THE HINDU

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Farmers feel the pulse of pulses cultivation

Special Correspondent

Black gram and green gram cultivation gains momentum

Handful:K. Sakthimohan (right), Joint Director of Agriculture, inspecting a greengram field at Sholandur on Monday.— Photo: L. Balachandar

The cultivation of pulses such as black gram and green gram has gained momentum in the district thanks to the concerted efforts of Farmers Interest Groups and officials.

Though the black gram cultivation does not require heavy downpour, the farmers of the district had never been interested in cultivating pulses till recent past during summer. However, constant meeting of officials and farmers has motivated them to take up black gram and green gram cultivation in a massive way in spite of the prevailing dry and adverse condition.

According to the officials of Agricultural Department, around 250 acres have been brought under the black gram cultivation in R.S. Mangalam block alone during the current season. Most of the fields in Sholandur, Vadavayal, Kothiyalkottai, Nedumpulikottai, Seenangudi look green with the cultivation of black gram and green gram.

The 60-day crop, for which seeds were sown in paddy fields as intercrop just 10 days before harvesting paddy, have reached the stage of harvest now.

Ka. Sakthimohan, Joint Director of Agriculture, told *The Hindu* that though the crops were not new to the district they had never been raised in a massive way mainly due to lack of awareness. However, the efforts of officials, who influenced the farmers of R.S. Mangalam block through regular meetings and training as part of Farmers Interest Groups, had motivated them to raise black gram, green gram and maize in summer season.

S. Mohamed Abdul Nazeer, Assistant Director of Agriculture and S.S. Shaik Abdullah, Agricultural Officer said that there was absolutely no need for the farmers to raise black gram and green crop as pure crops. They could be grown under low moisture and fertility conditions as intercrops.

As per the advice given by the officials, the farmers sowed the seeds in their fields just days before the harvest of paddy crop and they had grown in paddy fields with supplementary irrigation.

A. Kalimuthu, a farmer of Sholandur who has raised green gram in 5 acres of land, said that except for spraying pesticide, he did not apply basal or top dressing. There was no rain except drizzling since northeast monsoon season. However, the crop seemed to be healthy. It was expected that the yield could be between 150 and 200 kilograms per acre.

The Joint Director of Agriculture added that the cue taken from this year's success would be utilised for bringing more areas under black gram cultivation next year.

Published: April 10, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: April 10, 2012 04:30 IST

Demand for dryland agricultural policy

Special Correspondent

Members of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene staged a demonstration here on Monday urging the Government to formulate a comprehensive dryland agricultural policy to eliminate the scourge of drought permanently.

The KRRS and Hasiru Sene activists staged a demonstration outside the Deputy Commissioner's office to draw the attention of the Government to the farmers' sufferings in the drought-affected areas of the State. The farmers, led by KRRS leader Badagalpura Nagendra, said 123 taluks in t were reeling under drought. Migration by people in search of employment had begun. Accusing the Government of being insensitive to farmers' interests, the KRRS and Hasiru Sene submitted a set of 20 demands to the Government, including waiver of agricultural loans. The KRRS said the Government should establish a corpus, seek contributions from industrialists and extend financial assistance to farmers. Elected representatives should compulsorily contribute a month's salary to the proposed fund, according to the KRRS.

Published: April 10, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: April 10, 2012 04:31 IST

Changes in cotton cultivation stressed

Deputy Director General (crop science) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), S.K. Dutta, has underlined the need for scientific changes in the cultivation of cotton and improving local varieties of cotton.

Speaking at the annual group talks as part of All India Coordinated Cotton Improvement Project (AICCIP) held here on Monday, Mr. Dutta acknowledged the fact that Bt cotton had considerably improved cotton production in the country.

Director of the Central Institute of Cotton Research (CICR), K.R. Kranthi, said the country had made rapid strides in cotton production during the last four decades, but development of varieties with higher density of plants and limited flowers (seven) per plant was necessary.

Published: April 10, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: April 10, 2012 04:19 IST

Government urged to waive farm loans

Staff Correspondent

Farmers seek compensation for crop losses

SEEKING RELIEF:Farmers staging a dharna outside the Deputy Commissioner's office in Davangereon Monday.

A large number of farmers on Monday staged a dharna in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office here demanding that the government waive crop and other loans.

The agitators also urged the government to initiate drought relief schemes.

The farmers, under the banner of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene, raised slogans against the government.

In a memorandum submitted to the Deputy Commissioner, the farmers urged the government to come to their rescue by waiving various loans. The government should instruct banks and other financial institutions not to prevail upon farmers to repay any type of loan, the sangha demanded. Demanding that the government pay compensation to farmers for losses owing to drought, they urged the government to accord priority to drinking water schemes in all villages. Kogganuru Hanumanthappa, Balluru Ravikumar, Arun Kumar Kurudi, Ramesh Naika and Revannasiddappa were present.

Published: April 10, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: April 10, 2012 04:31 IST

Model farmer receives the Padma Shri

Staff Reporter

President Pratibha Patil conferring T. Vengatapathi Reddiar with the honour in New Delhi recently.— Photo:Special Arrangement

Model farmer T. Vengatapathi Reddiar recently received Padma Shri from President Pratibha Patil.

Reddiar is a model farmer, with several innovations to his credit, especially in the production of flower crops, a release said.

The man was a pioneer in minor crops such as Crossandra and Casuarina Junghuniana to the limelight by developing better yielding genotypes using breeding and biotechnology techniques, the release said.

Reddiar discontinued education while in Class IV and started assisting his father in agricultural work. At 19, he took up agriculture as main profession and shifted to Crossandra production. In 1972, he established Lakshmi Narayana's Crossandra Innovation Centre in Koodapakkam.

Later, he took up commercial propagation of Crossandra and paved the way for export of Crossandra flowers to countries including Singapore, Malaysia and the United States.

