

Published: September 22, 2011 03:15 IST | Updated: September 22, 2011 03:15 IST
September 22, 2011

Farmers go to college to brush up their knowledge



FULL ATTENDANCE: Students listen attentively during the course at the University. Photo: M.M. Prabu

This unique course is the first of its kind for any agricultural university

Students going to school or college is routine, but a 60 year old senior citizen running to a class, books in hand, does kindle some curiosity among onlookers.

Like him there are nearly 200 and odd students from 27 years to 75 years who have enlisted for a three year open and distance education course called Bachelor of Farm Technology (BFT) at the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore.

The course, a six semester schedule, is the brainwave of the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Murugesu Boopathi.

Personal experience

“Even 10th class school dropouts doing farming in Israel are brilliant. They speak on issues that our PhD scholars are working on. My personal experience during travel made me think of introducing a new course that benefits both the farmer and those desirous of entering farming as a vocation.

“Days of planning and discussion among our people resulted in introducing this course that seems to be very popular,” says Dr. Boopathi.

This unique course is the first of its kind for any State agricultural university and was introduced in November 2010.

Popular course

After nearly six months, it turned out to be a much sought after study among retired officials, young entrepreneurs, sales persons, and businessmen, according to Dr. V. Valluvaparidasan, Director, Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

“Today, our course draws students from different age groups and from diverse backgrounds. All share one common dream - to make a difference as a farmer in agriculture,” he says.

An 80-year-old farmer, Mr. Anbu Sundaranand from Thirumalayampalayam near Coimbatore, is the oldest student.

Better informed

“I chose to join this course even after 70 years of farming experience. There seems to be a lot of difference between what I did in the past and what I should do now.

I am now able to do farming more precisely as I am equipped with scientific knowledge and guidelines from an expert. I firmly believe that farmers must become aware about the new technologies,” he says.

There is a lot of difference between teaching students and farmers.

“The older and experienced students, the more pre-determined is the mindset and it takes some time for them to agree on certain things. But we enjoy teaching them because they are eager to learn,” adds Dr. Valluvaparidasan.

Dr. K. Singaravelu a retired income tax, official says that before he joined this course he did not know anything about farming.

Why the losses

“I am now in the second semester and already I am able to understand certain details about why farmers face losses.”

“Though many of us may be employed in private jobs, our parents, and brothers are still into agriculture. Given a choice we do not want to move away from farming.

Being a student of this curriculum now, I am able to ask questions to my labourers about the seeds, inputs and more importantly about the marketing facilities. I no longer simply nod my head for everything they say,” says R. Saravanakumar, a business executive who joined the course recently.

According to Dr. Boopathi, there is no age limit for those desirous of joining this study.

A minimum pass percentage in the 10th standard is the eligibility for applying. The course aims to create awareness among people about the many new technologies, crop growing, inputs and subsidies that the Government offers to farmers. In fact there is one paper in the last semester that deals with effective management of labour.

Lot of enquiries

“This year our University is being flooded with number of enquires about the course. Friends of present students also want to join. We feel immensely happy that we are able to bridge the communication and knowledge gap that existed between farmers and those interested in the sector by this new course,” says Dr. Boopathi. For more details contact Dr. V. Valluvaparidasan, Director, Open and Distance Learning, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Coimbatore, Phone 0422 6611229, Mobile: 09442111046, e-mail: vaniloma@gmail.com and Dr. Boopathi at pmboopathitnau@yahoo.com

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September 22, 2011

Controlling whitegrub menace in turmeric

The last two years saw turmeric prices increasing in area under cultivation in Tamil Nadu. It has replaced many cash crops and has been grown even as a rainfed crop. As it replaces primary crops the incidence of pest and disease also increases.

On rhizomes

In Dharmapuri district, white grubs which are infesting sugarcane are found to be feeding on the rhizomes of the turmeric.

The initial symptoms are yellowing of leaves and wilting. The infected plants can be removed from soil easily. Under the infected plants are fleshy “C” shaped creamy white grubs with swollen dark abdominal segment.

They feed on the newly formed rhizomes which lead to the wilting of plants. Mostly the whitegrub infestations are noticed in fields where the sugarcane was the previous crop or cultivated in the adjacent field. The adult whitegrubs become active with the onset of summer showers (May – June). They come out of the soil during the dusk, feed on leaves of neem, Acacia, Ailanthus etc and mate. The female lays the eggs in the moist soil.

After emergence the grubs start feeding on the soil organic matter and rootlets. The grub completes three instars and the damage is noticeable during July to September (i.e. third instar larvae).

Management

Provide adequate irrigation, since under inadequate soil moisture conditions the pest appears in the root zone.

Collect and destroy adult beetles when they are found feeding on the trees.

Install light traps to collect the adults (or) burn fire. Adopt crop rotation in the endemic areas

Apply Lindane 1.3D 125kg/ha or Carbofuran3G 10kg/ha near the root zone and give one more round 30 days later.

P.S.Shanmugam, K. Indhumathi, & P.Sridhar

Krishi Vigyan Kendra Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Pappapatty Dharmapuri

Published: September 22, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: September 22, 2011 04:18 IST
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Aging of adult stem cells reversed

It is now possible to reverse the aging process for human adult stem cells, which are responsible for helping old or damaged tissues regenerate.

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September 22, 2011

Farm query

Watershed activities

Is there any person doing work on conserving water in and around Madhya Pradesh?

D. Puneet Sharma, *Bihar*

You can contact Mr. Khumsing Chouhan at Gumadiya Khurd, Niwali post, Badwani, Madhya Pradesh, mobile: 09754216476 for your details. Mr. Khumsing has been instrumental in building checkdams and several other methods for conserving rain water in the region.

Rice farmers' association

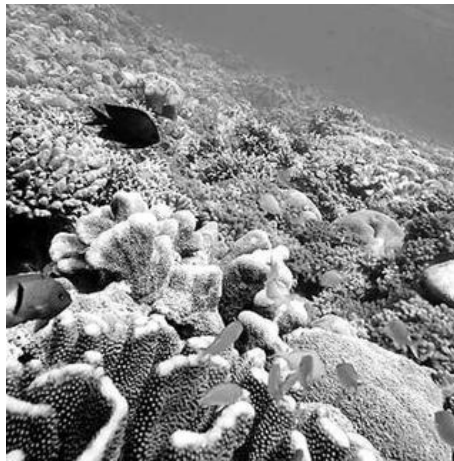
Where can I get information on Gramasree rice farmers association?

Ajith George, *Kerala*

Mr. M.R. Sasidharan from Mundokandathil house, Mylapady post, Appadu, Kerala, Mobile: 09745766774 has formed a rice farmer's association called Gramasree with an objective to retain farmers in paddy cultivation. The association has built a corpus fund and purchased agriculture machines to address labour problems.

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September 22, 2011

Seaweed-eating fish study to protect reefs



AFP

Using the Aquarius underwater lab off Florida, researchers are studying how the diversity of seaweed-eating fish affects endangered coral reefs, to gain new information to protect and even restore damaged coral reefs.

