering the livelihood opportunities, different uses of the fruit and different parts of the plant, the mulberry can be considered a kalpvriksha or wish-fulfilling tree. Instead of limiting the use of mulberry to horticulture and sericulture it should also be promoted as a plantation species. However, facilitating this is a policy matter and under the purview of the Forest Department. At a time when monkeys and other animals are increasingly straying towards cities in search of food due to shortage of fruits and fodder, planting mulberry will also provide food for these animals and birds,” Nautiyal added.

Mulberry thrives under various climatic conditions ranging from temperate to tropical and can be cultivated from sea level up to an elevation of 1,000 metres. Its foliage is the sole feed of the silkworm due to which the plant has been cultivated for sericulture. The mulberry plant provides fuel wood, fodder, helps in making good manure and its wood is also used in making baskets and agricultural equipment. The plant starts bearing fruits from a comparatively young age. For some years now since the National Research Development Corporation developed technology for making herbal tea with medicinal properties from mulberry leaves, the leaves are being used for making tea which was imported in the past. Consumption of the mulberry fruit has various health benefits as it balances internal secretions and enhances immunity, benefits the liver, kidney and eyesight, helps treat conditions like anaemia, palpitation and insomnia. Considering these facts, the mulberry should be propagated as a plantation species to optimise its benefits for people and the fauna.

Business Standard

Wednesday, Nov 09, 2011

Maharashtra sugar mills incur loss of Rs 600 cr

Sanjay Jog / Mumbai November 09, 2011, 0:18 IST

Maharashtra's sugar mills, which are striving to maintain their survival especially in the wake of widening mismatch between the cost of production and ex-mill realisation, have so far incurred a loss of Rs 600 crore. This was attributed to delays in the commencement of crushing season largely due to the ongoing agitation launched by the trade unions demanding the first advance of Rs 2,350 per ton and the final payment of Rs 3,300 per ton.

These unions have simply turned down the state government's directive to the mills not to pay below the fair and remunerative price (FRP) fixed by the central government for Maharashtra at Rs 1,450 per ton at 9.5% recovery. Fearing damage by the agitating cane farmers of the 150 sugar mills so far only 40 mills have begun crushing that too at the under capacity. The crushing season, which was to begin from October 1, was also delayed due to prolonged monsoon.

A preliminary estimate prepared by the state cooperation department revealed that mills having a per day crushing capacity ranging between 2,500 ton and 7,500 ton are incurring a daily loss of Rs 25 lakh to Rs 40 lakh.

"Due to non commencement of crushing season mills have to pay interest of their loan, payment to sugarcane cutting labourers, wages to contract labourers and other charges. The loss is therefore anywhere between Rs 600 crore to Rs 900 crore. However, we have calculated an average loss Rs 600 crore and it will be difficult to recover this loss even though mills operate on full capacity after the government, mills and agitating farmers arrive at an agreement," the official told Business Standard. He said the recovery of loss would be dependent if there is an improvement in sugar prices. Today ex-mill sugar price was reported at Rs 2,670 per quintal.

The official said on an average mills are incurring a loss Rs 625 per ton. In Maharashtra, the daily crushing capacity in operation is of the order of .51 million ton.

The issue came up for discussion at the meeting convened by the chief minister Prithviraj Chavan on Tuesday with his senior ministers and representatives of the sugar industry.

"The government has given a mandate to the cooperation minister Harshvardhan Patil and cooperation secretary Rajgopal Deora to hold talks with the agitating farmers. The government is quite clear that payment of first advance as per the FRP was not the final price but first advance. Mills can pay in excess till it pays the final payment to cane growers. The state government will roll out an advertisement clarifying its stand on cane payment and the demands made by the trade unions," the official said.

A chairman of leading sugar cooperative mill, who did not want to be identified, said the mills are sailing through a rough weather and if the agitation continues it would break them financially. "Early solution is needed to avoid financial crisis. Mills are not in a position to pay the first advance of Rs 2,350 per ton," he added.

Coffee planters seek Rs 160-cr interest waiver

BS Reporter / Bangalore November 09, 2011, 0:02 IST

Coffee growers have urged the Union ministry of commerce to waive an accumulated and capitalised interest of Rs 160 crore on special coffee term loans (SCTL) taken by small and medium growers from 2006 till June 30, 2011. They have also asked the ministry to reschedule the balance loan.