During this period, he took up research on propagation of casuarina, the release said.

He has received awards such as the Bliss Award in 1995 for outstanding service in developing propagation techniques for Crossandra; an award from National Innovation Foundation for evolving new varieties of Crossandra in 2001; an award from the Government of Puducherry as well as NRDC National Award from for his invention of new varieties of commercial Crossandra in 2005, the release said.

GUNTUR, April 10, 2012

JVV opposes promotion of GM crop

The district branch of Jana Vignana Vedika (JVV) has strongly opposed the promotion of Genetically Modified (GM) crops in the country particularly the large-scale proliferation of BT cotton by multi-national companies such as Monsanto for which India has become a lucrative market and laboratory for testing their harmful technologies.

The Indian Government watched helplessly as the MNCs strengthened their monopolistic grip on the seed markets by dubious ways. It is high time that the farmers and other stakeholders came together to thwart the MNCs' plans to make their domination of the Indian markets complete. Unfortunately, the adverse impact of GM technologies is not immediately felt by farmers, while the government refused to curb the illegal trade practices of MNCs due to pressure from the corporate lobbies, according to N. Venugopala Rao, JVV leader and former professor of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agriculture University. “April 9 is the day when anti-GM movement is organised around the world and it is an opportunity to make fresh attempts to protect the genuine interests of people and the farming communities.”

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Mr. Venugopala Rao said: "The BT crops give impressive yields in the initial stages but not in the long run. Besides, the pesticide requirement increases by a large measure, dependence on nitrogen-based fertilizers increases and the soil health gets depleted as useful microbes are destroyed by the BT seed."

In spite of these consequences, the demand for BT cotton seed had grown tremendously due to aggressive marketing by MNCs as the farmers reposed confidence in that variety (BT cottons have completed a decade of their entry into India on March 26), he said.

The government faced obstacles in bringing out its own BT varieties as the MNCs leveraged their financial clout in the market. An MNC tried to enforce a ban on BT products of other companies in India in stark violation of laws of the land, he said. While the BT seed was pushed through the market, organic farming was given the short shrift obviously at the behest of some multi-national and domestic companies. The JVV was doing its best to protect the Indian farmers' interests in collaboration with the Southern Action on Genetic Engineering (SAGE) and it needs wider support of the public, Mr. Venugopala Rao said. JVV district general secretary N. Venkateswarlu also spoke.

- *'India has become lucrative market for multi-national companies'*
- *Growing demand for BT seed attributed to aggressive marketing by MNCs*

Published: April 10, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: April 10, 2012 04:31 IST

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 77.92 feet on Monday, against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 602 cusecs and the discharge, 1,343 cusecs.

hindustantimes

Tue,10 Apr 2012

weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Sunny

Tuesday, Apr 10

Max	Min
35.5°	26.9°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 66%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:35

Sunset: 18:03

Barometer: 1011

Tomorrow's Forecast

Cloudy

Wednesday, Apr 11

Max	Min
34°	24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Apr 12	Apr 13	Apr 14	Apr 15	Apr 16
34° | 24°	34° | 23°	34° | 24°	34° | 24°	34° | 25°
Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy

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

Green prices soar

Chennaiites will have to spend more for their greens till July, especially with a shortage of 50 tonnes of all kinds of vegetables reaching the Chennai market every day from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and other neighbouring states. “We received vegetables only in 400 vehicles. Usually, 450 vehicles bring vegetables to our market every day. There is short supply of 50 tonnes every day since last week,” says S. Chandran, president of the Koyambedu Vegetable Market Association. The vendors say that the rejected loads of vegetables from Vijayawada and Hyderabad would reach Chennai to meet the demand. The price of beans jumped to Rs 45 a kg this week from Rs 35 last week. Less beetroot had arrived from Andhra Pradesh as the farmers sent more loads to Hyderabad city market. Even carrot loads from Krishnagiri, Ooty and Karnataka did not meet the demands of Chennaiites. The price of carrot, which was sold for Rs 15 a kg last week is Rs 20 now. Tomatoes were available for Rs 22 last week. Now they are sold for Rs 30 and the price is expected to rise in the coming weeks. One medium-sized cauliflower is priced at Rs 15 now while it was available for Rs 10 last week. The Vegetable Market Association says the shortage would be met only in July.

Source URL: http://www.deccanchronicle.com/channels/cities/chennai/green-prices-soar-158

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

Egg prices dip by 30% on sluggish demand

Agencies Posted online: Mon Apr 09 2012, 18:21 hrs

New Delhi : Egg prices have declined by up to 30 per cent in most retail markets of the country due to sluggish demand in summer and some impact of import ban on Indian eggs by the UAE, the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) said.

The retail price of egg, which was ruling at Rs 4 apiece during winter, has come down to Rs 2.75 apiece now in most places, NECC said.

"Retail prices have come down due to lower demand in summer. Also, there was some impact of ban on Indian eggs from the UAE," NECC Chairman M B Desai said.

The NECC, the world's largest association of poultry farmers, said retail prices were slashed to clear inventories that was piled up after Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai banned entry of Indian eggs in December, 2011.

Oman has also recently banned Indian eggs following bird flu outbreak in Orissa and Tripura, he said.

He, however, mentioned that Indian eggs continue to be exported to Afganishtan and African countries.

So far, on a average 180 containers, comprising 4,00,000 eggs in each container, have been shipped to these two countries, he added.

According to NECC, India normally exports 150 containers of eggs. Much of egg exports take place from Nammakal district in Tamil Nadu.The egg production is around 18 crore per day in the country.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Commodities

10 APR, 2012, 03.27AM IST, ET BUREAU

Chilli farming may score over cotton

KOCHI: More growers may favour chilli compared to cotton for the next season as the decline in the price of the spice is less than the latter's. Many farmers in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the main chilli producing centres, keep alternating between chilli and cotton cultivation depending on the prices. As chilli harvest draws to a close, growers estimate that yield will not meet expectations. It should be 10-15 % more over the previous year as against 30-40 % predicted earlier, they say. As a result, the price line for good quality chilli is still holding in the range of Rs 50-55 per kg. Arrivals have peaked to 1 lakh bags in the main market of Guntur. This is expected to continue for some more days as the harvest will continue till May.