Published: September 22, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: September 22, 2011 04:07 IST Tirupur,
September 22, 2011

Demonstration plots in Tirupur to boost maize, pulses production

To enhance productivity of maize and pulses in the plains of Palar sub-basin in the district, the Department of Agriculture plans to set up a total of 130 demonstration plots, 565 vermin compost units and also distribute sprayers at an outlay of Rs. 53.49 lakh.

“The project cost will be taken from the corpus created under the World Bank-aided Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water-bodies Restoration and Management Project,” Joint Director of Agriculture S. Muthusamy told *The Hindu* .

Of the 130 demonstration plots, 110 would be for maize and 20 for pulses spread over select-blocks of Dharapuram, Gudimangalam, Kangeyam, Kundadam, Madathukulam, Palladam, Pongalur, Tirupur, Udumalpet and Vellakoil.

Each of the demonstration plots would be set up on an expanse of one hectare in farmers' holdings with the beneficiary farmer to be provided with kits containing hybrid seeds, bio fertilizers such as phospho- bacteria in packets and chemical fertilizers such as urea and Di-Ammonium Phosphate at subsidised rates.

Soil testing would be carried out at the demonstration plots by experts before the farmers start sowing.

“This is to help the farmers assess the requisite quantity of nutrients needed for ensuring high yield,” Mr Muthusamy said. The demo plots would act as a 'practical guide' by itself for propagating irrigation service delivery and water management techniques.

For production of organic manure, earthworms were planned to be supplied with the 565 portable vermin compost units, each of 15 ft X five ft X three ft in size.

In the case of sprayers, both hand-operated and power-operated equipment would be given to the farmers at 50 per cent subsidy.

“At present, we plan to distribute 73 hand-operated and 45 power-operated sprayers to spray fertilizers and nutrient mixtures,” Mr. Muthusamy said.

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- *Agriculture Department plans to set up 130 demonstration plots*
 - *The plots will act as a 'practical guide' by itself*
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Published: September 22, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: September 22, 2011 04:07 IST
Udhagamandalam, September 22, 2011

Farmers urged to make use of schemes

A programme to enhance awareness among farmers about various schemes being implemented for their benefit by the Department of Horticulture was organised at Thummanatty near here on Tuesday.

Addressing the gathering the Joint Director of Horticulture, J. Haldorai, listed the schemes being implemented during the current fiscal and urged the farmers to make use of the subsidy being extended for inputs under the National Horticulture Mission, the Hill Area Development Programme (HADP), micro-irrigation scheme etc.

Underscoring the advantages of functioning as a team, he suggested that 20 or 25 farmers should get together and form societies. It would make the job of getting subsidies and financial assistance easier. The village head Babu presided.

The Assistant Director of Horticulture, G.K. Umarani, also spoke. Deputy Agriculture Officer J. Desingh welcomed the gathering. Assistant Agriculture Officer N. Ajjan proposed a vote of thanks. About 70 farmers from Thummanatty and surroundings benefited. Distribution of beans and peas seeds at subsidized cost under the Integrated Horticulture Development Scheme by Mr. Haldorai marked the occasion.

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BANGALORE, September 22, 2011

UAS distance education course for farmers

University of Agricultural Sciences plans to cover one lakh farmers under the programme

An ambitious experiment in agricultural extension is set to unravel in the State with the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, deciding to launch a distance education programme for farmers on integrated farming systems.

The programme, which is said to be the first of its kind in the country, is set to commence on October 2.

Plan

The university plans to cover a minimum of one lakh farmers under the programme that will have a duration of six months to one year. To begin with, an estimated 25,000 farmers are expected to enrol under this education programme, according to UAS Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda.

Need of the hour

Pointing out that integrated farming was the need of the hour to make farming a sustainable activity, he said that the course would provide relevant details to farmers on the trends and developments in integrated farming and recent technologies.

Subjects

The subjects proposed to be covered include farming and allied sectors such as horticulture, fisheries, animal husbandry, food processing and value addition.

The course would help farmers to become agri-entrepreneurs, he said. "Our intention is to empower farmers to become self-reliant," he noted.

Course content

While the university will prepare the course content, the process of imparting education would be carried out through the district-level krishi vigynana kendras so that farmers need not come to Bangalore for this course.

Any farmer who is literate or has passed seventh standard can take up the course. A unique nature is that the course is going to be region-specific.

While the coastal region farmers would get information related to crops and farming systems as well as practices which are conducive to their region, this would vary for those from Malnad region or old-Mysore area.

It is possible to give accurate information to farmers through such courses.

They would also get written material for their reference, Mr. Narayana Gowda said.

Visits

The course would involve visits to technical centres and farms of innovative farmers.

Technological practices for taking up sustainable integrated farming on different sizes of land such as two acres and five acres would be provided so that the course would be beneficial for all the farmers.

The details of the proposed course which are in the process of getting finalised would be announced soon, Mr. Narayana Gowda said.

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- *The programme, said to be first of its kind in the country, will be launched on October 2*
 - *It will have a duration of six months to one year; 25,000 farmers likely to enrol initially*
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Published: September 22, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: September 22, 2011 04:02 IST

BANGALORE, September 22, 2011

Farmers oppose land acquisition for RGUHS

To protest against the “meagre” compensation fixed for their land that is being acquired “without their consent” for setting up Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) campus, farmers from Archakarahalli in Ramanagaram district will hold a demonstration near the Ramanagaram Deputy Commissioner's office on Friday. The demonstration is being organised by Archakarahalli Bhoo Swadheena Virodhi Raithara Horata Samiti, backed by Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha.

Directions

Addressing presspersons here on Wednesday, samiti president K. Honnaiah claimed that the former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa had ordered halting the acquisition process in October 2008. His directions were not implemented, he added.

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GULBARGA, September 22, 2011

Attempt on to open up farm sector, says CPI

The Communist Party of India has claimed that the Union and State governments are all set to open the agricultural sector to the corporate sector as part of the globalisation plan.

CPI State secretary Siddanagouda Patil said here on Wednesday that the corporate sector was slowly stepping into the farm sector with the governments making discreet openings for the former to make its presence felt.

According to Mr. Patil, the proposed Global Investors Meet for agriculture was part of the Government's "grand design" to open up the agricultural sector.

Mr. Patil said the CPI partly welcomed some of the amendments proposed to the land reforms Act by the Union Government. The provision for resettlement and rehabilitation of farmers who lost their lands and another one that stated lands would be acquired only if 80 per cent of farmers agreed to the acquisition, were welcome steps, he added.

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MANGALORE, September 22, 2011

Compensation to areca nut growers

Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda has assured delegates of the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd. (CAMPCO) of taking a decision on providing compensation to arecanut growers whose plantations have been affected by "kole roga" (fruit rot disease) and yellow leaf disease.

The Chief Minister assured the delegation of providing subsidy to farmers for purchasing arecanut peeling machines, the release said.