“Growers had borrowed loans under the SCTL package in 2002 with a repayment period of nine years. With one year remaining, we are still finding it difficult to repay the loan and have asked the government to waive the interest accumulated,” said Sahadev Balakrishna, chairman, Karnataka Planters’ Association (KPA).

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, he said the plantation industry faces severe shortage and high cost of labour, a strain on water resources, environmental and quality concerns and a need to replant old plantations.

“We have been going through a difficult phase — heavy unserviceable debts, rampant pests and diseases like coffee berry borer, white stem borer and leaf rust, shortage and high cost of fertilizers, high input costs and unpredictable weather conditions. These have resulted in significant crop loss, bringing down the production and productivity, especially of arabica," he said.

Planters have also urged the Karnataka government to exempt partnership companies from payment of agricultural income tax (AIT). Most partnership companies consist of family members who have formed these for better and convenient management. This will enable them to reinvest whatever little surplus is available back into their plantations. Presently, only individuals are exempted from AIT payments in the state, while neighbouring Tamil Nadu has abolished the AIT Act, Balakrishna said.

KPA has also urged the Union ministry of agriculture to approve the Spices Board proposal for development of pepper plantations. Both the Karnataka government and the Board had given a proposal to the National Horticulture Mission for a Rs 120-crore package to improve pepper plantations in the state, he said. Karnataka accounts for about 40 per cent of India's 50,000 tonnes of pepper production annually. The package is sought to enable planters to go for development of new plantations and replant pepper vines.

Potato futures decline on slow demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi November 08, 2011, 12:06 IST

Potato prices fell further by Rs 3 to Rs 671.50 per quintal in futures trade today, as traders offloaded their holdings at the existing increased levels tracking the a weak trend at the spot market.At the Multi Commodity Exchange, March potato fell by Rs 3, or 0.44%, to Rs 671.50 per quintal, with a trading volume of 44 lots.The April contract also eased by Rs 2.60, or 0.40%, to Rs 655.10 per quintal, with a business turnover of just two lots.

Traders said fall in potato futures prices was due to offloading of positions by speculators amid increased arrivals from producing regions.

Cardamom futures up on seasonal demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi November 08, 2011, 11:05 IST

Cardamom futures prices rose further by Rs 3 to Rs 695.50 per kg today, mostly in tandem with a firm spot demand for the marriage season.

Tight stocks in the physical market on account of the reduced arrivals from the growing belts.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for December contract rose by Rs 3, or 0.43%, to Rs 695.50 per kg, with a trading volume of 110 lots.

The January contract traded higher by Rs 2.40, or 0.33%, at Rs 729.50 per kg, with a business volume of 25 lots, while November contract also moved up by Rs 2.30, or 0.35%, to Rs 652.90 per kg, with a business turnover of 248 lots.

Traders said rising demand in spot market on account of marriage and seasonal demand against restricted arrivals from southern producing regions mainly pushed up cardamom prices at futures market.

UP mills to pay 20% more for cane

Dilip Kumar Jha & Virendra Singh Rawat / Mumbai/lucknow November 09, 2011, 0:58 IST

Additional burden of Rs 2,500 crore on industry, besides Rs 600 crore of arrears in payments.

In a major blow to the sugar industry, the Mayawati government in Uttar Pradesh, the country's second-largest producer of the sweetener, has raised the mandatory State Advised Price (SAP) for sugarcane by a little over 20 per cent. The already ailing industry will have to bear an additional burden of Rs 2,500 crore.

The SAP for the high-yielding early variety has been raised to Rs 250 from Rs 210 a quintal last year, while that of the normal variety has been increased to Rs 240 from Rs 205 a quintal last year.

The state has four million cane farmers and, with legislative Assembly elections due in the state in 2012, all political parties want to woo farmers. “Millers should start crushing, so that the farmers get their field vacant for wheat sowing on time and they do not get entangled in the web of moneylenders,” Mayawati said.

“The additional cane price will result in at least a 17-18 per cent rise in average cost of production, to Rs 33-34 per kg from Rs 27-28 per kg last year. This means consumers will have to be ready to pay Rs 36-37 to buy a kg of sugar this year,” said Abinash Verma, secretary-general of the apex trade body, Indian Sugar Mills Association.

The government of Uttar Pradesh has estimated 70 million tonnes of cane would have to be crushed this year as compared to 60 mt last year. It forecast a 9.3 per cent recovery rate this year as compared to 9.2 per cent last year.

