THE HINDU

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Training in dairy farming

A six-day training programme in modern dairy farming will be conducted free of cost in the fourth week of April by Rudset Institute. The course would cover all aspects of modern dairy farming as an alternate self-employment venture.

Selection of hybrid milch cattle, calf rearing artificial insemination and pregnant animal management, cattle disease and control, cultivation of fodder crops, fodder preservation and other areas would be covered.

Besides behavioural inputs such as cooperative set-up, achievement motivation, project report preparation, market survey and bank schemes would be covered.

Youth in the age group of 18 to 45 years with minimum educational qualification of Standard VIII could apply. Applicants should reach the following address before April 20:

The Director, Rudset Institute, Airport Road, Perungudi, Madurai – 625 022. Mobile no: 73585 56656/98433 92246/96262 46671. telephone no: (0452) 269 0609, according to a press release.

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Training in confectionery making at TNAU

Staff Reporter

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will organise a training programme in chocolate and sugar confectionery making on April 10 and 11 on the university premises. The training will cover the preparation of chocolates, chikkies, lollipop and jujups, fondant and fudge, toffee and caramel, marzipan and marshmallow.

Those interested can attend the training by paying a fee of Rs. 1,000.

For details, contact Head, Post Harvest Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003.

- *Training fee is Rs. 1,000*
- *For details, contact 0422-6611268*

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Training programme on duck rearing

A one-day training programme on “duck rearing for meat production” has been organised by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) on its premises from 9 a.m. on Tuesday. Participants enrolling for the free programme will be trained on different breeds of ducks, maintaining them, feed and disease management in the birds. Interested persons can enrol at the Kendra in person or over phone at 04286-266345, 266244 or 266650 before 5 p.m. on Monday.

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Mechanised cotton stripper makes work more easy

M. J. Prabu

The cotton stripper machine developed by Mansukbhai. Photo: Special Arrangement

Discarding a routine work and trying to do something new is not everybody's forte.

Many employed persons who consider their job monotonous or boring, would like a change. But how many are able to give up their jobs and a steady income and try something else?

“A farmer, Mr. Mansukhbhai Patel's personal experience may serve as an example and encouragement for many. A tenth standard school dropout, Mr. Patel, born in a poor farmer family, is credited for inventing an updated cotton stripper machine, that revolutionized cotton cultivation in Gujarat,” says Prof Anil Gupta, Vice Chairman, National Innovation Foundation, Ahmedabad.

Popular

Several cotton mills in the region use the machine now. The machine brought down the cost of cotton stripping from Rs.1 per kg to Rs. 1 for 20 kg, thereby generating good income for farmers and also improving the milling quality.

The idea of mechanized stripping of rainfed cotton (V:797 variety) from shells came to him during one of his frequent visits to his village.

“Hailing from a farming family which also grew cotton in a small way, I was familiar with the recurring expense and production delays,” Mr. Patel says.

The variety does not require much water and grows well in harsh and dry climate.

While most hybrid varieties bear ball cotton, which need to be manually picked from the plant, the indigenous variety bears pods that cannot be opened easily.

The pods must be picked, and manually cracked open to extract the ball.

Being a tedious and cumbersome procedure, mostly women and children engage in it.

During the harvesting season, instead of attending schools several children pluck the balls from the field as day labourers.

Dedicated effort

Mr. Patel kept mulling over the idea for several months and became convinced that he could develop a machine to strip the cotton lint from partially opened bolls.

It took two years of dedicated efforts to come out with the first model. Mr. Patel designed, fabricated and demonstrated his first full-fledged cotton-stripping machine in 1994.

The demonstration in his village convinced everyone that mechanizing the tedious process is possible.

At the end of a meeting organised after the demonstration of the machine, he found himself flooded with confirmed orders for as many as 50 machines. This, despite the performance not being as good as Mr. Patel wanted it to be.

“The actual supply of machines was easy. Although the customers had been quite impressed at the time of demonstration, the performance under actual working conditions did not satisfy users. All the machines were returned with complaints.

“It was eventually found that the malfunction was due to a trivial technical problem. I had to refund the money received and suffered a severe financial setback,” says Mr. Patel.

More changes

But he did not give up. He made more changes to the machine over a period of three more years.

Last year, he introduced dust collectors and fitted an automatic feeding system to the machine.

He also provided wheel-brackets and castors to make the machine portable. Patents have been granted in India and U.S. for this machine.