Published: September 22, 2011 00:00 IST | Updated: September 22, 2011 04:06 IST
KALPETTA, September 22, 2011

Farm sector wilts for want of fertilizer



Acute shortage of fertilizers has put farmers in Wayanad district in a fix.

The second crop, known as 'Nanja,' was planted three weeks ago in 13,000 hectares spread over 600 'padasekharams' in the district. Fertilizers such as muriate of potash, suphala and factomphos are not available in the market for past two months, according to P. Wilson, secretary of Armad-Murani Padashakhara Samiti in the district, said.

"This is the time to apply the first dose of fertilizer to rice and banana crop, third dose to coffee and tea, and third and fourth dose to ginger and turmeric," he said. Farmers say that in the open market, fertilizer merchants were charging Rs.80 to Rs.95 more for a 50-kg bag for all fertilizers, except urea.

Dealers said the companies had been delivering fertilizers to their doorsteps at wholesale rate for the past three years. "But now, free delivery has been stopped and we are forced to purchase fertilizers from the company offices in Kozhikode," C. Raveendran of the Wayanad Fertilizer Dealers Association said. Though the companies had hiked the price of fertilizers by nearly 45 per cent, they were yet to print the revised prices on the bags, he added.

"We cannot sell at the printed price since we have to pay a huge amount for transport too," Benny Joseph, general secretary of the organisation, said.

Farmers fear that fertilizer shortage will adversely affect the crops next year. P. Vikraman, Principal Agriculture Officer told *The Hindu* that the quarterly requirement of factomphos in the district was 910 tonnes and of muriate of potash was 1,100 tonnes. But allotment of factomphos from the Central pool to the district was just 161 tonnes for that period. Moreover, after the price of muriate of potash was raised in the international market a few weeks go, the supply of the fertilizer in the State had been drastically cut. But, the issue would be solved soon, he added.

Dealers' fast

Meanwhile, the dealers' association has decided to stage a fast in front of the Telephone Exchange here on Thursday demanding that the Central government find a solution to the dearth of fertilizers in the district.

Published: September 20, 2011 15:25 IST | Updated: September 20, 2011 15:25 IST
PASADENA, September 20, 2011

U.S. scientists testing earthquake early warning



AP Explosives are used to clear huge landslide caused by Sunday's earthquake in Phengla, in Sikkim. The U.S. government had quietly tested an earthquake early warning system in California. File photo

After years of lagging behind Japan, Mexico and other quake-prone countries, the U.S. government has been quietly testing an earthquake early warning system in California.

Elizabeth Cochran belongs to an exclusive club of scientists who receive a heads up every time the state shakes.

She was sitting in her office this month when her computer suddenly sounded an alarm. Beep. Beep. Beep. A map of California on her screen lit up with a red dot, signalling an earthquake had struck. A clock counted down the seconds until shock waves fanning out from the epicentre north of Los Angeles reached her in Pasadena- 5-4-3-2-1.

Right on cue, Cochran felt her chair quiver from a magnitude-4.2 that rumbled through Southern California on Sept. 1.

“If I hadn’t known it was an earthquake, I would have thought it was a truck going by,” she said.

The alert system is still crude and messages are not yet broadcast to residents or businesses.

With more testing and funding, researchers hope to build a public warning system similar to the Japanese that has been credited with saving lives during the March 11 magnitude-9 disaster.

Since earthquakes are unpredictable, supporters of early warning say it’s the next best thing to prepare people and businesses before the ground rocks. Even a 5-second advance notice can be precious, they contend.

“You want to get under a sturdy table before things start falling off the wall,” said University of California, Berkeley, seismologist Richard Allen, a project participant. “We don’t want people to start running out of buildings.”

Early warning is designed to sense the first pulses of energy after a fault breaks and estimate the magnitude. This is possible because of the different speeds at which seismic waves travel.

A sprawling web of underground sensors can detect the faster-moving and less damaging primary “P” waves before the secondary “S” waves that can cause buildings to pancake. A warning is issued ahead of the arrival of the stronger waves.

How much warning a few seconds to tens of seconds depends on the distance from the epicentre. The farther away, the more lead time.

Project chief Doug Given of the U.S. Geological Survey ticked off actions that can be taken- Trains can be slowed or stopped. Air traffic controllers can halt takeoffs and landings. Power plants and factories can close valves. Schoolchildren can dive under their desks and cover their heads.

Early warnings are useless at the quake's origin because the tremors radiate out almost simultaneously.

Japan invested in a public alert system after the deadly 1995 magnitude-6.9 Kobe earthquake. Development began in 2000. Seven years and \$500 million later, Japan unveiled the world's first early warning network. Parts of Mexico, Taiwan and Turkey also have embraced early warning, but their systems are less sophisticated.

The Japanese got their big test in March when a massive quake hit off the northeast coast and spawned a tsunami. A public emergency announcement was sent out 8 seconds after sensors detected the first inkling of the quake, interrupting regular TV and radio programming, and buzzing cell phones.

Millions received 5 to 40 seconds of warning depending on how far they were from the epicentre. Tokyo about 230 miles (370 kilometres) away got about 10 to 30 seconds of notice before high-rises swayed. A dozen trains were stopped in their tracks without derailing.

There were glitches. Sensors underestimated the quake at a magnitude-8.1 when it was actually 22 times stronger. Because of the error, warnings were not sent to certain cities. The jolt was so violent that it knocked 55 seismic stations offline and there were no warnings sent for aftershocks for several hours.

Still, USGS director Marcia McNutt told U.S. lawmakers the Japanese early warning system saved thousands of lives.

"Shame on us if we do not learn from their misfortune," she testified.

Since 2006, the U.S. has been testing three alert systems and launched a prototype internally known as “ShakeAlert” in February, a month before the Japan devastation. For now, messages are only blasted out to about 30 scientists at the USGS, California Institute of Technology and University of California, Berkeley, where they are working out software bugs on a small budget.

Where possible, the U.S. has borrowed aspects of Japan’s warning system. Researchers said it’s not possible to just replicate it because of differences in the countries’ seismic sensor networks.

“It’s not perfect,” said Berkeley’s Allen of the U.S. effort. “Frankly, it’s stuck together with duct tape, but it’s operational.”

The next steps are to partner with businesses to test the system in the real world later this year and work on a more robust network. The Southern California Earthquake Centre, made up of 55 research institutions worldwide, has been chosen to independently rate how it’s working.

Technology hurdles aside, the work suffers from lack of funding. The USGS has spent \$2 million and is seeking help from private foundations and industry groups. Scientists estimate it will cost \$80 million over five years to create a state-wide public alert system and millions more annually to maintain it.

“That’s tough in this budget environment when there are lots of trade-offs that have to be considered,” said David Applegate, associate director for natural hazards at USGS headquarters.

It’s been a long wait for Caltech engineering professor Tom Heaton, who has studied early warning for more than three decades and finally got it running in his house on his 60th birthday.

“My hope is that it happens before I die. That’s my goal,” Heaton said.