“We hope to produce about 6.2 million tonnes (mt) of sugar this year, compared to over 5.8 mt last year,” Uttar Pradesh Cane Commissioner Kamran Rizvi told Business Standard.

“Its repercussion on the industry will be severe if the government tries to keep the price (of sugar) at the current level of Rs 27-28 a kg (ex-factory). The working capital will erode after two months and farmers’ arrears will go up sharply. Default on banks’ loans would start by the first fortnight of January. Hence, the government should take some measures to raise the ex-factory price immediately,” said Verma.The sugar industry commonly clears farmers’ dues in six months, while they get the realisation from sugar until 12 months. Mills are obliged to procure cane from farmers. To protect working capital from erosion, the government must provide easy bank loans to sugar mills, demanded a senior industry official.

The realisation was lower than the cost of production for most of last year and the arrears in payments total Rs 600 crore in UP. A mill owner said if the government did not allow decontrolled sale of sugar, the arrears would multiply several times this season.

On Tuesday, the share prices of sugar companies closed with a mixed trend. Triveni Sugar ended 4.6 per cent up on the Bombay Stock Exchange, while Balrampur Chini and Bajaj Hindusthan fell between 1.5 to 2.5 per cent.

Seafood industry likely to get agriculture status

George Joseph / Kochi November 09, 2011, 0:04 IST

The Union government is considering granting agriculture status to the seafood industry, including aquaculture. This old demand of the seafood industry is expected to be fulfilled soon, according to sources. The proposal is now under consideration of the ministry of agriculture.

The seafood sector has an industry status and is under the control of the ministry of commerce.

Since fish farming is a fast growing business and similar to agriculture activities, the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) has been pressing this demand for quiet some time.

“The agri status will benefit the industry in a multifaceted ways,” said Ravi Reddy, president, SEAI. The fish production sector, especially aquaculture farms, are not getting sufficient loans from financial institutions. Once the status is granted, loans at lower interest rates will be easy and will benefit thousands of aquaculture farmers.

Because of inadequate finance and high risk in the production, insurance is also not provided to this sector. A majority of the aquaculture farms in the country are not yet insured, he added.

Also, power will be provided at lower rates, as in the case of farming. For the sea fishing sector, diesel might be available at subsidised rates for mechanised boats.

The country produced 145,600 tonnes of products through aquaculture yearly valued at Rs 3,585 crore in 2010-11.

Production increased 39.7 per cent as against 41,381 tonnes valued at Rs 1,054 crore in 2009-10.

THE HINDU Business Line

Bollgard II cotton acreage at 84 lakh ha: Mahyco

M.R. Subramani

Company ready with Bt okra; Bt rice in advanced stage

Mumbai, Nov. 8:

Bollgard II cotton has been cultivated in 84 lakh hectares in the country this year, according to Mr R. Barwale, Managing Director of Mahyco India Ltd. This is over 70 per cent of the 118 lakh hectares under cotton this year.

Bollgard II was introduced in the country in 2006 when 50,000 hectares were covered and acreage under Bollgard I then had peaked to 51 lakh hectares, Mr Barwale said at a plenary session at the fifth World Cotton Research Conference on Tuesday.

Bollgard I was introduced in the country in 2002, marking the entry of the first genetically-engineered crop. Then, 29,000 hectares were brought under it. Bollgard contains the Bacillus thuringiensis, a gene that controls bollworms in cotton.

Bollgard II is an improved version of Bollgard I and is claimed to provide relief against spodoptera and heliothis pests in cotton.

“Bt cotton has seen the fastest adaptation of technology in India,” said Mr Barwale, adding that adoption of the technology had brought down use of pesticides by 10,391 tonnes.

Production challenges

However, there were challenges in cotton production such as reducing labour costs, finding solution to sucking pests and introducing mechanisation.

On the sidelines, he said that Mahyco was ready with roundup ready flex cotton which will help overcome the problem of weeds.

It has undergone trials at multi-locations but has been asked by the Genetical Engineering Appraisal Committee to repeat it this year.

Mahyco is ready with Bt Okra (lady's finger) and the company was waiting for the Centre to approve the introduction of Bt Brinjal, which has run into opposition from various sources. “First Bt brinjal has to be approved, then we will follow it up with Bt okra,” he said.

The company is in an advanced stage of trials on Bt rice, while experiments on herbicide-tolerant rice and wheat were at formative stages, he said.