“Rural people must try to be innovative. Like Mr. Patel, there are several innovative farmers who, with a little imagination and hours of labour, are trying to make back breaking work easier for their ilk,” says Prof. Gupta.

Value addition

Mansukhbhai's stripping machine innovation was scouted by SRISTI. Grassroots Innovations Augmentation Network (GIAN - West) that took up the task of value addition.

Mr. Mansukhbhai could secure a Rs 5,80,000 under Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP). Gian also arranged for technical assistance from National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad.

For more details contact Mr. Mansukhbhai Patel , Chetak Industries, 113, GIDC Industrial Estate, Hansalpur, Viramgam, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Mobile: 9824089035, Ph: 02715-235108.

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Protests mark 10th anniversary of Bt cotton

Gargi Parsai

The Hindu File photo shows Bt cotton hybrid Brahma BG-II raised by South India Cotton Association and Monsanto in Coimbatore for demonstration.

Activists charge seed companies, mainly Monsanto, with monopoly

Protests marked the 10th anniversary of the introduction of genetically modified (GM) Bt cotton in the country. Angry farmers urged parliamentarians to hold a special session to discuss the issue and ban the technology.

Charging a few seed companies, particularly Monsanto, with monopolising the seed industry and setting the agenda for the government, social activists urged policy-makers and farmers to reject the hype around Bt cotton and demanded a comprehensive review. “The crisis in the cotton belt should be closely examined and critically re-assessed,” they said.

The Delhi Alliance for Safe Food held a protest demonstration at Jantar Mantar. Similar protests were held in the cotton belts of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

A technology that was meant for irrigated areas was pushed in all cotton-growing States, including rain-fed ones resulting in higher rate of suicides of cotton growers — particularly in Maharashtra. The protests, therefore, were intense and widespread in the State where farmers burnt Bt cotton in several villages according to the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti. Several wives of farmers who had committed suicides joined the protests.

“Ten years ago, permission was granted to U.S. based Monsanto seed giant for experimental cultivation of [bollworm-resistant] GM Bt cotton in 10,000 hectares in different parts of the country. Today, with the push given to it, the acreage has gone up to over 12 million hectares and [the crop is] sown by 90 per cent growers, especially after Maharashtra permitted commercial cultivation trials of Bt cotton from June 2005,” points Kishor Tiwari of the Andolan.

A Coalition for GM-free India report released on Sunday last said the government's own data proved that Bt cotton had resulted in stagnant yields, pest resistance and evolution of new pest and disease attacks.“Yet, its use has spread because the creditors in the informal sector, who double up as seed agents, promote the Bt seed and deprive farmers of the traditional variety,” the activists said.

In Andhra Pradesh, for example, the State government estimates show that out of 47 lakh acres planted with Bt cotton during Kharif 2011 season, the crop failed in 33.73 lakh acres (71 per cent of the area). The State government reported that 20.46 lakh farmers suffered from cotton crop failure and lost Rs.3071.6 crore.In Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra as well as in Madhya Pradesh, Bt cotton is considered the reason for “deep agrarian crisis.”The protesters demanded that the government rejuvenate the production of conventional cotton seeds and pro-actively advise farmers about the risks of Bt cotton. There should be strict action against false claims and misleading advertising by seed companies.

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Food inflation back on agenda as prices rise

Global food prices rose in March for a third successive month, driven by gains in grains and vegetable oils, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation said on Thursday, putting food inflation firmly back on the economic agenda.

Food prices hit record highs in February 2011 and stoked protests connected to the Arab Spring wave of civil unrest in some north African and middle eastern countries. They then receded but started to grow again in January.

The index, which measures monthly price changes for a food basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy, meat and sugar, averaged 215.9 points in March, up from a revised 215.4 points in February, FAO data showed.

Its Cereal Price Index averaged 227 points in March, up from February, with maize prices showing gains, supported by low inventories and a strong soybean market, the FAO said.

"You can see prices in the near term rising even further," FAO's senior economist and grain analyst Abdolreza Abbassian told Reuters before the index update.

The FAO also confirmed its earlier forecast for world wheat output to fall 1.4% from last year's record crop to 690 million tonnes in 2012.

High oil prices have fanned inflationary concerns since the start of this year. Consumer prices in the 17 nations sharing the euro were up 2.6% in March from a year ago, despite the region's stumbling economy.

"The food price index has an extremely high correlation to oil prices and with oil prices up it's going to be difficult for food prices not to follow suit," said Nick Higgins, commodity analyst at Rabobank International.

