

NEW DELHI, August 11, 2012

Tamil Nadu seeks 25 tmcft of Cauvery water from Karnataka

J. VENKATESAN

The Supreme Court will hear on August 13 an application from Tamil Nadu for a direction to Karnataka to release 25.373 tmcft of water, the shortfall based on the distress water-sharing formula.

In its application, Tamil Nadu said this water year being a distress year due to a huge shortage in inflows, water had to be shared between the two States on pro rata basis. "This year, Karnataka has resorted to summer irrigation from February to May and has utilised the storages and also the inflows during that period, which is clearly against the final order passed by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal.

If the State of Karnataka had conserved the waters in their reservoirs and not resorted to summer irrigation, there would have been sufficient storage in their reservoirs and the distress faced due to the present failure of the monsoon could have been substantially mitigated and Tamil Nadu would not have been subjected to the serious difficulty."

Tamil Nadu said it had already filed an application for urgent orders for directing Karnataka to release water from its reservoirs without impounding all flows and for direction to convene the meeting of the Cauvery River Authority to approve the distress-sharing formula evolved by the Cauvery Monitoring Committee for sharing of the flows of the river."

It said, "The actual shares of State have to be worked out in December by applying a flexible distress formula that considers various factors, including inflows, outflows, impact of North - East rainfall in Tamil Nadu and the available groundwater in the delta region." If Karnataka had not resorted to summer irrigation, there would have been sufficient storage in their reservoirs and the distress faced due to the present failure of the monsoon could have been substantially mitigated and the applicant State would not have been subjected to serious hardship due to non-release of water by the State of Karnataka."

It said, "Tamil Nadu has received only 3.604 tmcft as on August 8 in the Mettur reservoir, against the stipulated quantum of 64.706 tmcft and even on an application of the distress-sharing formula, Tamil Nadu ought to have received at least 28.978 tmcft at Mettur."

Hence, Tamil Nadu sought directions to Karnataka to forthwith release the said quantum of 25.373 tmcft being the shortfall as per the distress sharing formula and further release flows on a pro rata basis as per the order dated April 3, 1992 passed by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal.

- *Supreme Court hearing*

on August 13

- *Tamil Nadu seeks Cauvery River Authority meeting*

PATHANAMTHITTA, August 11, 2012

New farm policy soon: Minister

The government has taken steps to form a new agriculture policy, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has said.

The Minister was addressing a meeting of officials of the Agriculture and Animal Husbandry departments at the Collectorate conference hall on Friday.

He said a committee chaired by K.Krishnankutty would hold a sitting in the districts as part of policy formation and the sitting in Pathanamthitta would be on October 31.

Mr. Mohanan said the government was for setting up a welfare board and tribunal for farmers.

TIRUPATI, August 11, 2012

Pests, boars devour groundnut crop in 11,000 acres

Farmers a worried lot as the red hairy caterpillar infests fields spread over 22 mandals in Chittoor district

The groundnut cultivation in the rain shadow Chittoor district which has already come down to about 58,000 acres this year from the normal 1.57 lakh acres, suffered another setback with the deadly red hairy caterpillars infesting about 8,000 acres spread over 22 mandals.

Reports reaching here from the district headquarters indicate that the pest which feeds on leaves and stems of groundnut sprouts is likely to devour the crop in the other contiguous mandals as well.

Precautions ignored

This was because the Agricultural Department and the farmers reportedly failed to take certain conventional precautionary measures to save the crop from the pest which normally infested the crop around this time of the season.

Sources said during the season, farmers would be asked to light bonfires in the groundnut fields using old tyres, jute bags, used engine oil etc., because the flames attract the red hairy caterpillars which by nature have a tendency to unwittingly crawl into the flames and get destroyed.

Sources further said in addition to what the farmers personally mobilise, the Agriculture Department also procures the materials (old tyres, worn out jute bags, used engine oil etc) and supply them to the farmers to light up the fires and keep the dangerous pest at bay. But no such initiative was said to have been taken this year by the department on the ground that it was 'not necessary' since it was a seasonal phenomenon and that the farmers themselves were well aware of the danger of the pest infesting the crop around this time of the season. Another problem which is said to be further compounding the woes of the groundnut farmers in the district is the menace being caused by the wild boars, especially in the forest fringe villages where the beasts invade the fields during nights and feast on the crops. According to sources groundnut crop grown in about 3,000 acres has reportedly been lost in the mandals vulnerable to this problem.