Not a panacea

Earlier on Monday, experts at the conference said they were worried over the fact that Bt cotton is now accounting for 93 per cent of the total area under cotton.

“Such a dominance could lead to elimination or disappearance of old and traditional varieties,” said Dr C.D. Mayee, Chairman of the National Organising Committee of the conference. “Bt cotton cannot be a panacea for everything,” he said.

The Conference is being held in Asia for the first time. Over 200 delegates from abroad and 600 within the country, mainly scientists, are taking part in the meet that discusses “Technologies for Prosperity.”

Bt cotton has seen the fastest adaptation of technology in India and had brought down use of pesticides by 10,391 tonnes.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 9, 2011)

Sugar mills face lower capacity utilisation

R. Balaji

SWEET STATISTICS

Factory (capacity - tonnes crushed daily)	Year Commissioned	Sugarcane crushed (tonnes)		
		2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Sakthi Sugars, Modakurichi (4,000 tcd)	2007-08	0	0	2,10,554
Rajshree Sugars, Cingee (3,500 tcd)	2008-09	3,95,482	5,01,973	7,23,614
Dharani Sugars, Kalayanallur (3,500 tcd)	2009-10	–	5,36,794	9,09,269
Kothari Sugars, Sathamangalam (3,000 tcd)	2007-08	2,09,186	2,39,543	3,74,453
Bannari Amman, Tiruvannamalai (5,000 tcd)	2009-10	–	1,91,933	8,07,130
Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan Sugars, Perambalur, (3,500 tcd)	2009-10	–	1,85,881	4,43,279
Empee Sugars, Ambasamudram (4,000 tcd)	2009-10	–	–	63,512
Madras Sugars, Tirukoilur (5,000 tcd)	2010-11	–	1,762	2,22,453

(Source: SISMA)

Chennai, Nov. 8:

Sugarcane companies that have invested in new sugar mills in recent years are beginning to see a growth in capacity utilisation as availability improves. But they are far from reaching full potential.

A total of eight new mills have gone on stream in Tamil Nadu since 2007-08 including Madras Sugars of the Bannari Amman Group, the most recent to commence operations in 2010-11.

Four went on stream in 2009-10, two in 2008-09 and one in the previous year. Sugar companies have invested a total of over Rs 1,500-2,000 crore in these mills.

In addition, two sugar mills – SV Sugars in the private sector and Madurantakam Sugars in the cooperative sector, have recommenced operations after a few seasons' break. The private sector sugar mill is under a new management while the cooperative mill was revived by the State Government in April. SV Sugars has crushed about 1.5 lakh tonnes of sugarcane and the cooperative mill, a token 18,000 tonnes.

As compared with the peak sugarcane production in 2006-07 when a mill with a daily crushing capacity of about 5,000 tonnes crushed 14 lakh tonnes of cane, industry data shows that new mills are yet to realise their full potential.

Some of the largest capacity expansions in the sugar industry happened in Tamil Nadu in these years which unfortunately coincided with a steep drop in sugarcane availability due to various reasons – weather conditions, sugarcane pricing issues and labour shortage.

Some of the early expansions in capacity were hit by low capacities with Sakthi Sugars' unit remaining unutilised for sugarcane crushing in the first two years of commissioning and only processed imported raw sugar.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 9, 2011)

Matching demand supply holds cashew on leash

G K Nair

Kochi, Nov. 8:

The cashew held steady in the past two weeks with demand matching supply for certain grades.

Some small and medium processors sold W320 at $3.65-3.80/lb (f.o.b). “There was a fair amount of buying interest in this range but selling interest was from a few small and medium processors only,” trade sources said.Most large processors were quoting above $4 a lb (f.o.b) and some even sold few containers at around $3.95 a lb (f.o.b), Mr Pankaj N. Sampat, a Mumbai based dealer, told *Business Line*. There was hardly any business in other grades but nominal values were at $4.15-4.35 for W240, W450, $3.70-3.85 for SW320, $3.50-3.65 for SW360. The Splits and Butts sold at $3.15-3.30 while Pieces at $3.00-3.15 a lb (f.o.b).

Quiet domestic market

The Indian domestic market was quiet with lower-than-expected retail off-take before Diwali. Prices dropped a bit in late October but are now stable with some buying interest at the lower levels ahead of the marriage season.Vietnam's local market – China – is showing some signs of activity but buyers are selective due to quality issues in the last few months, he said.

