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Government needs to harness IT for innovative agriculture

M.J. Prabu

The model disseminates site specific knowledge at no cost to farmers



Ideal tool: Thiruchelvam (left) interacting with some groundnut farmers of Andhra Pradesh.

There appears to be a general consensus that the country's agriculture sector can do better with some encouragement, motivation to youngsters who are driven with a passion, and a dream to do something for the rural poor.

“Ironically the government which keeps talking about encouraging youth to take up agriculture, does nothing to help us chip in,” says Mr. R.M. Thiruchelvam an IT professional from Alampattu, Sivaganga district Tamil Nadu.

Several problems

Mr. Thiruchelvam left a lucrative job as well as business plans nine years ago to take up the cause of rural development.

With the support of like-minded friends he and his team did four years of intensive study of the social, economic, and administrative problems that are wrecking rural India.

The team designed a comprehensive web system, it-rural.com to provide information and communication to increase the “per capita earning” of villagers.

Specific knowledge

“The model disseminates site specific knowledge at the village level at no cost to farmers. It is an employer-employee model. So a local person is not going to own the knowledge centre.

“It is designed to overcome typical constraints such as social, geographical, and commercial barriers that are prevalent across the world in taking technology to the grassroots,” explains Mr. Thiruchelvam

It comprehensively addresses the key components of agricultural sector such as good quality and yield, better price realization to farmers, balanced production and strengthening institutional credit systems.

Lack of input

“There is no effective input validation available at the grassroots in the present system for rural activities, particularly farming. Information on demand forecast, cultivation procedures, input supply management, disease control, marketing, glut in production, desperate selling, impact of drought and flood are absent,” he says.

The team wanted to showcase the model on a large scale to prove its efficiency. Their hard work yielded results. The Andhra Pradesh

Government provided an opportunity for them to carry out a pilot project in Pulivendala, Kadapa District, Andhra Pradesh. About 30 villages, 12 Panchayats, 40,000 people and 20,000 acres of agricultural land benefited.

But the success lasted only for a short while. Sudden developments in the state political scene saw these youngsters grounded due to lack of financial support.

In fact, for the past two years Mr. Thiruchelvan is running from one state to another to meet different officials and experts to explain and showcase his findings.

He believes that this concept can definitely provide a key to unlock different problems in the rural sector. But sadly, he has been ignored or refused an appointment.

Ideal tool

“IT is an ideal tool today for addressing several glitches a farmer faces. We are very eager to get the Government interested in this.

“But sadly we are not able to get any opening in the government circles. Recently I had to keep calling for an appointment with a Secretary to Government and literally begged his secretary to get me an appointment,” he says in a voice choked with emotion.

The secretary initially granted him 20 minutes but shortened it to 10 minutes and rushed through his concept.

“He asked me to contact the officials in his department but till date they have not responded,” he says with frustration and sadness.

Cant he try to take this concept further with private funding agencies rather than depend on the Government?

Seems daunting

“In India, a major part of agriculture activities is still under Government control. To reach out to hundreds of farmers we need the Government's support and funding. Even at the state level we require the local University and the state agriculture departments' support. But getting it seems daunting.

“If any Government is prepared to encourage us we are ready to join hands on a PPP model (public private partnership) as we are sure that this concept will benefit small farmers,” says Mr. Thiruchelvam hopefully.

Despite several attempts by The Hindu, the Agriculture Secretary was not available for his comments on this proposal.

For more details contact Mr. R.M.Thiruchelvam, Originator and Project Director, website: www.it-rural.com, email: thirurm@gmail.com, mobile:9840374266.

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Management of black tip disorder in mango

It is becoming a serious problem

Black tip is a serious disorder that occurs in orchards located close to brick-kilns. Gases like carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and ethylene constituting the fumes from brick kiln are known to damage growing tip of fruits and give rise to the symptoms of black tip.

Apart from these factors, irrigation, condition of the tree and management practices also play important a role in deciding the severity of the disorder.

The injury takes place from the exterior and not through the root as a medium.

Management

— The incidence of black tip can be minimised by the spray of borax (1 per cent) or other alkaline solutions like caustic (0.8 per cent) or washing (0.5 per cent) soda.

The first spray of borax should be done positively at pea stage followed by two more sprays at 15 days interval.