These apart, the deficit or absence of timely rainfall after the sowing also has resulted in groundnut crop loss in the district, especially in mandals like Sadum, Somala, Punganr where farmers buoyed over initial rains reportedly sowed seeds only to see them fail to sprout due to deficit if not nil rainfall.

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- *3,000 acres of crop in forest fringe villages lost due to menace caused by wild boars*
 - *Groundnut cultivation down to 58,000 acres this year from the normal 1.57 lakh acres*
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CUDDALORE, August 11, 2012

Farmers seek small dams in Cauvery basin

The south-west monsoon has been playing truant and reduced the area under kuruvasi crops. The delayed onset of the monsoon has depleted storage level in the Mettur Dam.

Hence, water could not be released from the dam on the customary date of June 12. Such a situation has not only made the kuruvasi prospects bleak but also affected the livelihood of farmers across the districts of Thanjavur, Thiruvarur, Nagapattinam and Cuddalore, according to P.Ravindhiran, president of the Paasi Muththan Odai Paasana Vivasayigal Sangam.

In a representation to Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, he said that on account of uncertainty over the onset of the monsoon and water release from the Mettur Dam, farmers in the Cauvery basin were leading a precarious life.

From 1934-1935 to 2011-2012, the dam was opened 78 times on different dates as follows: May – four times, June – 40 times, July -24 times, August – seven times, and, September, October and November – one time each.

CUDDALORE, August 11, 2012

Accent on hybrid cashew variety



Agriculture Minister S. Damodaran and Rural Industries Minister M.C. Sampath giving away crop insurance to cyclone-affected farmers in Cuddalore on Friday. —Photo: C.

Venkatachalapathy

The 'Thane' cyclone affected farmers should shed their inhibitions in going for the hybrid cashew grafts which have high-yielding potential within short duration, said S. Damodaran, Agriculture Minister.

Mr. Damodaran, along with Rural Industries Minister M.C. Sampath, Collector Rajendra Ratnoo and Additional Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao (heading the "Thane" Project Management Unit) toured extensively to inspect the rehabilitation works under progress across the district on Friday.

Mr. Damodaran observed that he had seen several partially uprooted cashew trees still remaining in the field. Farmers having sentimental attachments to the crops raised by their forefathers did not seem to have any intention to dispose of the old stock. They were under the impression that if they remove the existing trees, it would take years to raise new crops. Seeking to clear such an apprehension, Mr. Damodaran said the right answer could be found in the VRI-3 hybrid saplings.

As many as 25 lakh saplings would be obtained from Government Horticulture Farms at Neyveli and Vriddhachalam and the Regional Farm Research Centre at Vriddhachalam (5 lakh saplings each), the TANHOPE in Chennai (9.85 lakh saplings) and the TAPCON (15,000 saplings) for distribution.

As many as 500 saplings of the VRI-3 variety could be raised in a hectare against 40 saplings of the traditional variety. As the traditional cashew crop was mostly grown on rain-fed areas, the Minister said that the government had made provision for sinking community borewell for the benefit of clusters of farmers for raising the hybrid cashew grafts.

The Minister said that Cuddalore was the worst affected district where agricultural crops, including paddy, groundnut, sugarcane and cotton, on 95,555 ha and horticultural crops, including cashew, banana, mango, jackfruit and tapioca, on 30,004 ha were affected. Out of Rs. 122.91 crore sanctioned for relief, a sum of Rs. 122.67 crore had been disbursed so far. In

Villupuram district, agricultural crops on 25,440 ha and horticultural crops on 8,034 ha were affected and for which a total relief of Rs. 25.94 crore was disbursed.

The Ministers' entourage covered places such as Thirukandeswaram, Kandarakottai, Meliruppu, Vegakollai, Neyveli and Vriddhachalam.