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Spot rubber skids to Rs 200/kg

Kottayam, Nov. 8:

Spot rubber declined further on Tuesday. The commodity remained subdued as global economic uncertainty continued to cast its shadows over the domestic sentiments.

Slowing economic growth and auto sales, rising interest rates and fuel costs led the current declines, analysts said. Sheet rubber dropped to Rs 200 from Rs 202 and Rs 202.50 a kg respectively according to traders and the Rubber Board.

In futures, the November series weakened to Rs 201.05 (205.64), December to Rs 199.85 (204.12), January to Rs 200.75 (204.18), February to Rs 202.35 (205.48), March to Rs 203.60 (206.50) and April to Rs 208.18 (210.30) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) surrendered to Rs 180.20 (183.17) a kg at Bangkok. The November futures moved down to ¥273.20 (Rs 173.12) from ¥279.3 a kg during the day session but then finished unchanged in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 200 (202); RSS-5: 197 (199); ungraded: 188 (192); ISNR 20: 180 (183.50) and latex 60 per cent: 121.50 (124).

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Coconut oil prices rule steady as copra arrivals ease

C.J. Punnathara
Kochi Nov. 8:

Coconut oil prices ruled steady at Rs 80 a kg in Kerala's wholesale markets and Rs 78 a kg in Tamil Nadu.

Copra arrivals, which mainly come from Tamil Nadu, remained tight as the North East monsoons which have set across the southern districts of the State, has limited conversion of coconut into copra and further into coconut oil. Copra was quoting at Rs 45 a kg in both Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

One salient feature of the market has been the steady price trends of coconut even as coconut oil prices breached the Rs 100/kg-mark before declining to less than Rs 80, Dr K Satheesh Babu from the Market Intelligence Centre of the Kerala Agricultural University said.

A new demand has emerged for coconuts with the onset of the Sabarimala season. There is also a demand for edible copra during the festival season in North India. Also an increasing demand for tender coconuts that has reduced the availability of coconuts for conversion into copra and later into coconut oil.

Consequently, whichever manner coconut oil prices fluctuated, coconut prices have remained more or less steady in recent months, Dr Satheesh Babu said.

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Seasonal arrivals drag edible oils

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Nov. 8:

Seasonal arrivals pulled down edible oils here on Tuesday. Cotton refined oil lost Rs 11 for 10 kg, soyabean refined oil Rs 10 for 10 kg, rapeseed oil Rs 2 for 10 kg and sunflower refined oil Rs 5 for 10 kg. Even though crude palm oil (CPO) futures extended last week's gain on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives (BMD) Exchange on physical and technical buying, palmolein slid by Rs 2 for 10 kg.

More than nine lakh bags of soyabean arrived, cotton arrivals crossed the lakh mark on Monday and 2.5 lakh bags of groundnut arrived in the markets. Markets remain under pressure as demand after festivals is low.

Resellers sold 150-200 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 528-529. Liberty offered palmolein at Rs 537-538 for November delivery, super palmolein at Rs 568 and soya refined oil Rs 615.

Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 534, soya refined oil at Rs 611and sunflower refined oil at Rs 671. Allana quoted palmolein at Rs 533 for delivery between November 20 and 30. Mewah offered palmolein at Rs 532 for delivery between November 23 and 30 and super palmolein at Rs 564.

Malaysia's BMD CPO's December contracts settled at MYR3,050 (MYR3,021), January at MYR3,045 (MYR3,013), February at MYR3,046 (MYR3,020) and March MRY3,045 (MYR3,016) a tonne. Soya oil for November delivery closed lower at Rs 622 (Rs 624) and for December at Rs 616 (Rs 621.20) on National Board of Trade in Indore.

Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil — 845 (845), soya refined oil — 605 (615), sunflower exp. ref. — 620 (620), sunflower ref. — 680 (685), rapeseed ref. oil — 700 (702), rapeseed expeller ref. — 670 (672), cotton ref. oil — 605 (616) and palmolein — 530 (532).