— Trees sprayed three times with a 0.6 per cent solution of borax (600g of borax mixed in 100 litres of water) plus a sticker, at the rate of 10 litres per tree were almost free from black tip.

— Planting of mango orchards in North-South direction and 5 to 6 km away from the brick kilns may reduce incidence of black tip to a greater extent.

— Although black tip of mango can be prevented by applying borax, the disease is not caused by the fruit surface that prevents direct entry of poisonous fumes or changed into a form which is less toxic.

Other control measures

Restriction of new kiln sites to a safe distance — stopping the working of kilns before the time of fruit-set and use of telescopic chimneys (12-15 m high).

Mango decline is becoming a serious problem in many parts of northern India.

On the old leaves, leaf tissues collapse in clearly defined marginal areas of brick red colour towards the tip.

Younger leaves generally do not show symptoms up to two months of their emergence.

Mallikarjun Kenganal Byadgi, A.S.& Benagi, V.I

Department of plant pathology, University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad

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Farm query

Mustard variety

Where can I get information on JP Vishwajit mustard variety?

Neelima Singh

Ludhiana

A farmer called Mr. Jai Prakash Singh from Tandiya 30 km from Varanasi, in Uttar Pradesh has developed the variety. It can be sown with wheat, gram and peas as an inter crop as well. It matures in 100-110 days, bears 1,000-1,200 pods per plant, and yields 0.6 to 0.7 tonnes per acre. Good feed back pour in from several farmers in Maharashtra, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh, from those who use this variety. For more details contact Mr. Jai Prakash Singh, PO Tadiya, Dhadhorpur, Jakhini, Araji line, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, mobile: 9451577834, phone: 0542-107010.

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'Vermicompost improves soil fertility'

Special Correspondent

49 units set up under rain-fed area development programme to encourage farmers: Collector



wealth from waste:Darez Ahmed, Collector, inspecting the bio-manure at a vermicompost unit at Perali recently.

With a view to encourage farmers to restore the use of bio-manure and minimise the application of chemical fertilisers, a total of 49 vermicompost units are being set up under the rain-fed area development programme component of the 'National Agriculture Development Programme' in parts of the district.

A total of 20 units in the Perambalur block, one in Alathur, 13 in Veppur and 15 in Veppanthattai are being set up in the district.

Collector Darez Ahmed, who visited a few vermicompost units recently, has appealed to farmers to utilise the scheme for earning an assured income.

Apart from minimising the use of chemical fertilisers, vermicompost producers could motivate agriculturists in the vicinity to restore the use of bio-manure.

He said that the setting up sheds had been completed in a majority of places and many of them have even started production.

High production

The monthly production ranges between 1 and 2 tonnes.

"A large area of the district accounts for black soil and hence the application of vermicompost would improve soil fertility," he said, explaining the porous nature of the compost in absorbing and retaining water in the soil.

He assured the farmers that the district administration would extend all help necessary.

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Meet on seed potato price remains inconclusive

Staff Correspondent

No consensus between Hassan district administration and sellers from Punjab



Deliberations: Deputy Commissioner K.P. Mohan Raj at a meeting with potato growers from Punjab and farmers in Hassan on Wednesday.— Photo: Prakash Hassan

The meeting convened by the Hassan Deputy Commissioner here on Wednesday to fix the price of seed potato remained inconclusive as there was no consensus between the district administration and seed potato sellers.

While the growers from Punjab demanded Rs. 16.80 a kg of seed potato, the Deputy Commissioner and local farmers said the price should not be more than Rs. 9.30 a kg.

Growers from Punjab sell seed potato to farmers in Hassan every year at the price fixed by the district administration.

In stock

Five associations of growers from Punjab have already stored seed potato in the seven cold storage units at the industrial area here.

At the meeting, the growers quoted Rs. 16.80 as the price per kg saying that farmers in Punjab had suffered crop loss and it would be difficult for them if the price was fixed lower than this.

Deputy Commissioner K.P. Mohan Raj said officers of the Horticulture Department and agricultural scientists had arrived at Rs. 9.30 as the price per kg.

He did not buy the growers' argument that they would suffer losses if they were paid less than Rs. 16.80 a kg.

Mr. Mohan Raj said that farmers who had suffered losses for the last three years owing blight were not in a position to pay such an exorbitant price. "We have reports from the Meteorological Department that rainfall during this monsoon will be below normal in the first few weeks.