The Ministers gave away relief amount, insurance amount, and coconut and cashew saplings to farmers.

Mr. Damodaran also held a review meeting at the Collectorate.

KRISHNAGIRI, August 11, 2012

Concern over increase in fertilizer price

Farmers' association seeks waiver of crop loans



Rates of fertilizers displayed at the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society, Periyamuthur, on Friday.- Photo: N. Bashkaran

Steep hike in price of potassic fertilisers has hit the farmers, especially the paddy cultivators, in the district, said K.M. Ramagoundar, State general secretary, Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, here on Thursday.

Ever since the Union Government introduced the nutrient-based subsidy policy on decontrolled phosphatic and potassic fertilisers in February 2011, the price of fertilizers has seen an unprecedented rise. The price of a 50 kg bag of Potash (complex fertiliser) used for paddy cultivation has increased from Rs.180 to Rs. 865 in one year. Similarly, the price of di-ammonium phosphate has increased from Rs. 485 to Rs. 1,260. High rates of phosphatic and potassic fertilisers have prompted farmers to use urea which cause imbalance in soil nutrients, Mr. Ramagoundar said. Price rise will escalate the production cost of paddy and agricultural products, he said.

Subsidy

Farmers start sowing after the first spell of southwest monsoon. But, with the scanty rainfall this season, seeds did not get adequate water necessary for germination. The association wanted the government to waive the entire loan obtained by the farmers. They also urged the government to extend Rs. 50,000 per acre as production subsidy to bail out the farmers from the present situation. Even farmers who had dug borewell couldn't irrigate their fields due to lack of power availability. TANGEDCO extends only three hours of three-phase supply a day. Farmers having agriculture field in the vicinity of Reserve Forests were also hit, as their produce were damaged by the wild boars. The association in its recent meeting has decided to stage a demonstration before the Collectorate on August 22 to urge the government to implement their legitimate demands.

KODAIKANAL, August 11, 2012

Research efforts bear kiwi fruits

For the first time, kiwi plants at the horticulture research station here have borne fruits, according to Horticulture Research Station Professor A. Rajangam.

About 52 planting materials of Kiwi fruit in Hayward, Allison, Monty and Brulo varieties were brought from Agriculture University, Solan, Himachal Pradesh, four years back and planted in the research station for carrying out research, he added.

Now, 52 fruits were found in each vine in Hayward and Allison varieties, he added. Research was on to increase the yield to 100, he added. Normally each plant bore at least 120 fruits. Kiwifruit, also known as Chinese gooseberry, was the edible berry of a cultivar group of the woody vine *Actinidia deliciosa*. It was in oval shape with five to eight cm in length and 4.5 to 5.5 cm in dia. It has a fibrous, dull brown-green skin and bright green or golden flesh with rows of tiny, black edible seeds. It was a commercial crop in many countries like Italy, New Zealand, Chile, Greece and France.

Italy topped in the world with an annual production of 4.10 lakh tonnes, New Zealand with 3.60 lakh tonnes and Chile with 1.70 lakh tonnes, he added.

Kiwifruit could be grown commercially on sturdy support structures. The fruit will be borne on one-year-old canes. Canes should be pruned off and replaced after their third year, said the Deputy Director of Horticulture (Central Schemes), S. Raja Mohamed.

THENI, August 11, 2012

Cumbum Valley farmers fervently wait for rain

Officials check condition of four power turbines

Despite poor storage in Periyar dam and failure of southwest monsoon, hope alone helps farmers and government officials to continue their work in Cumbum Valley.

The agriculturists had raised seedlings and completed transplantation in Gudalur and Cumbum, waiting for the rain. Preliminary work is under way in many parts of the valley. The Public Works Department officials have cleaned channels and pipelines to draw more water during rainy season from Periyar dam.

Employees of the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited (TANGEDCO) have started ground work to generate power at its hydel power generation unit at Lower Camp. With the release of 467 cusecs of water from Periyar dam, the TANGEDCO officials checked the condition of four power turbines.

The condition of two turbines imported from Austria was in good condition.

But two other machines imported from the then Czechoslovakia, had minor problems.