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi, September 21, 2011

First Published: 12:25 IST(21/9/2011)

Last Updated: 12:34 IST(21/9/2011)

Onion export ban was not a 'panic' reaction: Thomas

Rebutting criticism that the short-lived ban imposed by the government on onion exports was not a "panic" decision after it was rolled back within two weeks on Tuesday, food minister K V Thomas today said it was a "precautionary" step aimed at protecting domestic consumers.

"Nothing panic, you should understand that there was a panic decision last December... But this time, we took the decision much in advance in September," Thomas told reporters on the sidelines of the General Assembly of the International Organisation for Standardisation here.

Thomas was referring to last year's bad experience when onion prices had touched Rs 80-85 a kg in major retail markets across the country, following which the government had banned exports of the commodity and imported large quantities from neighbouring Pakistan.

However, in the case of the latest ban, the decision was reviewed after massive farmer protests in the major growing states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka and was lifted on the basis of farmers' assurance that there would be no shortage of the kitchen staple in domestic markets, he added.

"But we should understand one thing, that ours is a farmers' country and the farmers should get a reasonable price for their produce," said Thomas, who attended the crucial Empowered Group of ministers (EGoM) of Food meeting yesterday, where the decision to lift the ban was taken.

"The government needs to balance the interest of consumers and farmers," he said.

Asked if permitting onion exports could trigger upward movement in onion prices again, the minister said, "We will regularly review the situation."

It has also been decided to fix the minimum export price (MEP) for onions at a high level of USD 475 a tonne to discourage exports.

Defending the decision to ban onion exports on September 9 in the wake of onion prices shooting up to Rs 25 a kg in retail markets, Thomas said it was taken in advance to prevent a repeat of the bad experience in December last year, when onion rates had soared to Rs 80-85 in the retail markets.

He said a similar decision was taken for milk as well.

The government had banned milk exports in December last year and imported milk powder in anticipation of a supply shortfall at home in March-April this year.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/748346.aspx>

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Sep 22

Max Min
31.7° | 25°

Rain: Trace

Sunrise: 5:58

Humidity: 56%

Sunset: 18:06

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Friday, Sep 23

Max Min
32° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Sep 24

Sep 25

Sep 26

Sep 27

Sep 28



33° | 26°

Rainy

33° | 26°

Rainy

33° | 26°

Rainy

33° | 24°

Cloudy

33° | 23°

Cloudy

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

22 Sep, 2011, 05.40AM IST, Sutanuka Ghosal & Madhvi Sally,ET Bureau

Curbs on food prices likely in festive season

KOLKATA/AHMEDABAD: State governments are trying to strengthen monitoring systems to ensure that retail consumers get essential food stuff like pulses, rice, wheat and vegetables at the right price during the ensuing festival season.

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is making periodic visits to wholesale markets and monitoring price movements. "We have formed task forces at the district level, who are making surprise visits to markets and keeping a close watch on PDS," said Arup Roy, agriculture marketing minister, West Bengal.

The Punjab government has put stock limits to curb hoarding and black-marketing of essential commodities. Deputy director of Punjab's food and civil supplies department Simarjot Kaur said, "Seven cases have been registered against hoarders in Punjab for storing excess sugar. The department has confiscated 14,740 tonnes sugar from Ludhiana, Patiala and Amritsar and periodic checks are taking place."

BB Pakhri, deputy secretary of food and supplies, Maharashtra, said that a close watch is on the PDS. A senior official of the food department said special attention was being given to onion prices. "The export ban on onion has just been lifted. To avoid any surge in onion prices during the festival season, we have beefed up the monitoring mechanism."

However, there is no stock limit for dealers and retailers in Gujarat. "There was no major price variation in the past few months. Pulses prices have seen a downward trend in the past few months. In the edible oil market, it is only groundnut oil whose prices have gone up 30% due to a delay in crop arrival," said Raj Kumar, secretary of food, civil supplies & consumer affairs, Gujarat.

A senior official of Delhi's food and civil supplies department said that the department has initiated talks with APMCs and associations to keep prices under check. "The stock position of essential food items is good and there should be no reason for any price hike," the official added.



By K Surekha

21 Sep 2011 01:39:08 AM IST

GM crops the need of the hour, says expert

KOCHI: The myth that genetically modified (GM) crops are harmful to people and environment is wrong. Farmers and the public must be made aware of it scientifically, according to Palpu Pushpangadan, Director-General, Amity Institute for Herbal and Biotech Products Development, Thiruvananthapuram.

He was in Kochi to participate in a seminar on modern streams of biochemistry organised at the St Albert's College.

"While the 20th century was the age of Physics with many sophisticated instruments coming into being, the 21st century is the age of biology propelled by technology, which should be applied to help tide over crises. The population is on the rise and so is malnutrition and it is in this context that transgenic crops gain significance," he said. Today experiments are on to develop pesticide-resistant and water-resistant crops. For example Bt Brinjal is not harmful.

Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) is a toxic protein which is safe for consumption but at the same time the toxicity in it will keep pesticides at bay. Only thing is that they should be cultivated in isolation so that they won't cross with other plants, Pushpangadan said. Experiments are on to transfer the protein in chicken to pulses so that they would like chicken, but the question whether it is vegetarian will linger.

Genetical modification takes place in nature also, evolving over the years by acquisition of genes from the environment.

The yield of GM crop cultivation per hectare will be three fold more and of better quality than the normal crop. "Now experiments are on to create golden rice which would have other vitamins besides carbohydrate and can give 50 percent of the required nutrients to children," he said. There is good scope for GM rubber, pepper and cardamom in Kerala, he said.

Numerous transgenic crops are being developed but only the best with least side-effects would be allowed for cultivation. So there is no cause for fear of terminator genes. Hence the little demerit of GM crop is nothing compared to the great purpose it would serve, he said.

Pushpangadan who has the most number of patents in India, (232) is the first scientist to get a patent for tribal folks. While he went trekking with the Kani tribes along with scientists working on the All India Co-ordinated Research Project on Ethnobiology (AICRPE), he realised they were full of energy while he sagged as he walked on. But when he gobbled a few of the berry-like fruits that they offered, it had a magical effect.

This 'magical' plant was identified as *Trichopus zeylanicus*. He took it to the Regional Research Laboratory in Jammu, got it tested and evaluated, which led to the herbal medicine 'Jeevani' and got them a patent for it.

Pushpangadan was instrumental in setting up the first ethnopharmacology laboratory in India at RRL Jammu, in 1987 and full-fledged ethnopharmacology laboratories at Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, and the National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow.

This multi-disciplinary scientist is a recognised PhD and MD guide and examiner of various universities in India and abroad. He is the recipient many national and international awards.

Business Standard

Thursday, Sep 22, 2011

Yarn export registration up 70%

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai September 22, 2011, 0:47 IST

Textile sector recovery to be short-lived, say experts; high interest rates, DEPB end cloud prospects.