10 APR, 2012, 03.16AM IST, ET BUREAU

New markets beckon soya meal exporters

MUMBAI: Indian soya meal exporters are expected to make gains this year as Brazil and Argentina, major soya bean producing nations, have reported a fall in production.

Traders have found buyers from nations such as Japan, Indonesia and Vietnam who are ready to buy at Rs 28,000 per tonne. Soya meal is traded at Rs 25,300 per tonne at major ports.

Importers from Iran and the Gulf region are likely to buy big volumes from India this year after the US imposed a trade ban on the West Asian neighbour.

"Buyers from Iran have shown interest in buying a large volume of soya meal this year as they can't import from the US," an Indore-based trader said. Traders believe prices are expected to go up as demand from various countries is going up significantly.

"Demand for soya meal from Iran has been pushing up the bean market. However, lower rapeseed/ mustard production will also play a big role in firming up the prices," said B V Mehta, executive director of Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEAI).

India shipped 4,61,892 tonne of soya meal in March, up 12.69% from 4,09,882 tonne in March 2010. During FY12, total exports stood at 39,14,683 tonne as against 38,45,736 tonne in FY11.

Exports in the last six months have fallen to 27,85,831 tonne against previous year's 29,97,847 tonne due to lower arrivals in the physical market.

"India's rapeseed/mustard output is expected to fall to 6.27 million tonne this year against 6.85 MT last year," an SEAI official said. Soya meal is primarily used as a protein source in animal feed. A small proportion of the meal is used to make defatted soy flour, soy protein concentrates and isolates.

Iran's additional demand may boost producers' confidence in the crop and processing facilities for next season. The soya bean April futures contract on NCDEX has risen to Rs 3,000 per quintal from Rs 2,500 quintal in January.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Apr 10, 2012

Guar farmers, millers upbeat on prospects

Komal Amit Gera & Vikas Sharma / Chandigarh April 10, 2012, 0:06 IST

The sowing season for guar is approaching — it commences with the monsoon in this region — and farmers in Rajasthan and Haryana (where the bulk of global supply comes from) are likely, lured by the high prices of last season, to bring more area under the crop. As for millers, they're adding to their capacity.

Sources in the trade say there are close to 40 guar gum mills in Rajasthan and about 30 in Haryana (80 per cent of the sown area for guar in the country is in these two states; India produces four-fifths of the global supply of guar gum). "The investment in putting up a mill is two acres of land and Rs 1 crore for building and machinery. About 70 per cent of last year's crop has been processed; there's a bright prospect for millers," said Satish Mittal, a miller from Adampur in Haryana.

The surge in prices had led the commodity derivatives market regulator to suspend fresh trade in guar products from March 28. However, traders believe seed acreage would still increase. Says Naresh Malik, a farmer in Hisar district of Haryana: "Last year, I had sown cotton on 10 acres of land and guar seed in five acres. This year, I am planning to sow guar seed on 10-11 acres."

Shashipal Punia, a farmer from Nohar tehsil in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan, said they were expecting about Rs 35,000 a quintal but even if they get around Rs 10,000, it would still be profitable to diversify from groundnut or cotton. He said another advantage of guar is that it can be stored for up to five years, with minimal investment in infrastructure. Another plus is that a byproduct is used as cattlefeed. "Earlier, we used to feed our cattle on guar as the crop was not remunerative. The cost of growing guar is covered by the cattlefeed; the rest is the farmer's net income," said Jhiri Ram of Rajasthan.

Rajesh Kedia , director, Jai Bharat & Chemical Ltd , a guar products exporter, says sowing would certainly rise, owing to the high prices farmers got for the seed this year. From Rs 60 a kg last year (Rs 6,000 a quintal) it had risen to Rs 300 a kg (Rs 30,000 per qtl) this year. Agricultural officials in Rajasthan say guar sowing would rise 15 per cent, from last year's 2.7 million hectares. Those in Haryana believe it should reach three million ha as against 2.15 m ha last year. The area under bajra and cotton would get diverted; officials say the demand for guar seed this year has doubled from last year. In all, say traders, sowing of seed should cross five million ha, compared to 3.5 m ha last year.

P K Hissaria, president, Indian Guar Gum Manufacturers Association, believes even irrigated areas (guar is extremely drought-resistant) would see farmers opting for sowing, which could commence as early as May. He said export demand in 2011-12 was 25-30 per cent higher than last year. Apart from guar seed's use as cattle feed and manure, guar gum has various industrial applications, such as in the paper and textile industry, the manufacture of explosives and hydraulic fracturing of oil and gas formations.

Crude palm oil up 0.5% on spot demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi April 09, 2012, 13:38 IST

Crude palm oil prices rose by Rs 3.40 to Rs 624 per 10 kg in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions, supported by a rising demand at spot markets.

A firming trend in the overseas markets also influenced crude palm oil prices at futures trade.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the April contract rose by Rs 3.40, or 0.54%, to Rs 624 per 10 kg, with a trading volume of 176 lots.

The May contract rose by Rs 3.30, or 0.52%, to Rs 629.10 per 10 kg, with a business turnover of 406 lots.

Analysts said the increase in crude palm oil prices was supported by a rising spot market demand and a firming trend in overseas markets.

In Malaysia, palm oil climbed as much as 0.5% to $1,179 a tonne.

Red chilli falls 4% on arrival pressure

Press Trust of India / New Delhi April 09, 2012, 13:31 IST

Chilli prices fell by Rs 228 to Rs 5,520 per quintal in futures trade today on profit booking by traders on the back of poor demand from the domestic markets amid higher arrivals of fresh crop.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, the June contract fell by Rs 228, or 3.97%, to Rs 5,520 per quintal, with an open interest of 4,965 lots.