Energy prices affect the production of fertilizers as well as costs related to food distribution and farm machinery use.

"We really saw the (food index) declines in Q4 2011 as being anomalous and related more to sell offs from the threats posed by the European macroeconomic situation rather than agricultural fundamentals," he said.

A US government report last week with lower than expected estimates of grain stocks and reduced soybean and wheat plantings, added to concerns about global grain supplies, driving a rally in US and European grain futures.

Corn and soybeans are set to be the major drivers on world grain markets until new crops are harvested. Strong price swings are expected due to weather changes in major producing countries, Abbassian said.

More price volatility could come if US farmers decide to plant more soybeans after being lured by high prices, he added.

US soybean futures rose about 7% in March and gained about 17% in the first quarter of this year spurred by concerns about tight supplies as drought hit South America and smaller US plantings.

But FAO's Abbassian said prices could fall in the second half of this year with new crops easing market tension and driving full-year average prices below the record levels of 2011.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/835868.aspx

THE ECONOMIC TIMES
Commodities
7 APR, 2012, 04.10AM IST, BLOOMBERG

Palm oil prices rise to a year-high on lower LatAm soyabean supplies

KUALA LUMPUR: Palm oil, used in food and fuel, climbed to the highest in more than a year in Malaysia as South American soyabean supplies declined. In China, palm and soyabean oil rose to the costliest in more than six months.

The June-delivery contract advanced 1.3% to end at 3,604 ringgit ($1,176) a tonne on the Malaysia Derivatives Exchange, the most expensive close for a most-active contract since March 7, 2011. Futures advanced 5% this week, the fifth straight gain and the longest run in more than 16 months.

Speculation stockpiles in Malaysia may drop also spurred buying. Palm oil is "rising mainly on anticipation of bullish stock data and also on the back of the increase of soybean prices," Ivy Ng, an analyst with CIMB Group Holdings, said by phone from Kuala Lumpur on Friday.

With Malaysian inventory data on April 10, "people will buy in anticipation of that news as well as the lower soyabean crop".

Stockpiles in Malaysia fell 2.4% to 2.01 million tonne in March, from 2.06 million tonne in February, according the median of estimates in a Bloomberg survey of four analysts and two plantation companies. The Malaysian Palm Oil Board will release data for inventories, output and exports.

Soyabean production in Argentina and Brazil will probably be smaller than the US government said last month after hot, dry weather reduced yields, based on a survey of as many as 20 analysts by Bloomberg News on Thursday.

Soyabean oil, produced from the oilseed, and palm oil can replace each other.

Argentina's crop will be 45.12 million tonne and the Brazilian harvest 66.77 million tonne, according to the survey, which compares with US Department of Agriculture estimates of 46.5 million tonne and 68.5 million tonne. The USDA is set to release new estimates on April 10 at 8:30 a.m. in Washington.

Soybeans for May delivery rose 1% to $14.34 a bushel on the Chicago Board of Trade on Thursday, the highest close for a most-active contract since September 2. Soybean oil for May gained 1.1% to 56.64 cents per pound on Thursday.

US exchanges are closed for a public holiday on Friday. Palm oil for delivery in September climbed 1% to end at 8,968 yuan ($1,422) a tonne, the highest close for the most active contract since September 9. Soybean oil for delivery in the same month increased 1.2% to close at 9,996 yuan a tonne, the highest since September 21.

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

67% of population may get wheat, rice at Rs 2/kg and Rs 3/kg

Agencies Posted online: Thu Apr 05 2012, 21:02 hrs

New Delhi : Sixty-seven per cent of country's 1.2 billion population, irrespective of their being below or above poverty line, may become eligible for 5 kg of wheat and rice at Rs 3 and Rs 2, respectively as the government is thinking of making some changes in this regard in Food Bill.

Under the Food Security Bill, which is at present being vetted by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the government has proposed to give subsidised foodgrains to beneficiaries grouped into 'priority and general households' at different rates and different quantities.

However, with socio-economic caste census yet to be completed, the government feels that it is not possible to identify the beneficiaries in these two groups.

For early implementation of the food law, it is thinking to give a fixed quantity of wheat and rice at uniform rate to 67 per cent of population and exclude the 33 per cent people by using some criteria.