Farmers will be suggested to go for alternative crops such as maize," he said.

The growers from Punjab said they would not accept the price quoted by the district administration.

Following which, Mr. Mohan Raj announced that he would not allow the sale of seed potato in the district.

The local farmers who attended the meeting welcomed the Deputy Commissioner's stand.

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- *Growers from Punjab demand Rs. 16.80 a kg*
 - *'The price should not be more than Rs. 9.30 a kg'*
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"Introduce modern farming techniques to increase yield"

Staff Reporter



Farm implement:Kanyakumari CollectorS. Nagarajan handing over sprayer to a farmer on Wednesday.

The Government has started celebrating farmers' festival in the State to create a second green revolution, to enhance agriculture productivity to thrice the existing rate, to increase the income of the farming community and to introduce new and modern techniques in agriculture and its allied activities in all the districts, said Collector S. Nagarajan.

Presiding over the farmers' festival at Kadukkarai village on Wednesday, he sought the cooperation of officials of all departments for organising such farmers' festivals in the district.

The officials should explore ways to introduce technology suitable for that particular village to ensure second green revolution after studying the ground reality.

They also should come forward to create awareness among the farmers about the latest technology in order to increase the productivity, said the Collector.

He also handed over agricultural inputs to two farmers during the farmer's festival.

In the meantime, the District Revenue Officer, S. Palanisamy, presided over a mass contact programme held at Perumalpuram on Wednesday.

Addressing the gathering, he said that the villagers need not waste man power, time and money to air their grievance and get it redressed in such grievance day meeting at the Collectorate every week. On the contrary, now the officials were at their door steps to facilitate them hand over their petitions.

All their genuine grievances would be redressed on or before the conduct of next grievance day meeting to be held in the same village.

Biometric smart cards

The Government has introduced biometric smart card system in other districts following the successful implementation of such scheme as a pilot project at Thoivalai taluk in the district.

The money of the pensioner was safe and at the same time they could inculcate the habit of saving with the introduction of biometric smart card system. The district administration was issuing application forms for the distribution of farmer's identity cards.

Hence he appealed to the farmers to make use of this opportunity.

The DRO also handed over various welfare assistances to 60 beneficiaries in the mass contact programme at Perumalpuram.

The elected members of the local bodies and other officials attended the two functions.

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MoEF takes serious note of conversion of paddy fields

Radhakrishnan Kuttoor

Environment directorate official inspects airport project site



Spot study:P.Sreekantan Nair, Director of Environment and Climate Change Directorate, accompanied by Kerala State Pollution Control Board officials and local people, inspecting the paddy fields and wetlands identified for the proposed airport project at Aranmula on Wednesday.

The row over the proposed private airport project at Aranmula has taken a new turn with the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) reportedly taking a serious view of the conversion of paddy fields and wetlands for setting up the project.

The MoEF had taken note of a report in *The Hindu* on February 2 (Airport project triggers widespread protest) and sought clarifications from the State government on the allegations that the site identified for the project included paddy fields and wetlands.

P.Sreekantan Nair, Director of the Environment and Climate Change (ECC) Directorate attached to the Environment Department, accompanied by Paulus Eapen, District Environmental Engineer, inspected the paddy fields and wetlands identified for the project on Wednesday on the basis of an MoEF directive.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Sreekantan Nair said the MoEF was yet to give clearance for the airport project, despite the National Expert Environment Impact Assessment Authority recommending the same on the basis of an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report prepared by a Chennai-based consultant.

The Union Ministry had also taken a serious note of the ongoing agitation against the project by the People's Action Council, Palliyoda-Pallivilakku Samrakshana Samiti, Pampa Parirakshana Samiti, and the Darpanam Cultural Society as well as the objections raised by socio-environmental activists Sugathakumari and Medha Patkar and certain findings of V.S. Vijayan, former State Biodiversity Board Chairman.

Mr. Sreekantan Nair said he inspected the paddy fields (Aranmula puncha), wetlands, and 'Thettikkavu', a sacred grove closely associated with Sree Parthasarathy Temple at Aranmula that come under the proposed site of the project.

Action council leaders, environmentalists, and P.T. Nandakumar, executive director of the private airport company, called on the ECC Director.

The situation turned tense when Mr. Nandakumar said no outsiders would be permitted to enter into the company's property.