The April contract declined by Rs 208, or 3.87%, to Rs 5,168 per quintal, with an open interest of 6,415 lots.

Market experts said besides profit-booking, fall in demand in the spot market led to a decline in chilli prices at the futures market.

Caution, the hallmark in foodgrain exports

Kunal Bose / April 10, 2012, 0:20 IST

New Delhi cannot be faulted for exercising utmost caution while permitting export of foodgrain and a sensitive commodity like sugar. The same discretion is exercised while extending the ban on exports of pulses, in which demand is perennially ahead of supply. The government does not mind any criticism for the time it will take to arrive at an export decision. For its priority is to ensure food for a population of 1.2 billion. Ideally, at any point it would like to have wheat and rice in FCI and state-owned godowns well in excess of 'minimum buffer norms' and comfortable stock of sugar in factory warehouses. All this is more in the nature of an insurance against setback in farm production in a difficult monsoon year.

The Economic Survey 2011-12 admits that “Indian agriculture is still dependent on the monsoon. The dependency of Indian famer on the monsoon has to be reduced largely by increasing irrigation facilities." It is not a day too early that finance minister Pranab Mukherjee gave a call to recognise water as a resource. If this is not done now, "the day is not far," as he says, "when water stress will start threatening our agricultural production."

The country's supply side vulnerability in farm items became acutely evident in 2009-10, when a drought brought foodgrains production down by 16.3 million tonnes (mt) to 218.1 mt. The consequences were disastrous for food prices. Similarly, we had a particularly bad sugar season (October to September) in 2008-09, with production at 14.54 mt, requiring us to import 2.4 mt. Sugar output improved to 18.91 mt in 2009-10, but since the season opened with lean stocks, imports jumped to 4.08 mt.

With the weather ideal in the two following seasons, including the current one, we now have bumper sugar production back to back.

Mounting stocks put pressure on local prices and consigned the industry to the red. This makes it difficult for sugar factories to clear cane bills in time. To ease pressure, the government has allowed export. But in a singular demonstration of caution, New Delhi, refusing to be moved by industry impatience, is allowing exports in tranches. From the early part of this season, it came to be widely believed that Indian sugar production would climb to around 26 mt from 24.4 mt in 2010-11. Naturally, the industry started telling the government of an export opportunity of up to four mt. So far, three mt of exports have been sanctioned, in three equal tranches. But, why are exports so far behind the sanctioned volume this season?

The policy as of now is the exportable quantity is distributed among all producing mills on the basis of the previous three years' production. The immediate past president of Indian Sugar Mills Association Narendra Murkumbi, said the dispensation "benefited all sugar mills." Not that every factory is participating in exports. The ones away from the shores will sell their quota at a premium to the few exporting units.

The merit of the policy lies in distributing the benefits arising from exports equitably among all industry constituents. But reports are now surfacing of moves to replace the present practice promoting equity, specially when the industry is faring badly as evident from nearly Rs 10,000 crore of unpaid cane bills, by quota distribution on a first come first serve basis. Will not the industry stand divided if such reports prove to be correct?

While the government is to take a decision on any further export allotment for sugar, the country never had it so good to allow export sales of wheat. Production of the cereal this season (July to June), aided by a pest-free long winter, is set to cross a record 90 mt. This is happening on the back of last year's bumper harvest of 86.87 mt. Bountiful wheat supply will lead the government to revise upwards 2011-12 foodgrain production in the third advance estimate.

The context is ideal for exports. Unfortunately, by the time the four-year old export ban was withdrawn in September 2011, high world wheat prices had passed by. At this point, Indian wheat is globally uncompetitive and export prospects could improve only if global prices make a strong recovery. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) says Indian wheat prices staying uncompetitive will restrict our exports to 700,000 tonnes in the current marketing year. In case there is "parity" in Indian and world prices in the next season, exports could more than double to 1.5 mt in 2012-13, according to USDA.

The export scene could get even better in case our traders make bold to start exporting wheat to Iran on the basis of new payment mechanism.

Hemmed in by sanctions and poor crop, Iran has indicated import requirements of three mt to Indian officials. Meantime, Turkey has started looking beyond traditional wheat suppliers to import grain from India to be able to make larger quantities of pasta for exports. As wheat prices in our case remain an export deterrent, the immediate challenge is to store grains safely for future use in wholesome condition. In this context, particularly welcome is private entrepreneur's guarantee scheme under which nearly 15 mt of storage capacity is being created.

'India's cotton output may fall to 32.3 mn bales in 2012-13'

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi April 10, 2012, 0:18 IST

India's cotton output is likely to dip by two million bales to 32.3 million in the 2012-13 marketing year (August-July), as farmers are likely to switch to better-priced alternative crops amid unclear cotton export policy, according to a report by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

India, the world's second-biggest grower, had produced a record 34.25 million bales in the 2011-12 marketing year. One bale contains 170 kg of cotton. "Cotton production is forecast to decrease by two million bales to 32.3 million bales, as the area is expected to drop by 10 per cent," USDA said in its latest report. But, domestic cotton consumption is expected to increase to 26 million bales in 2012-13, from 25.3 million bales in 2011-12.

However, India's exportable cotton supply would be only six million bales in 2012-13, as against 11.75 million bales this year, given an expected drop in production and higher domestic demand, it noted.

On cotton acreage, the USDA said gauging farmers' planting intentions at this early stage is difficult. However, several factors suggest the cotton area in 2012-13 will be lower at 10.9 million hectares, as against the record 12.2 million hectares in 2011-12.

USDA, however, said, "If the government increases the minimum support price (MSP) for cotton significantly, planting intentions could shift."