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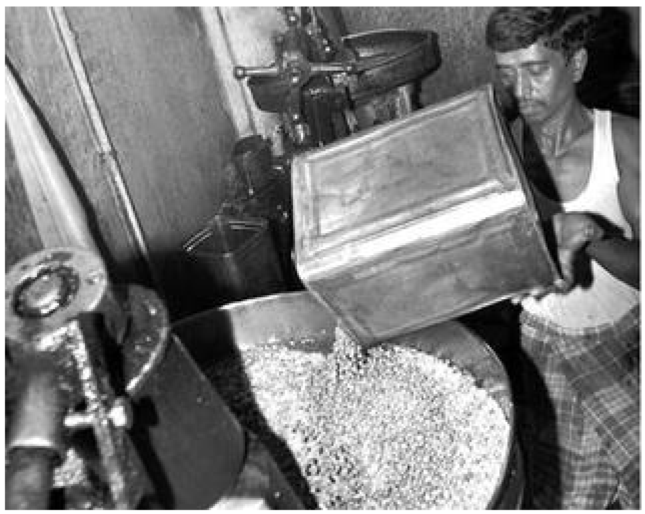
Groundnut oil seen falling on low demand

Our Correspondent



Rajkot, Nov. 8:

Higher arrivals in the State amid lower demand put pressure on groundnut oil here on Tuesday. Cotton oil also declined on weak demand.

Groundnut oil shaved off Rs 10 at Rs 640-645 for 10 kg. A new 15-kg tin was down Rs 5 at Rs 1,440-1,445 a 15-litre tin sold at Rs 1,325-1,330. About 100 tonnes of groundnut oil were traded in Saurashtra.

While bold groundnut sold at Rs 555-718 for 20 kg at the agricultural produce marketing committee in Junagadh, small groundnut was traded at Rs 650-752 for 20 kg.

At present, nearly a lakh bags of groundnuts arrive daily across Gujarat.

Loose cotton oil declined by Rs 10 at Rs 835-840 for 10 kg and and a 15-kg new tin dropped by Rs 10 at Rs 1,060-1,070. Three to three hundred and fifty tonnes of cotton oil were traded.

Groundnut oil supplies have risen in the State as crushing has increased after Diwali, traders said. Prices may fall more as demand is low.

According to the latest release from the Central Organisation for Oil Industry Trade, groundnut production in the country is estimated at 41.75 lakh tonnes in the current year, up by 1.83 per cent compared with last year mainly on account of better weather in Gujarat.

Kharif sowing acreage for groundnut in Gujarat was reported at 14.37 lakh hectares, down 14 per cent from the last year while production in the State is likely to be at 17.75 lakh tonnes, down 5 per cent from last year as yields have gone up to 1,238 kg a hectare from 1,120 kg a hectare.

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Spot chana dips as futures drop 4%

Our Correspondent

Indore, Nov. 8:

The bullish trend in spot chana came to a halt as its futures dropped by 4 per cent, hitting the lower circuit, on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange.

Chana (kanta) plunged to Rs 3,450 a quintal (Rs 3,550) as buying support at the higher price declined and the futures market hit the lower circuit. Similarly, chana (*desi*) declined to Rs 3,375-3,400. Chana had remained bullish in the physical market for the past few days, quoting as high as Rs 3,575 on Monday. Decline in spot chana also dragged chana dal (average) in local mandis at Rs 4,300-4,325 (Rs 4,350-4,375), chana dal (medium) at Rs 4,400-4,425 (Rs 4,450-4,475) and chana dal (bold) at Rs 4,550-4,575 (Rs 4,575-4,600).

Masoor, moong and urad remained firm despite subdued demand. In the spot market, masoor (bold) remained unchanged at Rs 2,900, while masoor (medium) sold at Rs 2,700. Masoor dal was unchanged, with masoor dal (average) at Rs 3,300-3,325, masoor dal (medium) at Rs 3,400-3,425 and masoor dal (bold) at Rs 3,500-3,525. Urad and its dal were flat on restricted buying support, with urad (bold) at Rs 3,600-3,700 and urad (medium) at Rs 3,000-3,300. Urad (mongar) was unchanged at Rs 6,100-6,300, urad dal (bold) at Rs 5,000 and urad dal (medium) at Rs 4,300-4,350. Moong (bold) remained unchanged at Rs 4,400-4,500, while moong (medium) sold at Rs 3,800-4,000.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 9, 2011)

Traders expect delay in sugarcane crushing

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Nov. 8:

Spot sugar prices at the Vashi market improved by Rs 10 a quintal on quality on Tuesday. Naka rates fell by Rs 20 a quintal for superior-quality S-grade and increased by Rs 10 a quintal for fair-quality M-grade. Tender rates gained Rs 10-20 a quintal for S-grade while those for M-grade were unchanged, said traders.