The trial run would continue tomorrow, said TANGEDCO officials at the Lower Camp.

The turbines would be ready to generate power before commencement of rainy season. If PWD officials drew more water during rainy season from Periyar dam, the turbines would generate power immediately.

After trial, public works engineers would scale down discharge to 200 cusecs from 467 cusecs from August 11.

UDUPI, August 11, 2012

KVGB promises help to drought-hit farmers

C. Sambasiva Reddy, Chairman of Karnataka Vikas Grameena Bank (KVGB), said on Thursday that the bank would help farmers in the drought-affected regions of the State.

Inaugurating a credit camp of the bank, Mr. Reddy said the KVGB, which was a regional rural bank, had received a note from the State Government a couple of days ago regarding the drought conditions prevailing in the districts of North Karnataka. He had visited these areas. Drought conditions were prevailing in areas coming under 423 branches of the bank in the State.

The condition of the people in these areas was bad. The people and farmers were facing drought for the second consecutive year. "We will help farmers in these regions", he said.

The bank would be holding 3,700 gram sabhas and Loan Distribution Sabhas in September. The bank had held 1,000 gram sabhas on June 25. The bank had business correspondents in 800 villages.

The bank planned to open 100 ultra small branches in the State this fiscal year. The bank was planning to open 50 branches this year. Of these, 25 would be started by the end of August. The bank would start ATMs in October.

The bank would encourage micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector by providing loans to it. The bank was giving importance to giving educational loans.

The service rendered by the KVGB was on par if not better than the other commercial banks. "We are in the top bracket among the banks in the State in providing service to our customers. Our employees treat customers as family members and give them service with a smile", he said. As many as 1,481 beneficiaries had been provided loans to the tune of Rs. 16.07 crore in places ranging from Byndoor to Sullia in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts during the credit camp. Of these 1,481 beneficiaries, nearly 800 had got agriculture related loans.

KALPETTA, August 11, 2012

Paddy procurement in September: Minister

Says Rs.120 crore due to farmers



Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Anoop Jacob on Friday said the government would start paddy procurement in the first week of September.

At a meet-the-press programme organised by the Wayanad Press Club, Mr. Jacob said the government would take measures to avoid delay in payment for paddy procured from farmers. He said the government had to pay Rs.120 crore to paddy farmers, including Rs.55 lakh to farmers in Wayanad.

Of this, Rs.60 crore would be paid soon utilising funds provided by the Central government for the purpose.

Supplyco would launch 10 new mobile Onam markets during the festival season. Chief Minister Oommen Chandy would launch the project in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday.

The intervention of Supplyco had helped in curbing the increase in prices of essential commodities in the open market, especially during the festive season, to a certain extent, the Minister said.

He said the government would set up Maveli stores in nearly 100 grama panchayats which at present did not have one. Additional Maveli stores would be opened in select panchayats, where the existing stores functioning, Mr. Jacob said. On the shortage of pulses supplied for the school noon-meal programme, he said the department would meet the demand if such a request was made by the Education Department.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

10 AUG, 2012, 03.05PM IST, PTI

Turmeric futures down on profit-booking

NEW DELHI: Amid continued profit-booking by speculators after recent gains and decline in spot demand, turmeric futures prices today fell by another 1.43 per cent to Rs 6,068 per quintal.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, turmeric for delivery in October traded Rs 88, or 1.43 per cent, lower at Rs 6,068 per quintal, with an open interest of 5,705 lots. Similarly, the spice for delivery in September shed Rs 84, or 1.41 per cent, to Rs 5,880 per quintal in 19,435 lots.

Marketmen said increased profit-booking by speculators after recent gains and fall in demand in the spot market at prevailing levels kept pressure on turmeric prices at futures market.

Besides, improved rains in growing areas also weighed the prices, they said.

10 AUG, 2012, 02.58PM IST, ET NOW

Crude palm oil futures decline on sluggish demand

NEW DELHI: Crude palm oil prices declined by Rs 2.50 to Rs 547.70 per 10 kg in futures trading today after speculators reduced positions on the back of sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil for delivery in August declined by Rs 2.50, or 0.45 per cent, to Rs 547.70 per 10 kg, with a business turnover of 572 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in September shed Rs 1.90, or 0.44 per cent, to Rs 544.30 per 10 kg in 690 lots.