Farmers have a number of planting options, as high prices of peanuts, soybeans, guar and maize could prompt them to shift away from cotton in central, western and northern India, it added.

According to the report, Indian farmers may decide to try crops that are subject to fewer policy-driven market disruptions, as it is not clear whether the government will allow fresh cotton export before the start of the 2012-13 marketing year or if the government will develop a new procedure for regulating exports.

On March 5, India had banned cotton exports briefly for a week. It has decided to permit export registered before the ban period.

On yields, the USDA said there is some concern within the industry that these have stagnated over the past few years, even as productivity has increased from an estimated 300 kg per hectare to 500 kg hectare since the introduction of biotech cotton.

"The increasing prevalence of 'sucking insects' such as whitefly, the need for better micronutrient and fertiliser management, the spread of cotton into dry-land areas and seed quality are all cited as factors affecting yields," it said.

Given these ongoing challenges, yields are forecast at the five-year average of 500 kg per hectare, it said, adding that India's yields continue to be significantly lower than the global average of 740 kg per hectare.

Cotton, a predominantly monsoon (kharif) season crop, is planted from the end of April through September, and harvested from October. India's two-thirds of cotton is produced in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Odisha where much of the crop is rainfed.

Revamped agri scheme faces 1-year delay

Anindita Dey / Mumbai April 10, 2012, 0:17 IST

The Union ministry of agriculture has decided to delay the rollout of the revamped Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) by a year, to the next financial year (2013-14).

Official sources said the ministry proposed to continue all its existing schemes under its flagship programme, RKVY, in the current financial year. The new plan approved by the planning commission has recommended pruning the number of schemes for better coordination.

Officials said the ministry had already started working towards consolidating its 50-odd schemes into a dozen according to the Planning Commission recommendation, but the revamped scheme could not be implemented right now. They explained various stakeholders like state governments or coordinating agencies and banks were yet to be informed of the changes and the kharif season is to start soon. At this point of time, if revamped schemes will be implemented, it would create a lot of confusion among the stakeholders, and farmers would be harassed. Therefore, it has been decided the old schemes will continue this year and side by side, preparations will start for implementing the schemes in the new form by next financial year, said officials.

For the new Plan period, 2012-17, the ministry proposes to revamp RKVY to adopt a focused approach towards each sector and avoid a multiplicity of schemes. The number of schemes will be pruned to a dozen, without diluting the objective of schemes.

Besides, various schemes announced earlier, being administered under various departments, will be consolidated.

Schemes operating independently and may be brought under RKVY are those on green revolution to the eastern region, integrated development of 60,000 pulses villages in rain-fed areas, promotion of palm oil, initiative on vegetable clusters and nutri-cereals national mission for protein supplements, among others.

In its new form, the scheme will support a new objective of asset creation along with its current job of funding project and schemes. Allocation will be spread across four to five years, rather than a yearly allocation.

Officials explained that funding to states under RKVY will be made proportional to the growth of agriculture in that particular state.

They said except for seeds, fertilisers, plant protection scheme and agricultural implements and machinery, all other schemes have shown good performance.

Some of the schemes which are proposed to be scrapped after a proper evaluation are the Technology Mission of Integrated Development of Horticulture in north-eastern states, Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, agri-clinic and agri-business centres scheme, macro-management of agriculture.

RKVY was launched in 2007 with the objective of achieving four per cent annual growth in the agricultural sector during the 11th Plan.

Tea output declines 11% over a year

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi April 10, 2012, 0:10 IST

India's tea production fell 11 per cent to 18.7 million kg in January, on account of a drop in output in major producing areas.

Output of the brew was 20.9 million kg in January last year, Tea Board said.

Production in Assam, which accounts for a little more than 50 per cent of the total output in north India, by the Board classification, fell sharply. In south India, the decline was on account of fall in production in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

Production in Assam declined 43 per cent to 1.96 million kg in January, from 3.4 million kg in the same month last year. However, production in West Bengal rose marginally to 2.99 million kg in January 2012 from 2.93 million kg in the same period last year.Total output of the brew in north India declined by 22 per cent to 4.99 million kg, as against 6.41 million kg and in south India by six per cent to 13.69 million kg in January this year, from 14.51 million kg in the same month last year.While, output of the brew in Tamil Nadu declined to 8.93 million kg in January 2012 from 9.42 million kg in the year-ago period, tea production in Kerala fell to 4.38 million kg from 4.68 million kg in the same period.Similarly, production in Karnataka declined to 382,000 kg in January this year from 409,000 kg in the same month previous year.

India is the world's biggest consumer and second largest producer of tea.

THE HINDU Business Line

Pepper market recovers on limited availability

G. K. Nair

Kochi, April 9:

Pepper market recovered on Monday on tight supply situation while there was good circular trading with high volatility.

Total open interest dropped sharply while the turnover showed a substantial increase. At the same time, all the active contracts increased significantly.

Rumours

“It is against the fundamentals. There is tight supply situation,” market sources told *Business Line*. They said there were false rumours that huge quantities of pepper were being deposited in the exchange warehouses for some time. But the actual position is totally different.

While there were 2,061 tonnes of pepper on the exchange platform on March 7 the volume available as on April 7 was just 1,865 tonnes, they said.

In the ready pepper market no sellers were seen, they said. Whatever material available in the primary markets here is moving out, evading tax. A similar scenario exists in Karnataka also, trade sources claimed. Pepper from there is also moved out and delivered anywhere in India at Rs 380 a kg, allegedly evading tax in the producing State, they said.

Those who have commitments and those who had sold in the hope that they could cover when the new crop arrived are making the “hue and cry” now by spreading rumours to push the market down, they alleged.

Meanwhile, long position holders who do not want to take delivery were liquidating.

April contract on the NCDEX increased by Rs 740 to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 38,300 a quintal. May and June were up by Rs 640 at Rs 39,225 and Rs 39,800 a quintal respectively.