However, the ECC Director said it was he who summoned the action council leaders as part of the inquiry- cum- inspection.

Action council leaders and local people accompanied Mr. Nair to Valiyathode, a stream leading to the Pampa, stretches of which had been illegally converted, and to the vast expanse of paddy fields illegally converted in the name of the airport project.

Environmentalists criticised the "undisclosed and incorrect information in the EIA report provided by the private firm to the MoEF".

They said the project area was a wetland and riparian floodplain area of the Pampa with a fragile ecosystem.

They alleged that the project site was a paddy field and it required conversion of 347.556 acres for developing the airport, which had not been mentioned in the EIA submitted to the MoEF.

HYDERABAD, April 26, 2012

World Agriculture Congress-2013 in Hyderabad

The capital city will host the World Agriculture Congress - 2013 in November next year.

The World Agricultural Forum, which organised the biannual event last time in Belgium, chose the city for the mega global event next year to be organised for the first time in the country.

Forum chairman Kenneth M. Baker, and Board member Evie, who are on visit to city for discussions with government officials and stake holders about the event, had a meeting with the Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy here on Wednesday. The Chief Minister assured all help and support to the World Agricultural Congress and agreed that agriculture should be made remunerative and attractive so that youth would take it up.

Agriculture Minister Kanna Lakshminarayana later told media persons that the broad theme of the World Agriculture Congress will be 'Reshaping Agriculture for the benefit of small and marginal farmers'. About 600 delegates including government leaders, administrators, academicians, CEOs of Industry, farmers, functionaries of development organisation etc., were expected to attend from all parts of the world.

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■ Thu, 26 Apr 2012

weather

Delhi - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Thursday, Apr 26

Max Min
35.6° | 21.4°

Rain: 0.4 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 48%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 7:14

Sunset: 17:48

Barometer: 1007

Tomorrow's Forecast



Sunny

Friday, Apr 27

Max Min
39° | 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Apr 28	Sunday Apr 29	Monday Apr 30	Tuesday May 1	Wednesday May 2
39° 23°	39° 23°	39° 24°	39° 22°	39° 21°
Rainy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Sunny

25 APR, 2012, 01.44PM IST, REUTERS

Soybean hits record high on robust demand

MUMBAI: Indian soybean futures rose to another record high on Wednesday, boosted by thin arrivals in the spot market, firmer overseas prices and as oil millers stocked up to meet soymeal exports orders.

* "Demand for Indian soymeal is very good. Lower production in South America has been helping Indian exporters," said Sudha Acharya, an analyst at Kotak Commodity Services Ltd.

* Drought has hit South American corn and soybean production, and last week Argentina's government cut its soy and corn production estimates, dropping both more than 10 percent below last year's harvest levels.

* The May soybean on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange was up 1.33 percent at 3,421.5 rupees per 100 kg by 0744 GMT, after hitting a record 3,430 rupees.

* Soyoil futures were steady tracking a similar trend in Malaysian palm oil prices, while rapeseed rose on an estimated drop in the production.

* Malaysian palm oil futures were down 0.06 percent at 3,461 ringgit per tonne, while U.S. soybean rose 0.82 percent to \$14.73-1/4 per bushel.

* Rapeseed for May delivery was up 1.16 percent at 3,925 rupees per 100 kg. May soyoil was little changed at 773.75 rupees per 10 kg, after hitting a record 780.7 rupees earlier this month.

* In the Indore spot market in Madhya Pradesh, soybean rose 46 rupees to 3,355 rupees per 100 kg.

Business Standard

Thursday, Apr 26, 2012

Global food costs up 8% December through March

Reuters / New York April 26, 2012, 0:06 IST

Global food prices are rising again, pushed higher by costlier oil, strong demand from Asia and bad weather in parts of Europe, South America and the United States, the World Bank said on Wednesday. The latest World Bank food price index showed the cost of food rose eight per cent between December and March. In the previous four months, prices had declined. Even after the latest rise, food prices remain 1 percent below a year ago and 6 percent below the February 2011 historical peak, the World Bank said..

Soybean acreage to rise 8-10% on better realisation

Sharleen D'Souza / Mumbai April 26, 2012, 0:01 IST

The sowing area under soybean, the largest edible oilseed in the country, may rise 8-10 per cent in the ensuing kharif season due to increased confidence of farmers gained from better realisation last year. Overall soybean sowing may set a record at 10.26 million hectares (ha) this year, compared to 9.33 million ha last year.