Sources said the government wants to test the effectiveness of the food security law before in the next general elections in 2014.Under the Food bill, the government has proposed to provide 7kg of rice and wheat at Rs 3 per kg and Rs 2 per kg, respectively, to priority households. A general household member would get at least 3kg of wheat and rice at price not less the 50 per cent of the minimum support price.Sources said that about 33 per cent of the country's population, who can afford to buy food grains at market prices will be kept out of the intended list of beneficiaries through the introduction of the exclusion criteria in the Bill.

The rest 67 per cent of the population would be made eligible for subsidised foodgrains as per individual basis at 5kg of rice and wheat at Rs 3 per kg and Rs 2 per kg, each, sources said.However, an household of Antodaya Anna Yojana category would continue to get 7kg foodgrains, they said.Sources further said that the changes in the Bill would cost the government Rs 1,12,000 crore, about Rs 4,000 crore higher than what was estimated under the original bill.The foodgrains requirement would be 61.55 million tonnes, instead of 69 million tonnes.The socio-economic caste census (SECC), which would help in identifying beneficiaries for various social welfare programmes, would take some more time to complete, they added.

The government's new line of thinking is close to the suggestion of John Dreze, economist and former member of National Advisory Council (NAC) who advocated universalised public distribution system (PDS).

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the pioneer

Millers tell govt to rethink ban on pulses export seek long-term policy

Also say pulses should be a part of the public distribution system

BS Reporter / Chennai April 07, 2012, 0:45 IST

The central government’s ban on export of pulses has affected the milling industry, say traders’ bodies. They want export to be allowed with certain quantity restrictions.

“We have been demanding an opportunity to import raw pulses, which could be milled and re-exported. The milling industry, currently antiquated, will have a huge opportunity if the government allows this,” said Anurag Tulshan, coordinator , eastern and northeastern region, India Pulses and Grains Association.

He was speaking to journalists after announcing the annual Global Pulses Convention 2012, to be organised by the International Pulse Trade and Industry Confederation (IPTIC) in Dubai from April 21 to 24.

The pulses’ processing industry in India is a Rs 40,000-50,000 crore one, said Sudhakar Tomar, chair of communications and sponsorships at IPTIC. Mills process about 15 million tonnes (mt) of the annual 17 mt output. Another three-four mt are imported each year. The government stopped export three to four years earlier.

“While we are lagging, the food processing industry in countries like Sri Lanka and some African countries are booming. There is enough room for us to grow and we can also adapt newer scientific technologies and methods,” said Tulshan.

The industry has also asked the government to include pulses in the Public Distribution System. It would be a boost for them; they argue it would also help better nutrition among the population. The industry is also demanding the government bring a long-term policy to boost output and the processing industry.IPTIC, in which IPGA is a member, is also lobbying to announce the year 2016 as the ‘Year of Pulses’. It has support on this from the governments of India, Canada and Australia so far. It is expecting two more countries to approve the proposal, before it can be considered by the United Nations.

Output may dip this year

Pulses’ production is expected to drop from 18.2 million tonnes last year to 17.5 mt in the season ending June, said Anurag Tulshan, coordinator, eastern and northeastern region, India Pulses and Grains Association.

Local prices are expected to remain stable for the near future. These have been stable after a spiralling in 2008-09. It has contributed negatively to inflation for some months.

However, the price of imported pulses are seeing growth of around 10 per cent due to strengthening of the rupee. India imports three-four million tonnes annually, of which 1.2-1.5 mt is from Canada, France, Russia and Ukraine, he said.

THE HINDU Business Line

'Improve rice productivity to meet future requirements'

K. V. Kurmanath
Hyderabad, April 7:

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has called for the cultivation of hybrid rice varieties that meet the local requirements.

Dr Swapan Kumar Datta, Deputy Director-General, ICAR, said India needed to increase the productivity of rice to meet its future food requirements.

Addressing the 47th annual rice research group meetings on Saturday here, he said hybrids would play a major role in achieving targets in the coming decades.

Thin trading at commodity futures market

C.J. Punnathara
Kochi, April 7:

Being a Saturday there was not much of a movement at the commodity futures market in India. Trading was thin.

Without direction from the global futures market, there was very low activity at the base metal futures counters. No major players were visible at the counters. Agri-commodity trade witnessed some activity.

Cardamom futures lost 1.5 per cent of its value. The fall was much more in chillies which lost 3.5 per cent of its value.

Analysts said that the fall in chillies was on expected on lines, this being the arrivals season. Spot market prices are also expected to drop correspondingly. Edible oils remained positive.

Pepper and rubber ruled steady. Rubber was ruling at Rs 203.90 per kg for the May contract.