In a clear sign of revival in the textile industry, albeit for a short period, the registration for cotton yarn exports surged 70 per cent in August. The textile commissioner under the ministry of textiles recorded renewed interest from yarn exporters and registered 97.7 million kg of orders in August, against 57.2 kg in July.

The response from yarn exporters was encouraging purely because of two factors, said Premal Udani, chairman of the Apparel Export Promotion Council. First, the government restored the Duty Entitlement Passbook (DEPB) scheme until September 30. DEPB was withdrawn from yarn exports halfway last year. The restoration brought exporters on track. Second, the depreciating rupee.

In the first four months of the current financial year, the response from yarn exporters was subdued. The overall registration for yarn exports, said textile commissioner A B Joshi, showed “very poor response”. Looking at the poor demand from the industry, yarn manufacturers reduced production capacity, resulting in drying up of pipeline inventory. Buyers, globally, were abstaining from fresh purchases due to a global economic slowdown, especially in Europe and the US.

Last year, the government had kept a cap of 720 million kg of cotton yarn exports, which traders apparently executed in less than eight months. During the remaining four months, there was almost no export, which resulted in oversupply in the domestic market. Although the

government has opened exports since April, the demand continued to be lower due to uncertainty in the global economy.

“The industry has started hedging extensively against the dollar to maintain profitability,” said Udani. Demand from foreign markets has revived, a good sign for the overall industry. How sustainable the revival is would be known only by November-end.

Faced with many problems among export-oriented industries in general and the textile sector in particular, Harshad Bhayani, president of the Indian Exporters Forum had urged the commerce ministry to extend DEPB, to provide a breather until the Goods & Services Tax was introduced. DEPB, the scheme most preferred by exporters, comes to an end on September 30.

GAINING GROUNDS

Quantity of cotton yarn export registrations (in million kg)

Month	Quantity
April	71.36
May	63.19
June	54.08
July	57.21
August	97.73

Another problem the industry faced in the first quarter, to continue in the next two, is the rising interest rate, which banks have raised by to 12.5 per cent from seven per cent in the past couple of months.

According to D K Nair, secretary general of Confederation of Indian Textile Industry, spinning mills have invested Rs 40,000 crore during the past 10 years in capacity building and modernisation, which would mean that about Rs 5,000 crore per annum will have to repaid to banks. The interest payment on these loans would amount to another Rs 2,000 crore. Thus Rs 7,000 crore will have to be paid by the spinning mills to banks during the current year. The other segments in the value chain also have huge repayment commitments. A rise in the interest rate means their repayment amount would increase, weakening textile mills’ financial health. The highly leveraged capital structure, plus rising interest rates, exposes the industry to a higher risk of defaults.

After hitting a record of Rs 62 a kg late last year, the benchmark Shankar-6 variety of cotton plunged to Rs 32 a kg early this financial year. The commodity has now stabilised at Rs 39-40 a kg. Hence, the increase in fibre price is gradually moving to yarn, said Nair.

As a consequence, yarn prices have started recovering, to trade currently at Rs 180 a kg (30’s count) from around Rs 140-150 a kg in early June. Udani, however, feels the outlook for cotton and the textile industry is “nervous”, with the end of the DEPB scheme on September 30.

Sugar production likely to increase marginally

BS Reporter / New Delhi September 22, 2011, 0:51 IST



India's sugar production in the 2011-12 crop marketing year, that starts from October, is expected to be around 24.6 million tonnes (mt), just 1.2 per cent more than this year's output, food minister K V Thomas said on Wednesday.

The government estimates are almost 1.4 mt less than that of the industry.

"This week, we had a meeting of sugarcane commissioners from 11 major producing states, along with representatives from the agriculture department. We feel sugar production in the next crop year is expected to be around 24.6 mt," Thomas told reporters.

He said the area under sugarcane in 2011-2012 was expected to be 5.02 million hectares, up 1.6 per cent from last year. Cane production is expected to be 342.2 mt, up from 339.16 mt this year.

"The production estimate is the first for next year and can vary as the season progresses," Thomas said. He said output wouldn't be less than 24.6 mt, as it was a conservative estimate. On allowing more sugar export, the minister said any decision would be taken only after the festival season is over in October.

"Post Diwali, we will assess the sugar availability situation and then take a call on whether any more exports should be allowed," Thomas said.

The government has already allowed export of 1.5 mt of sugar under the open general licence this year. Industry players feel there is scope for more, as output is projected to rise.

"Because of the steps taken by us, the total sugarcane arrears accruing to farmers this year is Rs 744.43 crore as on August 31," the minister said.

On the recent demand by the edible oil industry to raise the import duty on refined palm oil and revise the rate structure, Thomas said he had received their representation and raised the issue with the finance and commerce ministries.

“The issue of increasing import duty is under the finance ministry and that of stopping import of packaged edible oil into India is with the commerce ministry. I have spoken to both and apprised them of the concerns expressed,” Thomas said.

Yesterday, representatives from the edible oil industry said the sector could come under grave danger because of lowering of the export tax on refined oils by Indonesia, one of the largest suppliers of edible oils to India.

They had demanded a rise in the domestic import duty to save the local industry. The minister also said any decision on allowing foreign direct investment (FDI) in the retail sector should be allowed only after taking into account the interest of small traders and shopkeepers.

“We (the food and consumer affairs ministry) have some view of FDI in retail and will convey the same to all the concerned ministries and departments,” Thomas said.

Govt to monitor onion prices regularly

BS Reporter / Mumbai September 22, 2011, 0:48 IST

The government has decided to regularly monitor price variation in onion after lifting the two-week export ban yesterday.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the General Assembly of the International Organisation for Standardisation in New Delhi on Wednesday, food minister K V Thomas said, “We will regularly review the situation.”

He rebutted the criticism that the short-lived ban imposed by the government on onion exports was not a ‘panic’ decision. He said it was a ‘precautionary’ step, aimed at protecting domestic consumers.

“There was a panic decision last December. This time, we took the decision much in advance, in September,” Thomas said.

He was referring to last year’s bad experience, when onion prices had touched Rs 80-85 a kg in major retail markets across the country, following which the government had banned exports and imported large quantities from neighbouring Pakistan.

In the case of the latest ban, the decision was reviewed after massive farmer protests in the major growing states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka. It was lifted on the basis of farmers' assurance that there would be no shortage of the kitchen staple in domestic markets, he added.

Meanwhile, the Bombay high court has disposed off a case filed by a city-based exporter against the government's decision to ban exports. According to the petitioner, the court found no merit in it, following withdrawal of the ban by the government.

Potato down 0.8% on subdued demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi September 21, 2011, 14:24 IST

Potato prices fell by 0.85% to Rs 452.70 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators offloaded their positions, driven by subdued spot market demand.

Adequate stocks in the physical market following increased arrivals from producing regions also put pressure on the prices. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, October potato fell by Rs 3.90, or 0.85%, to Rs 452.70 per quintal, with a trading volume of 474 lots.

The March contract eased by Rs 2.50, or 0.38%, to Rs 639 per quintal, with a business volume of 19 lots.