Rajesh Agrawal, spokesperson of the Indore-based Soybean Processors' Association, forecasts acreage to remain high as farmers in major growing regions — Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh — are keen to bring additional area under the oilseed. The scenario in Madhya Pradesh is also set to remain positive, albeit marginally. Madhya Pradesh is the largest grower of soybean in the country.

The increase would translate into proportionate growth in output, thereby, providing relief to the domestic crushing industry. Oilseed crushing mills have been operating at lower than capacity levels for the past few years due to negative parity. Apparently, higher production of oilseeds like soybean will intensify crushing in domestic markets. As a consequence, the output of soybean oil will increase, reducing reliance on imports. India imports 55-60 per cent of its vegetable oils, largely palm oil, for blending with soybean, sunflower and other oils, from major world producers, such as Indonesia, Argentina and Malaysia. Total soybean output was recorded at 10.5 million tonnes last year.

B V Mehta, executive director of Mumbai-based Solvent Extractors Association, said, “Farmers received good returns last year, which will definitely lure them to bring additional area under soybean.” Soybean price for near-month delivery on the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange rose 43 per cent in the past year from Rs 2,444 a quintal to the current Rs 3,506 a quintal.

Soybean is sown with the onset of monsoon in June till July. The harvesting starts in October and continues till December.

THE HINDU Business Line

Castorseed futures recover on short-covering

Our Correspondent



Rajkot, April 25:

A mixed trend was seen in the castorseed market on Wednesday. Spot prices dropped on higher arrivals and weak demand, while the futures market turned bullish on short-covering.

Castor futures have declined in the last few days mainly due to profit booking. However, on Wednesday participants began to cover since many had gone short when the declining trend persisted.

At the Rajkot Commodity Exchange (RCX), castorseed June contracts increased by Rs 32 to Rs 3,422 a quintal. Spot castorseed prices on the exchange dropped by Rs 60 to Rs 3,115 a quintal.

On National Commodity and Derivative Exchange (NCDEX), castor for May delivery increased Rs 44 to Rs 3,405 a quintal with an open interest of 16,850 lots. NCDEX June contracts gained Rs 44 at Rs 3,465 for a quintal, with an open interest of 9,400 lots.

About 1,20,000-1,25,000 bags arrived in Gujarat and the price was Rs 600-625 for a *maund* of 20 kg. Around 13,000-14,000 bags of castorseed arrived in Saurashtra and they were quoted at Rs 600-625 for a *maund*.

According to traders, arrivals of castorseed were very and in contrast, demand was poor. However, any fall in prices is likely to be capped as buyers could enter the market are current levels seeing it as an opportunity for bargain hunting.

PTI reports: In Mumbai, castorseeds bold and castor oil commercial declined on subdued offtake from shippers and soap industries.

Linseed oil also dipped owing to selling pressure amidst lack of demand from paint and allied industries.

Castorseed bold fell by Rs 40 a quintal to Rs 3,300 and castor oil commercial eased by Rs 8 for 10 kg to Rs 690.

Linseed oil slid by Rs 15 for 10 kg to Rs 775.

Bearish trend in pulses likely to prolong

Our Correspondent



Indore, April 25:

Tur prices ruled steady despite sluggish demand from millers. In the spot, tur (Maharashtra) ruled stable at Rs 3,650-75 a quintal, while tur (Nimari) ruled at Rs 3,000. Bearish sentiment in tur continues for the past one week as prices have declined by Rs 100 a quintal.

With the onset of mango season, demand in pulses has declined. According to Mr Sanjay Bansal, a wholesale trader, the bearish trend will continue in the near future as cheap imported tur was also available. Tur dal ruled stable on slack buying support with tur dal (full) quoting at Rs 5,400-5,500 a quintal in *mandis*

Bearish sentiment also prevailed in urad and its dal on lack of buying support. Urad (bold) ruled at Rs 3,500-3,550 a quintal, while urad (medium) quoted at Rs 2,800-2,900.

Similarly, urad dal ruled steady on slack demand with urad dal (average) ruling at Rs 3,900-4000, urad dal (best) at Rs 4,450-4,700 a quintal, urad mongar at Rs 5400-Rs 5800 a quintal.