Turnover

Total turnover increased by 2,939 tonnes to close at 5,464 tonnes. Total open interest fell by 543 tonnes to 7,035 tonnes, indicating good liquidation.

April, May and June open interest dropped by 422, 116 and 2 tonnes respectively to close at 3,214 tonnes, 3,445 and 271 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend and non-availability of ready pepper increased by Rs 700 to close at Rs 37,000 (ungarbled) and Rs 38,500 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at $7,750 - 7,800 a tonne (c&f) Europe and $8,050 - 8,100 a tonne (c&f) for the US.Exporters here said that some of their selected clients in Europe who preferred Malabar had alleged that they were supplied with Vietnam pepper marked as TGEB and TGSEB. These brands are universally registered as India specific produce, they pointed out.

Turmeric prices rise a tad

Erode, April 9:

Turmeric traders chose to buy from the Attur market in Salem district to fulfil committed orders. This is since markets in Erode are closed till Wednesday.The traders took part in Attur auctions on Saturday and as a result, prices increased by Rs 300 a quintal.Similarly, prices Sathyamangalam Cooperative Marketing society at Thalawady also increased with traders looking to that market too.Erode markets were to open on Monday after being closed last week for local religious festival. But the death of a member led to markets being closed on Monday. Tuesday is a local holiday.According to Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, over 25,000 bags of turmeric are expected to arrive on Wednesday.

Prevailing dry spell keeps cardamom market steady

Kochi, April 9:

Activity on the cardamom market was low-key last week due to holidays and the market is likely to see action from Monday. According to trade sources in Bodinayakannur, the market opened today on a steady note with indications of an upward trend later.

Auctions were held only for three days from Monday to Wednesday last week and the total volume arrived stood at around 165 tonnes and of which around 153 tonnes were sold.

Prices remained steady at previous levels. The market is likely to show positive trend today as exporters and up country buyers are likely to cover, given the tight supply situation likely to emerge in future.

The weather conditions continued to remain unfavourable in several growing areas which have not received any summer showers so far even though the valleys and midlands were blessed with rains in recent days, Mr P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *Business Line*. And reports of the rains have also led to some bearish sentiment in the market.

The dry spell in the major cardamom growing belt in the interiors from Nedumkandam to Munnar such as Udumbanchola, Rajakad, Rajakumari, Santanpara, has resulted in withering of plants in several estates. If the present conditions prevail for some more days plants in more areas would be destroyed, growers claimed.

They said the next crop will not only be delayed but would also be much smaller. The crop in 2011-12 was estimated to be the highest ever at around 20,000 tonnes, trade sources in Bodinayakannur said.

This projection is substantiated by the total arrivals so far at the auctions held during the current season. It stood at around 15,790 tonnes as against about 8,500 tonnes in the corresponding period previous season. When direct sales in the open market coupled with production in Kerala's Wayanad district and Karnataka are added to the auction arrivals, total output in the current season would go up to around 20,000 tonnes, the trade said.

The weather conditions last season were favourable leading to the bumper crop.

“The situation this season is opposite. If no rains are received in the coming days, the situation would become worse,” some of the growers in Kumily region said.

Total arrivals during the current season from August 1, 2011 up to April 4, 2012 were around 15,790 tonnes and the sales at 15,310 tonnes as against about 8,450 tonnes of arrivals and 8,330 tonnes of sales in the same period last year.

Weighted average price as on April 4, 2012 was at around Rs 605 a kg as against Rs 1,102 a kg on the same date last year, according to official sources.

Prices of graded varieties were steady at previous levels. Their prices in Kumily in rupees per Kg were: AGEB 1,190-1,200; AGB 950-960; AGS 940-950 and AGS 1: 920-930.

Open market prices of graded varieties in Bodinayakannur in rupees per kg were: AGEB 1050-1,100; AGB 900-925; AGS 880-890 and AGS 1: 800-850, trade sources in Bodi said. Negligible quantity of 8mm bold was available and it was fetching over Rs 1,250-1,350 a kg while good bulk was being sold at Rs 850-900 a kg, they added.

Turmeric market to re-open on April 11

PTI
Erode, April 9:

The Erode turmeric market will reopen on April 11 after a long local holiday.

The market was closed from March 31 to April 8 in connection with a local festival.

It remained closed yesterday as a mark of respect to one of their members who died recently, Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, said.

The market will not assemble tomorrow, declared a local holiday on account of a fire walking festival and will meet only on April 11.

About 25,000 bags of turmeric are expected to arrive for sale in the market on April 11.

Mixed trend in foodgrains market

Chennai, April 9:

Prices of tur dal and sugar rose, while moong dal fell at the wholesale foodgrains market here.

Prices of all other commodities remained unchanged.

Tur dal rose Rs 200 per quintal to Rs 6,200. Sugar increased marginally by Rs 50 per quintal to Rs 2,950. Moong dal fell Rs 100 per quintal to Rs 5,900.

Urad dal, gram dal, wheat, maida and sooji ruled steady.

Following are the wholesale rates of various agri-commodities today (in rupees per quintal, except where stated otherwise): Tur dal 6,200, urad dal 5,200, moong dal 5,900, gram dal 4,300, sugar 2,950, wheat 1,800, maida (90 kg) 1,650 and sooji (90 kg) 1,900.

Direct Basmati shipment to Iran resumes

Vishwanath Kulkarni

New Delhi, April 9:

After almost a decade, Indian basmati rice exporters have now started direct shipments to Iran.

This follows the operationalisation of a new payment mechanism that allows importers from Iran to make payment in Indian rupee.

Iran is the largest market for Indian basmati and accounts for over 20 per cent of the country's annual shipments.

“The direct shipments to Iran have commenced with the rupee payment system in place. We expect exports to grow by 10-15 per cent this year,” said Mr Vijay Setia, President of All India Rice Exporters Association and Director, ChamanLal Setia Exports. Direct exports to Iran will reduce the logistics costs for importers and may prompt them to buy more, he said.