Marketmen said speculators reduced their positions due to sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position influenced crude palm oil prices at futures trade.

10 AUG, 2012, 02.54PM IST, PTI

Sugar futures up 0.56 pc on festive season demand

NEW DELHI: Sugar futures today rose by 0.56 per cent to trade at Rs 3,584 per quintal after speculators built-up fresh positions, supported by strong demand in the spot markets for the ongoing festive season.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for October delivery traded Rs 20, or 0.56 per cent, higher at a new high of Rs 3,584 per quintal, with an open interest of 14,450 lots.

Sugar for delivery in September also traded Rs 18, or 0.51 per cent, higher at Rs 3,582 per quintal, with an open interest of 41,350 lots.

Meanwhile, small sugar (S-30) rose by Rs 39-30 per quintal to Rs 3,551-3,651 per quintal at the Mumbai's Vashi wholesale market in yesterday's trade. Medium sugar (M-30) surged by Rs 40/50 per quintal to Rs 3,621/3,761 from Rs 3,581/3,711.

Marketmen said the rise in sugar futures was mainly due to good demand in the spot markets for festive season.

Besides, the government's statement that the surplus quantity of agri-products such as sugar, wheat and rice, would continue to be exported despite concerns over possible fall in farm production due to poor monsoon also supported the upside.

Select edible oils up on local buying

Agencies Posted online: Sat Aug 11 2012, 17:52 hrs

New Delhi : Select edible oil prices rose by Rs 50 per quintal in the wholesale oils and oilseeds market today on local buying.

However, neem oil in the non-edible segment, eased on reduced industrial offtake.

Traders said increased demand from local parties mainly led to a rise in select wholesale edible oil prices.

In the national capital, mustard expeller, sesame and cottonseed mill delivery (Haryana) oils were up by Rs 50 each to Rs 8,550, Rs 8,700 and Rs 6,900, respectively.

Groundnut mill delivery oil (Gujarat) traded higher by similar margin to Rs 12,000 per quintal In the non-edible section, neem oil weakened by Rs 50 to Rs 4,600-4,700 per quintal.

The following were today's quotations per quintal: Oilseeds: Mustardseed 2,950- ,050 and Groundnut Seed 2,150-2,900. Vanaspati Ghee (15-litre tin) 1,100-1,250.

Edible oils: Groundnut Mill Delivery (Gujarat) 12,000, Groundnut Solvent Refined (per tin) 1,900-1,950, Mustard expeller (Dadri) 8,550, Mustard Pakki Ghani (per tin) 1,210-1,350, Mustard Kachi Ghani (per tin) 1,365-1,465, Sunflower 6,300, Sesame Mill Delivery 8,700, Soybean Refined Mill Delivery (Indore) 8,050, Soyabean Degum (Kandla) 7,600, Crude Palm Oil (Ex-Kandla) 7,550, Cottonseed Mill Delivery (Haryana) 6,900, Palmolein (RBD) Rs 8,200, Palmolein (Kandla) 7,750, Rice Bran (phy) 3,800 and Coconut(per tin) 1,400-1,450. Non-edible oils: Linseed 5,750, Mahuwa 4,000, Castor 8,700-8,800, Neem 4,600-4,700, Rice Bran 3,280- ,380 and Palm Fatty 3,225-3,300.

Oilcakes: Groundnut Dehusk 800-850, Sesame 950-1,150, Mustard (New) 1,000- ,025, Mustard 1,200-1,210 and Cottonseed 1,075-1,175.

Non-basmati rice, other grains fall on subdued demand

Agencies Posted online: Sat Aug 11 2012, 18:00 hrs

New Delhi : Weak conditions prevailed in the wholesale grains market today as non-basmati rice and a few other bold grain prices fell by up to Rs 50 per quintal.

Traders said sluggish demand against sufficient supplies mainly led to fall in non-basmati rice and a few other bold grain prices.