With the beginning of arrival of new moong in local mandis and poor buying support from the millers, moong prices have declined by about Rs 200 a quintal since the beginning of this week.

On Wednesday, moong (bold) ruled at Rs 4,200-4,400 a quintal, while moong (medium) being quoted at Rs 3,800-4,000 a quintal.

Moong dal ruled steady on sluggish demand with moong dal ruling at Rs 4,900-5,000 a quintal, moong dal (bold) at Rs 5,550-5,600 and moong mongar ruled at Rs 5200-5,500 a quintal.

Growers hold back turmeric on support price rumours

Our Correspondent



Erode, April 25:

Turmeric growers are holding back their produce on the rumours that the Tamil Nadu Government will procure the spice at minimum support price of Rs 10,000 a quintal.

Even out of the limited arrival, only 50 per cent was sold.

“Many farmers did not bring their produce on Wednesday. Only a few farmers brought the stock and sold for a lower price. This was due to rumours that the Tamil Nadu Government will consider their plea of granting minimum support price of Rs 10,000 a quintal for turmeric,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said two days ago, a group of farmers staged a demonstration in Erode demanding that the Government fix Rs 10,000 a quintal for turmeric as minimum support price. Similarly in Karnataka, some farmers urged the State Government to fix the MSP at the same rate demanded by Tamil Nadu growers.

On Wednesday, only 10,000 and odd bags of turmeric arrived for sale, and 4,890 bags were sold. Local traders and some stockists have purchased and as usual no exporter purchased. He said that no order has been received from North India for Erode turmeric, leading to limited purchase. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 2,200-3,532 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 2,200-3,210.

Salem Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 2,839-4,459 and the root variety at Rs 2,710-3,609. Out of total arrival of 2,683 bags 1,517 were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,172-3,797; and the root variety at Rs 3,100-3,356. Of the 700 bags arrived, 596 were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 2,939-3,756; and the root variety at Rs 2,869- 3,379. All the 1,378 bags brought for sales were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,089-3,589; the root variety at Rs 2,869-3,379. All the 355 bags kept for sales were sold.

Pepper moves up

G. K. Nair



Kochi, April 25:

The pepper market on Wednesday moved up on buying interest amid limited availability. All active deliveries increased after witnessing high volatility throughout the day.

There was good demand for high bulk density pepper and it was not available as some of the agents of multinational companies were reportedly buying it from the growers in the high ranges at a premium of Rs 4 to 5 a kg above the terminal market price.

'Organic pepper'

The material is being sold allegedly as organic pepper grown by the tribes at a higher price in the primary markets. The nerve-centre of such operations is said to be Adimali. Trade sources said this also resulted in the shrinkage in arrivals of high bulk density pepper at the terminal market.

Activities were mainly on pepper below 550 GL and that was concentrated in Karnataka, which was selling the grades 550 GL and below at Rs 360 to Rs 370 a kg apart from selling at Rs 380 a kg delivered anywhere in India.

May contract on the NCDEX increased by Rs 545 to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 38,650 a quintal. June and July moved up by Rs 285 and Rs 220 respectively to the LTP of Rs 39,030 and Rs 39,400 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover fell by 1,433 tonnes to close at 3,480 tonnes. Total open interest moved up by 98 tonnes to 5,785 tonnes.

May open interest declined by 37 tonnes to 4,778 tonnes while that of June increased by 139 tonnes to 878 tonnes showing additional buying. July declined by 3(three) tonnes to 99 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend and buying interest amid limited availability went up by Rs 300 to close at Rs 37,300 (ungarbled) and Rs 38,800 a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was marginally up at around \$7,550 a tonne (c&f) for the Europe and \$7,850 a tonne for the US.

Aromatic rice up on trade enquiries

Our Correspondent



Karnal, April 25:

Domestic demand coupled with new trade enquires pushed up full grain aromatic rice prices on Wednesday, while the brokens and non-basmati rice varieties were unchanged.

With China opening up its market for Indian stocks, basmati exporters are keen on accessing the country's market, said experts. In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) went up by Rs 150 and ruled between Rs 5,800-6,000 a quintal while Pusa-1121 (sela) sold at Rs 4,900-5,050 a quintal, Rs 200 up from previous level.