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

Chana remains weak on subdued demand, profit-booking

Press Trust of India / New Delhi September 21, 2011, 14:26 IST



Chana prices fell by Rs 26, or 0.71%, to Rs 3,633 per 100 kg in futures trade today as speculators preferred to book profits at higher levels, triggered by subdued spot market demand.

Also, increased supplies from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan put pressure on the chana

futures prices.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, October chana declined by Rs 26, or 0.71%, to Rs 3,633 per 100 kg, with an open interest of 3,32,420 lots.

The November contract fell by Rs 23, or 0.62%, to Rs 3,706 per quintal, with an open interest of 1,13,580 lots.

Likewise, the commodity for December delivery shed Rs 23, or 0.61%, to Rs 3,757 per quintal, with an open interest of 46,910 lots.

Marketmen said in addition to profit-booking, subdued demand in the physical market led to the fall in chana prices at futures market.

Gur down on weak spot market cues

Press Trust of India / New Delhi September 21, 2011, 14:19 IST

Gur prices declined by Rs 5.50 to Rs 992.50 per 40 kg in futures trade today as traders preferred to off-load their positions, tracking weak spot market sentiments.

Traders said reports of higher sugarcane production this season sparked selling on expectations of easy availability of raw material.

Also, sluggish demand and heavy stocks position in the physical markets put pressure on gur prices, they added.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, November gur went down by Rs 5.50, or 0.55%, to Rs 992.50 per 40 kg, with an open interest of 5,300 lots.

The January contract slipped by Rs 3, or 0.30%, to Rs 1,012 per 40 kg, with an open interest of 300 lots.

Chilli plunges on all round selling

Press Trust of India / September 21, 2011, 14:16 IST



Chilli prices plummeted by Rs 158 to Rs 8,540 per quintal in futures trade today following reduced offtake by traders, guided by a weak spot market sentiment. Marketmen said large stocks position along with the fall in spot market demand, mainly led to the downfall in chilli futures prices. India is the largest producer of chilli in the world and contributes almost 50% to the total production.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, October chilli lost Rs 158, or 1.82% to Rs 8,540 per quintal, with an open interest of 7,000 lots.

The December contract also dipped by Rs 66, or 0.77% to Rs 8,524 per quintal, with an open interest of 2,490 lots.

THE HINDU Business Line

With onion, bustle and cheer return to Lasalgaon



Business Line Back on trucks: Lasalgaon, Asia's biggest onion market in Nashik, re-opened on Wednesday, after the Government's decision to lift the ban on onion exports. Traders had shut

shop on September 9, protesting against the Centre's decision to ban onion exports after a steep hike in retail price. — Paul Noronha

Lasalgaon (near Nashik), Sept. 21:

Diwali is more than a month away, but for the farmers of Lasalgaon in Maharashtra, touted as Asia's largest onion market, the sparkle has already arrived.

On Wednesday morning, as soon as bidding opened at the Lasalgaon market, farmers took their onion crop to the market yard, accompanied by a music band. They were welcomed with the distribution of sweets and bursting of crackers.

By noon, about 1,000 tonnes of onion had arrived in the market, swelling to to about 12,000 tonnes by evening. Farmers got Rs 1,212 for every 100 kg of onions.

The Centre lifted the ban on onion exports on Tuesday, a move that followed intense pressure from farmers and political parties, particularly from Maharashtra. The Centre's decision was taken after prices had stabilised. It has fixed a floor price of \$ 475 a tonne for export (about Rs 23,000).

For the last 12 days, farmers across the country had launched a country-wide agitation against the ban. They had stopped bringing their produce to the market.

On September 9, the Centre decided to ban onion exports after the retail price rose by more than Rs 10 a kg in less than three months in some cities because of the delayed harvest of the kharif crop.

Mr Babasaheb Gujar, a farmer from neighbouring Niphad, who sold about 2.5 tonnes of onion today told *Business Line* that he could have brought in 3.5 tonnes, but about a tonne of onions got damaged due to the agitation.

In spite of the loss, Mr Gujar is in good spirits as he believes the lifting of the ban is a great victory for the farmers. "The farmers are happy that a wrong decision has been overturned. Farmers did not have to come on the streets, they simply stopped supplying onions. *Sarkar ko jhukna pada kisan ke samne* (the Government had to bend to farmers' will), he said.

Mr Trimbak Charanke, also a farmer from the same region, said the Government was giving a subsidy on fertilisers and for storage facilities for onions because it “wants us to keep on producing a bumper crop so that the city dwellers can buy our produce cheap. Now, we are going to demand that we will supply the onions to the cities at prices decided by us and not the middlemen,” he said.

Mr Jaidutt Holkar, Chairman of the Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee, said had the farmers not agitated against the export ban, the prices would have dropped to Rs 400 per 100 kg, which would have been disastrous for the farmers. Today they are hovering at Rs 1,200, where marginal profit is possible, he said.

Reduced offtake puts pressure on cashew processors

Kochi, Sept. 21:

Some of the processors are said to have lost patience as the cashew market continued to remain quiet for the past two months. Consequently, the cashew kernel price range (offers and even actual trades on the same day) widened to an extent which, the traders said, they have not seen before, e. g. W240 from \$4.55 to \$4.85 and W320 from \$4.20 to \$4.60 a lb (fob).

Small processors in Vietnam were at the bottom end of the range, medium processors from Vietnam and India were in the middle, while large processors in Vietnam and India were at the top end of the range. Brazil was at around \$4.45 a lb (fob) for W320, they said.

All of them sold but volumes at both ends of the range were small. The wide range of prices is causing confusion about trend of the market and also concern about quality of product. Buyers are cautious and at the same time, most medium and large processors are not ready to reduce prices to make sales, they said.

domestic market quiet

Except for reasonable activity in Pieces, the Indian domestic market was also quiet. Retail offtake is slow but expectation is that it will pick up by September-end or beginning of October. Wholesalers are waiting for retail offtake to improve before making additional purchases in origin. Reduced risk appetite and higher fund requirement as prices are substantially higher

than last year, is making them keep inventories as low as possible, Mr Pankaj Sampat, a Mumbai based dealer, told *Business Line*.

There is absolutely no news from the supply side, he said. Southern crops are expected to be normal except for some rumblings of damage in some parts of Indonesia. India or Vietnam processors will not have idea of East African Raw Cashew Nut (RCN) prices before late October-early November. Any sales they make before that will have to depend on prices paid at the end of the Northern crops with some cushion in case RCN prices do not come down in the last quarter, he said.

August and September have been extremely quiet and this has resulted in some processors losing patience and selling at lower levels in the last 2-3 weeks. But the majority of the processors are not willing to come down much from the levels traded in July, although they are willing to look at slightly lower bids.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 22, 2011)

Volume continues to be low at Coonoor tea auctions

Coonoor, Sept 21:

A volume of 11.39 lakh kg will be offered at Sale No: 38 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions to be held Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of brokers' listing.