In the rice section, permal raw, sela and IR-8 were down by Rs 50 each to Rs 2,050- ,100, Rs 2,700-2,900 and Rs 1,550-1,600 per quintal, respectively. Maize and barley also traded lower by Rs 30 and Rs 20 to Rs 1,350-1,360 and Rs 1,380-1,390 per quintal, respectively.

The following are today's quotations per quintal: Wheat MP (deshi) 1,750-1,970, Wheat dara (for mills) 1,410-1,420, Chakki atta (delivery) 1,420-1,430, Atta Rajdhani (10 kg) 195, Shakti bhog (10 kg) 195, Roller flour mill 720-750 (50 kg), Maida 870- 890 (50 kg) and Sooji 920-950 (50kg). Basmati rice (Lal Quila) 9,500, Shri Lal Mahal 9,500, Super Basmati Rice, 9,000, Basmati common new 6,500-6,600, Rice Pusa-(1121) new 5,800-6,900, Permal raw 2,050-2100, Permal wand 2,300-2,350, Sela 2,700-2,900 and Rice IR-8 1,550-1,600, Bajra 1200-1205, Jowar yellow 1,300- 1,350, white 2,100-2,250, Maize 1,350-1,360, Barley 1,380-1,390, Rajasthan 1,080- 1,090.

Pulses remain steady in thin trade

Agencies Posted online: Sat Aug 11 2012, 17:39 hrs

New Delhi : Steady conditions prevailed in the wholesale pulses market today as prices moved in a narrow range in scattered deals and settled around previous levels.

Marketmen said adequate stocks position against sporadic demand at higher levels mainly kept wholesale pulses steady.

The following are today's pulses rates per quintal: Urad 4,000-4,600, Urad Chilka (local) 4,950-5,250, best 5,400-5,900, Dhoya 5,950-6,040, Moong 5,000-5,500, Dal Moong Chilka local 5450-5850, Moong Dhoya local 5,950-6,050 and best quality 6,650-6,750.

Masoor small 3,900-4,100, bold 4,000-4,250, Dal Masoor local 4,800-4,900, best quality 4,900-5,000, Malka local 4,600-4,650, best 4,800-4,900, Moth 4,100-4,500, Arhar 4,100-4,400, Dal Arhar Dara 5,750-5,950.

Gram 4,800-5,800, Gram Dal (local) 5,900-6,000, best quality 5,950-6,050, Besan (35 kg) Shakti bhog 2,290, Rajdhani 2,290, Rajmah Chitra 7,400-9,300, Kabli Gram small 5,300-8,600, dabra 2,700-2,800, imported 4,700-5,100; Lobia 4,600-5,400, Peas white 3,000-3,050 and green 3,050-3,100.

Sugar prices steady in thin trade

Agencies Posted online: Sat Aug 11 2012, 17:08 hrs

Mumbai : Sugar prices ended quiet in the national capital today as prices by and large moved both side on alternate bouts of trading before settling at last levels.

Marketmen said regular supply from mills and seasonal demand mainly held prices unmoved.

The following were today's rates per quintal:

Sugar ready: M-30 3,640-3,790, S- 30 3,615-3,765. Mill delivery: M-30 3,460-3,650; S-30 3,440-3,630. Sugar mill gate (excluding duty): Mawana 3600, Kinnoni 3660, Asmoli 3630, Dorala 3560, Budhana 3540, Thanabhavan 3520, Ramala 3500, Bulandshar 3520, Morna 3500, Sakoti 3510, Chandpur 3520, Dhanora 3550, Khatuli 3520, Baghpat 3500 and Amroha 3510.



Farmers in Punjab, Haryana need monetary support: Pawar

SATURDAY, 11 AUGUST 2012 21:07

The Centre on Friday agreed in principle that the peasants of the region are in dire need of monetary support, in view of drought-like situation prevailing in Punjab and Haryana due to uneven monsoon rainfall.

The Union Minister of Agriculture Sharad Pawar said the Union Government had made a four-point plan to be implemented immediately in both the states. This four-point agenda includes

safe drinking water to rural population, fodder for cattle, protection to standing crops and job generation for unemployed drug-addict youth.

The Union Minister said that all possible help would be provided to the affected farmers through their respective state governments.