Prices of Pure basmati (raw) increased by Rs 600 and sold at Rs 5,500 a quintal while pure basmati (sela) sold at Rs 5,000 a quintal, Rs 400 up from previous level.

Duplicate basmati increased by Rs 175 and sold at Rs 4,400-4,650 a quintal. For the brokens of Pusa-1121, Tibar sold at Rs 3,400-3,500, Dubar at Rs 2,700-2,900 while Mongra was trading at Rs 1,900-2,300 a quintal.

On the other hand, after witnessing an uptrend earlier this week, PR varieties ruled flat. Permal (raw) sold at Rs 1,900-2,120 a quintal, Permal (sela) was at Rs 1,900-2,150 a quintal, PR-11 (sela) sold at Rs 2,300-2,550 and PR-11 (raw) was trading at Rs 2,200-2,500 a quintal.

PR-14 (steam) sold at Rs 2,400-2,650 a quintal while Sugandha (steam) sold at Rs 3,700-3,800 a quintal.

Sharbati (steam) sold at Rs 3,600-3,800 a quintal while Sharbati (sela) was at Rs 3,650 a quintal.

Tamarind growers face problem of plenty

Our Bureau



Visakhapatnam, April 25:

A bumper harvest this season is proving to be a problem for tamarind farmers in the State.

Cold storage units in Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and East Godavari are full with tamarind. The yield is estimated to be more than double and a similar trend is seen in Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, according to trade sources.

The Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) here, which procures non-timber forest produce from the tribal farmers, is facing criticism from various quarters for reducing the minimum support price. However, officials say that there was no choice and they had to reduced it to Rs 15 a kg from last year's Rs 22.50 a kg due to heavy stocks.

There was no demand. The going rate in neighbouring States is around Rs 10-15/kg.

During the current season, which began in early February and ended a few days ago, the GCC procured 32,000 quintals as against 20,000 quintals last year. The quality of crop produced after mid-April is said to be not that good due to exposure to day-long humidity and temperatures.

The GCC General Manager (bulk marketing), Mr Manohar Mishra, said on Wednesday that the present stock was enough to take care of the requirement for the next few years. During the previous years, when the yield was not much, GCC used the tamarind bought by it for supply to social and tribal welfare hostels. GCC also sells it to Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanams and few other trusts which run temples. The yield pattern of tamarind is said to be cyclical. After poor yields for three to four years, farmers get a bumper harvest.

Global agri meet to discuss reshaping of farming

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, April 25:

The World Congress Forum (WAF) will host the World Agriculture Congress (WAS)-2013 in November 2013. Dr Kenneth M. Baker, Chairman of WAF and Ms Evie, WAF's Board Member, held discussions with officials of Andhra Pradesh Government on selection of theme, dates and venue.

The broad theme for the WAC-2013 would be 'Reshaping Agriculture for the benefit of small and marginal farmers.'

It would discuss measures to make farming economically viable and improve farmers' income in the WTO regime.

“The WAC-2013 will provide a policy direction to developing countries on how to revamp agricultural policies,” a State Government statement said here on Wednesday.

During the meeting the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, told WAC officials that the President of India would be invited to inaugurate the conference.

5 firms in race to study onion storage feasibility

Vishwanath Kulkarni



PEELING DETAILS

- Currently, no large cold storage facility exists in the country for storing onions for over six months
- The Ministry of Agriculture has recently mandated FHEL to explore options for creating storage facilities for onions, kinnows and orange
- FHEL is likely to finalise the bids in about two to three weeks

New Delhi, April 25:

Five consultancy firms including Technopak Advisors and Yes Bank are in the race for Fresh & Healthy Enterprises Ltd's (FHEL) techno-feasibility study for large storage facilities for onion and oranges.

FHEL is the wholly-owned subsidiary of Container Corporation of India (Concor) and operates a cold chain infrastructure and logistics for fruits such as apples. The Ministry of Agriculture has recently mandated FHEL to explore options for creating both short and long-term storage facilities for onions, kinnows and orange.

Currently, no large cold storage facility exists in the country for storing onions for over six months. Creation of cold storage facility for onions assumes significance for the Government as shortages have often triggered political crisis. Onions are harvested normally from September to May.

FHEL had invited expression of interest (EoI) from consultancy firms to prepare techno commercial feasibility studies for storage of onion, kinnows and oranges. It also includes feasibility study for creation of cold storage facility in Jammu and Kashmir and review and preparing a 10-year business plan for FHEL.