This is the lowest volume of the last 26 weeks barring last week when the volume was marginally higher. It is 25,000 kg less than the offer this time last year.

Of the 11.39 lakh kg on offer, 7.79 lakh kg belong to the leaf grades and 3.60 lakh kg belong to the dust grades.

As much as 10.63 lakh kg belong to CTC variety and only 0.76 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 0.43 lakh kg belong to orthodox while 7.36 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.33 lakh kg belong to orthodox while 3.27 lakh kg, CTC.

In the 11.39 lakh kg, fresh teas account for 10.42 lakh kg. Only 98,000 kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions. Quotations held by brokers last week indicated bids ranging Rs 40-44 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 80-118 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 47-50 for plain dusts and Rs 85-134 for brighter liquoring dusts.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 22, 2011)

Mixed trend in spot rubber

Kottayam, Sept. 21:

Spot rubber saw a mixed trend on Wednesday. While limited supplies and fall in production due to persistent rain provided firm support to prices, uncertainties in the economic outlook, slowdown in auto sales and rising interest rates and fuel costs exerted pressure on the demand. Apart from that, with rupee sliding into a two-year low against the dollar, import prospects might diminish further, analysts said.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs 217.50 (216.50) a kg, according to trades. The grade increased to Rs 217 (216) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, as quoted by the Rubber Board.

The October series closed at Rs 218.10 (218.05), November at Rs 216.74 (216.84), December at Rs 217 (216.85), January at Rs 219.21 (219.89), February at Rs 219.25 (219.56) and March at Rs 222.10 (219.98) a kg for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs 222.66 (223.51) a kg at Bangkok. The September futures for the grade slipped to ₹343 (Rs 216.60) from ₹344 a kg during the day session but then bounced back to ₹345 (Rs 217.86) a kg in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 217.50 (216.50); RSS-5: 210 (209); ungraded: 205 (203); ISNR 20: 210 (210) and latex 60 per cent: 134.50 (134.50).

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 22, 2011)

Food Ministry wants curbs on small edible oil pack imports

Cuts sugar output estimates to 246 lakh tonnes for 2011-12



Prof K.V. Thomas

New Delhi, Sept. 21:

The Food Ministry has approached the Finance and Commerce Ministries to take steps to curb import of cheaper small packs of edible oil from Indonesia. The steps suggested include higher import duty. Meanwhile, the ministry also released the revised estimates of sugar production, which were much lower than industry estimates. Industry fears that such an estimate will block further exports.

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Food, Consumer Affairs and PDS, Prof K.V Thomas, told reporters that Indonesia had reduced export duty on edible oils in smaller packs that made imported smaller packs much cheaper here. "Domestic oil mills are concerned and have appealed to the Ministry. It is then that we approached the Finance and the Commerce Ministries," Mr Thomas said. At present, the import duty on refined edible oil is 7.5 per cent.

Although, India has become more dependent on import of edible oils as oilseed production as well as domestic refining capacity has decreased, experts said that with high inflation, it would not be easy for the Finance Ministry to increase the import duty. The Food Ministry has requested the Commerce Ministry to ensure that India does not become dumping ground for cheaper and smaller packs, Mr Thomas said. Both the Ministries are expected to take a call on this soon, he said. The Agriculture Ministry is also pushing hard for increasing oilseed production

and plans to give more incentives to farmers. The Prime Minister Office (PMO) has also directed the Agricultural Department to come with an action plan within a month for increasing the production of oilseeds through the cluster mechanism. It has asked the Indian Council for Agricultural Research to develop high-yielding variety of pulses and oilseeds within two years. The Food Ministry revised its estimates for sugar production for the next season starting October. It is much lower than the industry's estimates of 260 lakh tonnes.

Sugar Production

“Sugarcane Commissioners from 10 States reviewed the situation and accordingly, we went for new estimate,” Mr Thomas said. The 10 major states include Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Bihar and Uttarakhand. It was observed that total sugarcane production was expected to touch 3,421.91 lakh tonnes during 2011-12 from 3,391.67 lakh tonnes in 2010-11. Higher production is due to increase in total acreage across the country. *shishir.s@thehindu.co.in*

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 22, 2011)

Profit-booking drags castorseed



Rajkot, Sept. 21:

Castorseed futures dipped by 3 per cent on Wednesday as low spot demand led investors to book profits.

The September contract on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange was down by Rs 100.50 to Rs 4,495 a quintal, with an open interest of 12,690 lots. The October contract declined by Rs 134 or 2.97 per cent to Rs 4,372, with an open interest of 18,610 lots.

December contracts of castor on Rajkot Commodity Exchange decreased by Rs 101 to Rs 4,332 a quintal (Rs 4,431). Spot castor fell by Rs 55 to Rs 4,442.50 a quintal on the exchange.

While 15,000-20,000 bags arrived in Gujarat and sold at Rs 880-910 for 20 kg, the 1,600-1,700 bags that arrived in Saurashtra sold at Rs 850-881 for 20 kg. Major *mandis* in Andhra Pradesh, like Kurnool, Hindupur and Telangana, reported new arrivals of 10,000-12,000 bags that quoted at Rs 4,000-4,4000 a quintal in the spot market, according to sources.

Marketmen said increased supplies and reduced offtake in the physical markets mainly pulled down castorseed futures. Sluggish demand from industrial-oil-making units aided the decline.

According to data from Gujarat Agriculture Department, castor was sown on 7.37 lakh hectares as on September 12, up 151.49 per cent from 4.7 lakh hectares last year.

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Edible oils under pressure on fresh arrivals



Mumbai, Sept 21:

Edible oil prices witnessed a mixed trend on Wednesday.

Groundnut oil fell sharply by Rs 10 for 10 kg. Palmolein declined by Re 1, while soya oil, sunflower oil and rapeseed oil ruled unchanged. Cotton refined oil gain by Re 1 for 10 kg. Tracking bearish foreign markets, local refineries reduced their rates for palmolein and soya refined oil by Rs 2-3.

Domestic edible oils were under pressure as new arrivals have started coming in at more producing areas under clear weather conditions. Crude palm oil (CPO) futures on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives (BMD) closed lower, though the decline was limited due to uncertainties about the US soyabean crop.

Despite the upcoming *Navaratri* festival, there was no movement at retail level. Stockists preferred to delay any new commitment. The overall volume was low. New kharif crop arrivals have started in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, southern and northern parts and are expected to rise further in coming days.

Resellers quoted palmolein at Rs 560-562. Liberty's rates for palmolein was Rs 564, soya oil Rs 645, Ruchi was quoting palmolein at Rs 565, soya refined oil Rs 645. Allana's palmolein was Rs 564 for September 25-October 5 delivery. In Rajkot and Saurashtra, groundnut oil extended losses by Rs 25 to Rs 1,475 (Rs 1,500) for Telia tin and loose (10 kg) lost Rs 20 at Rs 955 (Rs 975) on increased arrivals of new crop along with selling pressure in old crops. BMD CPO futures closed lower as its broad price gap of \$248 - tonne to rival soyaoil encouraged bargain hunting. Soyabean futures on the Dalian Commodity Exchange edged lower on Wednesday amid weak investor sentiment.