The US and European Union sanctions against Iran had forced the Indian exporters to route their shipments through third country, the UAE, for the past seven-eight years. Adding to their woes, the recent volatility in Iranian currency had triggered a payment crisis.

As part of the recently worked out bilateral payment mechanism, UCO Bank is the nodal agency from the Indian side while Persian Bank is its counterpart in Iran to facilitate the transactions. . "We are entertaining small orders from Iran," Mr Setia, said.

KRBL, the country's largest basmati exporters is yet to begin direct exports to Iran. "We are waiting for basmati prices to stabilise," said Mr Anil Mittal, CMD, KRBL. Basmati prices have shot up by 35 per cent in recent weeks.

"The payment issue is resolved and soon the business should be back to normal. There is a natural acceptance of basmati in India and exports are going to improve," said Dr A.K.Gupta, Advisor, APEDA.

Currently, the balance of trade is heavily in favour of Iran as India imports from that country about 12 per cent of its crude oil requirements.

'Cold storages to address post-harvest losses in fruits, vegetables'

Our Bureau

Fruit and vegetable crates being arranged at the cold storage at Safal market near Bangalore. (file photo)

Kochi, April 9:

The Centre will focus on setting up cold storages across the country to ensure proper storage of agricultural produce.

At least 40 per cent of fruits and vegetables is lost due to poor storage facilities after harvest and the cold storages will address this problem, said Mr Anand Sharma, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry.

Inaugurating the Spice Park at Jodhpur, he said the Centre will focus on technological development through foreign direct investments for setting up the cold storages.On the sidelines of inaugurating the Spices Park at Jodhpur, Mr Sharma cited the example of how farmers in Maharashtra are selling onion in the mandis at Rs 2/kg, while ultimate consumer in the terminal markets end up paying Rs18.

“This practice should go and the Government will see that disparity in prices and ensure better return to the farmer,” he added.

Mr Sharma and Mr Ashok Gehlot, Rajasthan Chief Minister, jointly inaugurated the 60-acre Spices Park at Jodhpur. Mr Gehlot said that any extra land available in the vicinity will be given for expansion of the Spices Park.

No fresh permit for cotton exports

Our Bureau

New Delhi, April 9:

An inter-Ministerial meeting held on Monday decided not to allow any fresh registration for cotton exports.

However, it will allow shipments of two million more bales of cotton which has already been registered before an export ban was imposed on March 5, official sources told *Business Line*.

This two million will be above the 10 million bales that have been already physically shipped out, they said.

The Ministerial panel took into account the procurement being carried out by the Cotton Corporation of India and the domestic requirements.

The Commerce Ministry had imposed the export ban apprehending a shortfall in domestic supplies. The move to curb exports had evoked sharp criticism from various quarters.

Following the protests, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, had intervened and directed the Group of Ministers consisting of Finance, Agriculture and Commerce ministers to “urgently review the decision.”

On March 12, the Centre formally withdrew the ban but it has suspended issuing new export registration certificates (RC) “until further orders”.

The official notification revoking the ban had said that contracts already registered with it so far, but not yet shipped, will be expeditiously scrutinised to ensure that their papers are in order and revalidated. An RC is valid for 30 days from the date of issue.

The Commerce Secretary, Dr Rahul Khullar, had said that the RCs issued during January and February were being scrutinised to find out whether there are any ‘fictitious' export transactions. Over 85 per cent of cotton exports go to China and there is evidence of stockpiling there, he said.

CAG indicts Bihar Animal and Fisheries Dept

Press Trust of India
Patna, April 9:

The CAG has indicted Bihar Animal and Fishery resources department for infructuous expenditure of Rs 19.1 crore on non-functional establishments.

In its report for the period ended on March 31, 2011, the CAG said Rs 9.55 crore was spent on pay and allowances /salaries and wages etc. of staff deployed in non—functional establishments such as cattle breeding farms at Patna and Dumaraon (Rs 7.16 crore) and frozen semen bank-cum-bull station, Patna (Rs 2.39 crore).

Audit scrutiny RE that against the available accommodations of 650 and 450 respectively in these farms, the average available cattle in Patna and Dumaraon (Buxar) during 2007—11 was 29 and 30 respectively.

But none of the bulls were distributed for cattle breeding, through Rs 5.21 crore and Rs 1.95 crore were spent on the pay and allowances of the staff posted in Patna and Dumraon farms respectively.

The government stated (Nov 2011) that plans would be made to revive these cattle breeding farms and utilise the services of bulls for natural insemination.

The CAG said the frozen semen bank-cum-bull station (FSB-cum-BS), Patna, was responsible for the collection of semen from exotic and cross breed bulls and to produce frozen semen straw breeding.

The auditor observed that FSB-cum-BS, Patna did not produce any frozen semen during 2007-11 due to non-allotment of funds under this scheme though Rs 2.39 crore was spent on wages of 28 employees.

No efforts were made by the department to review the posting of these idle employees or to transfer them to other offices, it said.

The government stated (November 2011) that efforts were on for the production of semen straw by December 2011.

Spices Park inaugurated at Jodhpur

V.Sajeev Kumar
Kochi, April, 9:

Mr Anand Sharma, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry and Mr Ashok Gehlot, Chief Minister Rajasthan jointly inaugurated the Spices Park at Jodhpur. This is the first seed spices park in the country with private and public partnership.

The Jodhpur Park in 60 acres is part of the 10 spices park being set up by the Spices Board at an investment of Rs167crore across the strategic locations in the country by the end of 2012. Out of which, Rs75crore are already invested in three completed spices parks in Chhihdwara in Madhya Pradesh, Puttady in Kerala and in Jodhpur.

The other parks will be completed during the year in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Kota in Rajasthan.