Pawar said "after the proposal from various committees and taking into consideration the misappropriation of fund during the previous monsoon failure in the year 2009-10, the Union Government has decided to distribute relief fund directly to the accounts of the farmers of both the states."

The loan taken by the farmers from various co-operative societies would be rescheduled with immediate effect and after taking the holistic picture of the impact of drought on both the states, waivers might be announced in this regard.

In Punjab and Haryana, around 40 per cent farmers have Kisan credit cards and hence this seems to be a possible solution. Those farmers who don't have the benefit of Kisan credit cards can register their account for availing any kind of subsidy or relief. Responding to the demands put forth by the Punjab and Haryana Government, Pawar said the mandate of the Central team was limited to providing immediate relief to mitigate the drought-like situation.

He said the Centre fully appreciated the concerted efforts of the state governments in providing adequate power to the farmers to enable them to save their paddy by diverting electricity from the domestic and Industrial to farm sector. He also assured the state governments that the visiting team would take up this issue at the appropriate level for its early resolution in accordance with the already set precedent when in similar situation the Centre sanctioned Rs 800 crore to Punjab and Rs 400 crore to Haryana in 2009.

The Union Government had already announced adequate subsidy on the seeds for the drought affected farmers. The ambit of Integrated Fodder Development Scheme had been widened to cover the drought affected farmers to ensure adequate supply of fodder from other states because Punjab and Haryana are among the largest milk producing state.

However, the Minister also added that it was the need of the hour to come up with a seed map for both these state and stop the practice of mono-culture in the region.

Pawar said "mono-culture has destroyed the fertility of the soil of the most fertile region of India and has given way to salinity and other soil related issue. Efforts are being made by the Union Government to come up with diversification of agriculture and subsidies are being provided in abundance to the eastern region of the country to encourage the paddy farming there."

On the other hand, Jairam Ramesh, Minister of Rural Development harped on the populist scheme of MNEREGA and showered Rs 435 crores on Haryana eyeing the increase in work and laborer due to dry season. However, he failed to answer as to how he is speculating the increase.

Ramesh also added that MNEREGA was not that popular in Punjab and hence he said that currently Rs 211 crore was the labor budget for the state under MNREGA. On the other hand, he was optimistic that the work under the scheme might increase in the state because 30 new works had been included under the scheme out of which most were related to agriculture.

Think beyond paddy farming: Centre

SATURDAY, 11 AUGUST 2012 20:57

The Centre wants the States of Punjab and Haryana to think beyond paddy, though the idea is refusing to go down the farmers.

Ready to provide financial assistance to the farmers for venturing into crop-diversification, the Centre has asked the respective State Governments to come out of the vicious circle” of wheat-paddy rotation, which is, in return, “harming” the State’s groundwater level.

The Centre wants to introduce the programmes of horticulture, vegetables, floriculture, oilseeds, and pulses for the next kharif crop in this region. For the purpose, the Centre will hold deliberations with the two neighbouring states.

In fact, the Centre is already bringing out a “second green revolution” in the eastern states, to meet the nation’s requirement of rice in case the “food bowl” of India — including Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh — concurred to shift from the paddy.

“Agriculture experts believed that there is dire need for the States of Punjab and Haryana need to diversify in crop production. They need to reduce procurement of paddy in the states,” Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar categorically said on Friday.

Unconvinced, the farmers are reluctant to the idea maintaining that it would lead to more losses as the region's climate suits paddy.

Moreover, the farmers demanded that in case the shift was to be made, proper marketing of the new crops, along with the minimum support price for the same should be assured.

Living it up on the state leaderships to decide on the proposal, Pawar made it clear that remunerating the farmers for switching from paddy would entirely be the responsibility of the Centre. "It would be our responsibility to assist the farmers fully for shifting from paddy, and provide them viable and remunerative options," he clarified.

"Already, the Centre is seriously contemplating to provide marketing support mechanism to the farmers to encourage them for sowing these crops as an alternative to wheat-paddy cycle," added Pawar.