Malaysia's BMD CPO October contracts settled lower at MYR3,077 (MYR3,084), November at MYR3,066 (MYR3,073) and December MYR3,066 (MYR3,067) a tonne. October contracts of soya oil on National Board of Trade in Indore declined to Rs 654 (Rs 654.10).

Mumbai commodity exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 975 (985), soya refined oil 645 (645), sunflower exp. ref. 670 (665), sunflower ref. 740 (740), rapeseed ref. oil 700 (700), rapeseed expeller ref. 670 (670), cotton ref. oil 660 (659) and palmolein 562 (563).

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Poor offtake keeps chickpea sluggish



Indore, Sept. 21:

Chana and moong ruled steady, while masoor, tur and urad declined further on weak demand. Amid increased arrivals and weak demand, chana (kanta) ruled steady at Rs 3,650 a quintal. Arrivals of chana in local mandis were recorded at around 2,000 bags. Chana dal also ruled steady, with chana dal (bold) remaining unchanged at Rs 4,950-4,975, chana dal (medium) at Rs 4,850-4,875 and chana dal (average) quoted at Rs 4,750-4,775 a quintal.

Dollar chana or chickpea remained sluggish on weak demand. In the past two days, dollar chana has declined by Rs 150-200 a quintal. In local mandis, dollar chana ruled at Rs 8,000-8,300 a quintal. Arrivals of dollar chana in local mandis were recorded at 1,000 bags

Masoor continued to slide on slack demand, with masoor (bold) declining to Rs 3,250 a quintal (Rs 3,300-3,325 a quintal). Masoor (medium) declined by Rs 50 at Rs 3,050 a quintal. Masoor dal, however, ruled firm with masoor (bold) remaining unchanged at Rs 4,000-4,025, masoor dal (medium) at Rs 3,875-3,900 and masoor dal (average) at Rs 3,775-3,800 a quintal. Increased selling hammered tur prices, with tur (Maharashtra) declining to Rs 3,550-3,600 a quintal, down Rs 50, while tur (Nimari) remained unchanged at Rs 2,900-3,100. Tur dal, however, ruled stable. Tur dal (full) quoted at Rs 6,000-6,050 a quintal, tur dal (*sawa* no.) at Rs 5,100-5,150 and tur dal (marka) at Rs 6,700 a quintal.

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Mixed trend in rice market



Karnal, Sept. 21:

The Government's decision to open up exports of non-basmati varieties may not be having the desired results as far as the rice market is concerned, but it is helping farmers to get a fair price for their produce.

Farmers arriving with their produce at the Karnal grain market terminal are getting better prices now than in the corresponding period a year ago, said Mr Tara Chand Sharma, a rice trader. Traders expect paddy arrivals to be around 40,000 bags a day from next week. The rice market witnessed a mixed trend on Wednesday. Slack demand pulled aromatic rice slightly down, while non-basmati varieties ruled firm with marginal variations. Pusa-1121 (steam) eased marginally by Rs 30 and quoted at Rs 4,900-5,010 a quintal, while Pusa-1121(sela) was around Rs 3,950. Basmati (raw) fell by Rs 50 to Rs 5,700-5,750 a quintal, while Basmati (sela) sold at Rs 3,900-3,975, down Rs 25 from the previous level. For the broken of Pusa-1121, Tibar ruled at Rs 3,300-3,620 a quintal, Dubar Rs 2,600-2,930 and Mongra, Rs 1,900-2,350.

On the other hand, non-basmati varieties were trading well. Sharbati (steam) ruled at Rs 2,900-3,050, and Sharbati (sela) was at Rs 2,875 a quintal. PR-11 (sela) sold at Rs 2,150-2,425 a quintal, while PR-11(raw) quoted at Rs 2,000-2,350 a quintal.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 22, 2011)

Eastern States' purchases sweeten sugar



Mumbai, Sept 21:

Spot sugar prices witnessed a firm trend on Wednesday on continued buying support at upper level. Mill tender rates rose by Rs 10-12 a quintal as fresh buying from eastern-side buyers along with improvement in State-level demand buoyed the sentiment.

In line with firm tender rates, naka prices gained. Spot rates increased by Rs 2-5. A Vashi-based wholesaler said that on Tuesday evening Maharashtra's mills sold nearly one lakh bags (each of 100 kg) through tender offers. Good buying by State and upcountry-level stockists pushed up prices. Freight rates were steady after a small rise in last two days in Baramati line. Tuesday's decision by the Empowered Group of Ministers to extend the stock limit by two months did not any impact on the market sentiment. Traders now await the announcement of October free sale quota as *Diwali* will be celebrated next month. Changes in quota quantity will decide the market direction. Bulk buyers such as confectionery and sweet makers are buying sugar in advance to meet the demand for their products, traders said.

In the Vashi market, arrivals and local dispatches were slightly higher. Arrivals in the market was about 52 -53 truckloads (each 100 bags), while local lifting was about 50-51 truckloads. On Tuesday evening, one rail rake of 27,000 bags was sold to eastern side buyers while 70,000-75,000 bags were sold to local traders in the range of Rs 2,650-2,720 (Rs 2650-2,710) for S-grade and Rs 2,745- 2,820 (Rs 2,735-2,810) for M-Grade. In the international market, December-11 futures closed lower at \$ 678.40 (\$ 689.10).

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 2,768-2,851 (Rs 2,766-2,851) and M-grade Rs 2,826-2,986 (Rs 2,820- 2,981).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 2,720-2,770 (Rs 2,720-2,770) and M-grade Rs 2800-2,910 (Rs 2,790-2,890).

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N. India orders lend colour to turmeric



Erode, Sept. 21:

Spot turmeric prices increased by Rs 300 a quintal on Wednesday as demand emerged from North India merchants.

Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association said: "This is the first time in 70 years such a steep decrease and marginal increase in price has been seen by traders. Till last year, the prices fell gradually, but this year the decrease has been sudden, affecting farmers," he said.

The hybrid Salem crop fetched good price based on quality and increased around Rs 500 a quintal.

Farmers said that on Wednesday they gained by Rs 300-500 a quintal. The traders said that turmeric futures improved by Rs 100 a quintal, which was reflected in the Erode Market.

Further, over 10 fresh orders were received. On Wednesday 6,200 bags of turmeric arrived for sale, of which 70 per cent were sold.

Some traders brought their stocks to the market on Thursday hoping for a better price.

The Salem crop (hybrid variety) increased by Rs 480 a quintal and the finger variety in other sales centres increased by Rs 300 a quintal. The price in the Regulated Marketing Committee increased by Rs 350 a quintal.

Salem Crop: The finger variety sold at Rs 4,107-5,689, the root variety at Rs 3,842-4,409. Of the total 1,359 bags that arrived , 386 were sold.

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