An expected delay in crushing as farmers may agitate for a higher sugarcane price and hopes of the Centre allowing more exports kept the market sentiment firm at the mill level, traders said.Mr Jagdish Rawal, a wholesaler said, “At present, the market is passing through a volatile situation as producers are holding the price hoping for some positive news soon. In Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, farmers are demanding higher cane price and possible agitation in coming days may affect the production of sugar. Sugar industry is demanding for more exports considering higher production in second consecutive year and the Food Ministry is also supporting that demand. All these factors kept the market sentiment positive.”

According to a report from the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, quota of non-levy sugar is higher for the current month at 17.01 lakh tonnes compared with 14 lakh tonnes for November 2010.

On Monday, 15-17 mills offered tenders and sold about 75,000-80,000 bags to local stockists at Rs 2,750-2,800 (Rs 2,730-2,790) for S-grade and Rs 2,840-2,930 (Rs 2,840-2,930) for M-grade. Arrivals in the Vashi market were at 50-52 truckloads of 100 bags each and local dispatches were at 48-50 truckloads. Freight rates were unchanged.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade — Rs 2,862-2,932 (Rs 2,851-2,925) and M-grade — Rs 2,956-3,071 (Rs 2,956-3,071).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade — Rs 2,830-2,880 (Rs 2,830-2,900) and M-grade — Rs 2,930-3,030 (Rs 2,920-3,030).

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Weak buying, futures pull down spot turmeric

Our Correspondent

Erode, Nov. 8:

Spot turmeric prices decreased by between Rs 100 and Rs 200 a quintal on Tuesday on lower orders and weak futures.

"After the four-day holiday, farmers came to the market with high expectations. But they were disappointed as prices declined by Rs 200 a quintal. The arrivals were also lower than anticipated. Only 9,800 bags of turmeric arrived for sale," said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said: “The demand for the yellow spice from other areas has decreased and traders received few orders. So, they purchased limited quantity at lower prices. Besides the futures market declined by Rs 100 a quintal, too.”

Because of a heavy downpour in rural areas here, many farmers could not bring the produce to the market, he said. Around 60 per cent of the bags that arrived were sold.

Farmers continue to retain huge stocks of more than eight lakh bags. Some farmers believe the current rainy spell will hit the turmeric crop in a few areas, affecting yields next year, thereby leading to increase in prices, he said.

That was one reason why some farmers have stocked up. Officials at the Horticulture Department, however, said only a negligible quantity of turmeric crop had been submerged because of the rains, so yields will not fall.

The hybrid finger variety rose on quality even as prices of the other varieties declined by Rs 200.

If arrivals on Wednesday decrease, then prices may go up, traders said. If arrivals cross 10,000 bags, there would be another decrease of Rs 100 to Rs 200 a quintal, they said. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety fetched Rs 3,500-5,089 a quintal And the root variety Rs 3,360-4,695 a quintal.

Salem Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,134-5,589. and the root variety at Rs 4,989-5,299. Out of the 2,489 bags that arrived, only 498 were sold.

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Low arrivals keep wheat firm

Karnal, Nov. 8:

The wheat market was unchanged despite sluggish local demand on Tuesday.

Even though there was hardly any buying, low arrivals kept prices firm, said Mr Hansraj, proprietor of Hansraj Traders. Dara variety prices may remain around current levels for the next few days as arrivals may not increase and as flour mills have ample stocks, he added.

In the physical market, after witnessing a good rally last week, dara prices remained unchanged at Rs 1,155-1,165 a quintal. Around 60 tonnes of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,155 a quintal and *chakki* at Rs 1,165 a quintal.

Similarly, *desi* wheat varieties remained unchanged. The Tohfa variety quoted at Rs 2,250 a quintal, Lal Quila at Rs 1,820 and Rasoi at Rs 1,800. On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for November delivery decreased by Rs 8 to Rs 1,143.20 a quintal, after touching a high of Rs 1,153.20 a quintal on Tuesday. On the MCX, wheat for November delivery was at Rs 1,162.30 a quintal.

Following wheat, flour prices remained flat at Rs 1,165 for a 90-kg bag while among branded flour, Lal Quila sold at Rs 150 and and Om Bhog at Rs 155 for a 10-kg bag each. On the other hand, *chokar* prices eased further by Rs 10 at Rs 570 for a 49-kg bag because of easy availability of green fodder.

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