Further, Pawar said, "The paddy requires lot of water and that has led to decline in ground water level of this region. Considering this, the experts believed, two States' need to reduce the paddy procurement...and encourage them to engage in other crops."

He asserted that the farmers, in this part of the region, should be encouraged to go for cash crops likes oil seeds, pulses, sugarcane, maize, cotton besides horticulture, floriculture, vegetables, in big way. "For this, we are ready to provide financial support...we have to find out the ways to reduce the acreage under paddy by giving them suitable options," he added.

On "second-revolution", Pawar said that the eastern states of Assam, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, among others are showing good results and "are ready to substitute the north Indian food bowl".

Not happy, Bharti Kisan Union's president Balbir Singh Rajewal said the Centre's proposal is not viable for the state as the region's climate suits the wheat and paddy crop.

He said: "They are talking about diversification, but other crops do not have proper market. We know about the MSP of wheat and paddy, but before diverting farming towards cash crops, they should prepare proper market for that. In fact, they should announce its MSP first."

Onkar Singh, Ludhiana-based farmer maintained that indulging in cash crop farming would add up to losses to a great extent.

“We have several machines and equipments for cultivating wheat and paddy, it requires less effort now, but, the horticulture, floriculture, and cultivation of vegetables, oil seeds, pulses requires labour,” he added.

Happy with the Centre’s proposal to assist the farmers in diversification of cropping pattern, Mehar Chand, Sirsa-based farmers, maintained that “without assured procurement for alternate crops, farmers will not abandon the rice, wheat cropping pattern...the Centre should do what it is promising”.

Already, the state government had made an effort to bail out state’s beleaguered peasantry by encouraging diversification of the agriculture by releasing nearly `70 crore to the state Agriculture Department under the Rashtriya Krishi Vigyan Yojna (RKVY) during this fiscal.

THE HINDU Business Line

Pawar to attend turmeric farmers’ conference in Tamil Nadu

PTI



Erode, Aug 11:

Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar will attend a turmeric farmers’ conference to be held here on August 25 to discuss the issue of steep fall in prices of the yellow spice.

“Pawar had agreed to attend the conference aimed at highlighting the plight of the farmers and the need to enable them to fix the price of turmeric,” All-India Turmeric Farmers Federation Chairman D K Deivasigamani said in a release on Saturday.

He said turmeric, which was sold at Rs 17,000 a quintal two years ago, touched a low of Rs 3,500 in June before recovering to Rs 7,000 a quintal at present.

In connection with the conference, a rally would be conducted from Kodumudi to Erode, which is among the major turmeric markets in the country, the release said.

Country has got 90% rainfall so far: Ashwani Kumar



Monsoon turning active in many parts this month.

Chandigarh, Aug 11:

With monsoon turning active in many parts this month, Union Minister Ashwani Kumar today said rainfall received by the country during the current season so far stands at 90 per cent, which is six per cent short of the normal figure.

The Union Minister of State for Planning, Science and Technology and Earth Sciences said there had been rains in various parts of the country during the past few days and the situation has improved, but “we are still overall deficient.”

“The latest figures that we have got tell us that there have been 90 per cent rains while 96 per cent is normal. 90 per cent is less than normal and there is deficiency, but by August end, the range of deficiency will be considerably narrowed,” the Minister said here.

“Though it will still be deficient, but not to the extent what it looked 15 days back,” the Minister said at a function at Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research.

Punjab and Haryana governments have raised a demand for Central packages of Rs 5,112 crore and Rs 4,050 crore respectively in the wake of deficient rain this kharif season, he said, adding, “We are thinking of intervention in various areas to mitigate the hardship.”

He denied the charge by ruling SAD-BJP that Congress MPs from the State were not raising genuine issues concerning the state and also countered the step-motherly charge often used against UPA by Shiromani Akali Dal in context of Punjab.

“The UPA-I and II governments have given the largest possible assistance to the state government. It is there for everyone to see, whether it is education, increasing the crop MSP, Metro rail to Ludhiana, border development...You name it and they have got it. If they want to politicise development, then what can I say,” he said.

Asked about the move to provide free mobile phones to people below poverty line, Kumar said “some suggestions have been given here and there, but there is no decision yet on this”.