PricewaterhouseCoopers and Ingersoll Rand are the other companies that have submitted their bids for the FHEL proposal. FHEL is likely to finalise the bids in about two to three weeks, a source said.

FHEL operates a 12,000-tonne cold storage facility at Rai near Delhi. The Concor outfit procures apples from growers in Himachal Pradesh during the season and sells them during the off-season under its own brand – Fresh & Healthy. Over the past four years, FHEL has handled more than 35,000 tonnes of apples. It can store apples for over six months at its cold storage.

FHEL leases out its cold storage facility to third parties for storing rice, vegetables such as carrot and garlic, flower bulbs among others.

Food processors demand tax holiday

Our Bureau

Mumbai, April 25:

The CEOs of the several food processing and FMCG firms have demanded a 100 per cent tax holiday for food processing units. They pointed out that the sector is poised to be the growth driver of the country's economy.

At a CEO round-table organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here, the industry representatives also urged the Union Government to concede the long pending demands such as uniform implementation of Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act, promotion of cold chain industry on private public partnership basis, fast implementation of GST for a harmonised tax structure, exemption of import duties on machinery and raw materials, and establishment of quality food laboratories.

Lack of proper infrastructure in the sector is resulting in a wastage of Rs 30,000-crore food every year.

Mr Rakesh Kacker, Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, said: "The sector grew by an average of 8 per cent between 2006 and 2010. This is higher than the growth of the

manufacturing sector. Agriculture has also been growing 2-3 per cent which means we are adding more value to agriculture.”

However, the Government is looking at resolving certain problem areas of the sector such as land, he said.

He said that cold chains have been doing quite well with eight already being set up. Another 10-15 will come up by the end of this fiscal and the Government had approved another 30 new projects last month.

Areca output pegged at 5.36 lt in 2010-11

Our Bureau



Mangalore, April 25:

The Kozhikode-based Directorate of Areca and Spices has estimated arecanut production in 2010-11 at 5.36 lakh tonnes.

Speaking at a seminar on “Use of fungicides in areca plantations” in Mangalore on Wednesday, Mr Tamilselvan, Director, Directorate of Areca and Spices, said 5.36 lakh tonnes of arecanut were produced on 4.1 lakh hectares of plantations during 2010-11.

The Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd and Arecanut Research and Development Foundation had organised the seminar.

He said that Karnataka had a major share in this production. It produced 2.58 lakh tonnes of arecanut from 1.95 lakh hectares of plantations.

Since 1998-99, there is an increase of around 40 per cent in the area of cultivation of this produce at the national level. In Karnataka alone, there has been an increase of 70 per cent in expansion.

Earlier Karnataka, Kerala and Assam were growing arecanut. Now, the cultivation has extended to other States also. The Central Government is not encouraging the area of expansion of arecanut, he said.

Though significant portion of areca is used in the supari industry, the arecanut sector is facing various challenges. Other alternative uses have not been commercially exploited.

In such a situation, growers should think of areca-based mixed cropping. This would shield areca growers when prices of the commodity crash, he said.

Mr Tamilselvan said price fluctuation and diseases play a major role in the cultivation of this commodity. Cooperatives such as Campco have a share of nearly 15-20 per cent in the arecanut market. The rest is being controlled by private traders. Because of this, farmers do not get desired price for their produce.

He said that "'fruit rot disease' and 'yellow leaf disease' are affecting the prospects of arecanut growers in some areas. In such a situation, the seminar like this will help farmers to take an informed decision on the use of fungicides in their plantations, he added.

Farmers advised to take up mixed cropping of areca

A. J. Vinayak

Mangalore, April 25:

The country produced 5.3 lakh tonnes of arecanut on 4.1 lakh hectares of land during 2010-11.

Speaking at a seminar on the use of fungicides in areca plantations in Mangalore on Wednesday, Mr Tamilselvan, Director, Directorate of Areca and Spices, Kozhikode, said Karnataka accounted for nearly half of the produce. It produced 2.58 lakh tonnes on 1.95 lakh hectares during the year.

Though nearly 25 per cent of areca is used by the supari industry, the arecanut sector is facing various challenges. Other alternative uses have not been commercially exploited.

In such a situation, growers should think of areca-based mixed cropping system. This would shield areca growers when prices of the commodity crash.