As many as 17 companies are investing in the Jodhpur Park with their own plans for value addition. The park has common infrastructure and processing facilities for the seed spices especially cumin and coriander. The machineries in the park are capable of processing of other seed spices like fennel and fenugreek.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Sharma said that the government would be focussing on technological development with foreign direct investments, setting up of cold storages across the country so that the farming population would be benefitted through fair prices. The country is facing nearly 40 per cent loss of fruits and vegetables as they perish without proper storing facilities, he said.

He cited the example of how farmers in Maharashtra are selling onion in the Mandies at Rs2 per kg while ultimate consumer in the terminal markets end up paying Rs18 per kg. This practice should go and the government will see that disparity in prices and ensure better return to the farmer.

The Minister also lauded the Spices Board for the commissioning of the project in record time.

Mr Ghelot announced that any extra land available in the vicinity of the park will be given for expanding the Spices Park

Cotton output may fall to 32.3 m bales: USDA

PTI

Cotton production is forecast to decrease by two million bales to 32.3 million bales as the area is expected to drop by 10 per cent.

New Delhi, April 9:

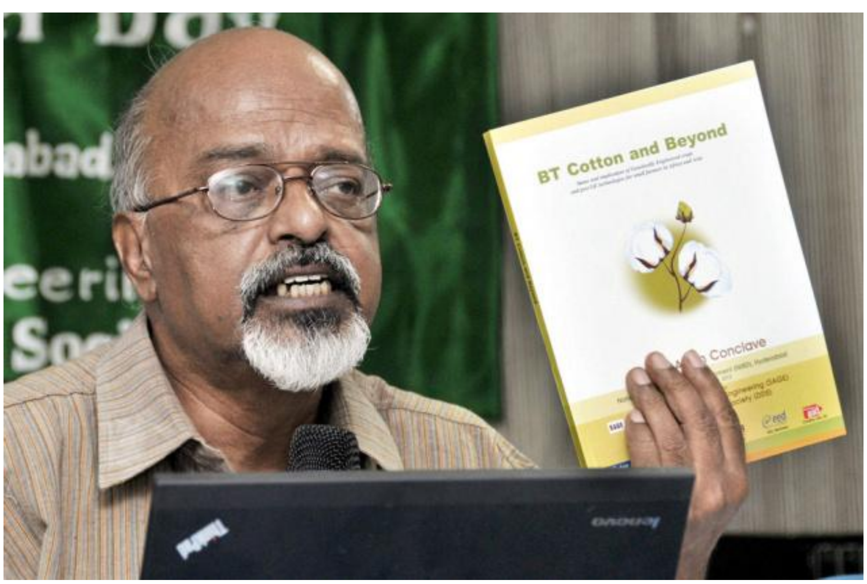
India’s cotton output is likely to dip by two million bales to 32.3 million in the 2012-13 marketing year (August-July) as farmers are likely to switch over to better-priced alternative crops amid unclear cotton export policy, according to a USDA report.

India, the world’s second biggest cotton grower, had produced a record 34.25 million bales in the 2011-12 marketing year. One bale contains 170 kg of cotton.“Cotton production is forecast to decrease by two million bales to 32.3 million bales as the area is expected to drop by 10 per cent,’’ the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) said in its latest report.But domestic consumption is expected to increase to 26 million bales from 25.3 million bales.

However, India’s exportable cotton supply would be only six million bales in 2012-13 against 11.75 million bales this year, given an expected drop in production and higher domestic demand.On cotton acreage, the USDA said gauging farmers’ planting intentions at this early stage is difficult. However, several factors suggest that cotton area in 2012-13 will be lower at 10.9 million hectare against the record 12.2 million hectares in 2011-12.The USDA, however, said that “if the Government of India increases the minimum support price (MSP) for cotton significantly, planting intentions could shift.”Farmers have a number of planting options, as high prices of peanuts, soyabeans, guar and maize could prompt them to shift away from cotton in central, western and northern India.According to the report, Indian farmers may decide to try crops that are subject to fewer policy driven market disruptions as it is not clear whether the Government will allow fresh cotton exports before the start of the 2012-13 marketing year or if the government will develop a new procedure for regulating exports.

On March 5, India had banned exports briefly for a week. It has decided to permit exports that were registered before the ban period.

Bt cotton has done little in increasing yields: SAGE



Business Line Up against GMOs: Mr P.V. Sateesh of the Southern Action on Generic Engineering releasing the status and implication of GE Crops and post GE technologies for small farmers in Africa and Asia in Hyderabad on Monday, observed as the 'International GMO Opposition Day'. — P.V. Sivakumar

Hyderabad, April 9:

The Southern Action on Genetic Engineering (SAGE) has alleged that the 'success story of Bt cotton' in the last 10 years is only a hype.

When Bt cotton spread to 85 per cent of the country's cotton area in 2009-10, the yield was 474 kg of lint a hectare.

"This is just 4 kg more than the yield in 2004-05 when Bt cotton's share was 5.70 per cent in the total cotton area. Besides 25 lakh acres of new area has been brought under cotton ever since significantly increasing production," Mr P.V. Satheesh, National Convenor of SAGE, said.

SAGE is an umbrella organisation of non-governmental organisations and intellectuals that oppose genetic engineering in agriculture.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, he said the cost of inputs went up by 50 per cent for farmers, while the increase in yield was just 4 kg. Quoting Cotton Advisory Board figures, he said yields, in fact, were coming down in the last five years. From 524 kg of lint a ha in 2007-08, yield fell to 474 in 2009-10, a decline of 12 per cent over the previous year's yield.

"Addition of 25 lakh acres and cultivation of cotton under irrigated areas have led to higher production. Praising Bt cotton for this achievement is totally undue," he said.

In Andhra Pradesh, cotton crop on 33.73 lakh acres had failed, while farmers sowed the crop on 47 lakh acres.

Besides, Bt cotton also posed a threat to soil health. "We have witnessed soil fatigue in some cotton growing areas," he said.