

HYDERABAD, August 17, 2012

Ban sought on soya meal, maize export

National Egg Coordination Committee NECC has appealed to the government to ban exports and forward trading in soya meal and maize or place quantitative restrictions on both the activities to bring down the prices of these essential ingredients and provide relief to farmers.

In a press release here on Thursday, NECC also urged the government to initiate strong measures to curb speculation and hoarding of soya meal and maize.

During the past two months, there has been a steep increase in price of soya meal, mainly due to forward trading, speculation and hoarding by traders, exporters and certain multi-national companies in anticipation of substantial increase in the volume of export. In the past three months, the price of soya meal has increased from less than Rs.2,000 per quintal to Rs.4,200 at present and that of maize from Rs.950-1,000 to Rs.1400 and above.

As a result of steep increase in input cost, the breakeven level for egg production, which was Rs.2.25 per egg two months ago, has now gone up to Rs.3.00. It also went up for broiler production.

ERODE, August 17, 2012

Turmeric growers to raise key demands before Pawar

Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar will inaugurate a national conference of the Turmeric Farmers Association of India here on August 25.

The conference will discuss issues faced by turmeric growers and the association will announce a floor price for the spice. The association will also put forth three major demands before the Minister.

“We want the Central Government to cover turmeric under the market intervention scheme, which protects the growers when prices fall,” association president P.K. Deivasigamani said.

The association would also demand the establishment of a spice park, exclusively for turmeric, at Erode. It would enable the farmers to access latest technologies for processing the yellow spice.

“Besides, it will also encourage the manufacturing of value-added products,” Mr. Deivasigamani said.

The farmers would also utilise the conference as an opportunity to show their strong opposition to the online marketing of turmeric.

THENI, August 17, 2012

Farmers find new grafted grape variety fruitful

The fruits have high quality and long shelf life

: Despite failure of the southwest monsoon and shortage of water for irrigation, introduction new grafted grape variety, adoption of modern techniques, proper application of fertilizers and effective post harvesting technologies help grape growers in Cumbum valley not only to boost yield and ensure better quality but also to tap European markets first time.

Graft varieties developed by Cumbum farmers by blending Dog Ridge variety rootstock, a well known for its drought and salt tolerance and nematode tolerance variety, with Thompson, red globe and Manik Chaman, some high yielding varieties brought them better yield.

Sweetness was high in the fruits from this grafted plant. The fruits have high quality and long shelf life when compared to traditional crops.

(Pure varieties were not a drought tolerant one and also pumped more water to plant destroying fruits and plants.)

Progressive farmers who raised this grafted plants have started getting better yield.

“I had harvested around six tonnes per acre and sold Rs.60 a kg in the market last time. Now, the market price was Rs.100 a kg. Normally, yield from old varieties was four tonnes per acre only, said Kandhar, a grape grower, who raised this grafted plants in 0.7 hectare at Then Palani near Odaipatti.

Moreover, new plant grew well even in saline water.

Introduction of grafted plant alone did not bring such great achievement.

Innovation in cultivation pattern was the secret behind his success. Installation of ‘Y’ angle for raising plants improved flow of sunlight. Production costs were less owing to correct use of inputs, he added.

Deputy Director of Horticulture S. Murugan said progressive farmers had exported sizable quantity of this grape to Europe through a Mumbai export agency.

If farmers produced large quantity, they could export directly.

At present, table variety of grapes only was produced in large scale. A group of grape growers was trained at National Grape Research Centre in Pune on the latest grafting method and advanced production technologies. They have adopted grafting method well, he added.

Farm mechanization was easy in farms having Y angle system. Air and light will flow freely. Photosynthesis will be increased manifold and pests attack will be very minimal, he added.

Grape growers appealed to the government to scale down price of single grafted plant imported from Maharashtra.

While inspecting a grafted grape field at Then Palani, Collector K.S. Palanisamy said that this new grafting method could be propagated among farmers effectively to expand the area under grape cultivation.

- *Progressive farmers started getting better yield*
- *Innovation in cultivation pattern is also a reason*

August 17, 2012

Farmers' stir

Farmers' organisations owing allegiance to the Left parties staged road and rail rickshas across the delta region on Thursday demanding release of water in the Cauvery and compensation for paddy crop loss.

KRISHNAGIRI, August 17, 2012

Farmers' association oppose allocation of land on water body

Andheripatti panchayat plans construction of school building

Protest: Members of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam staged a demonstration in front of the Pochampalli Taluk office recently opposing allotment of water body land for construction of a school in Ettipatti.

The Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam has opposed the move of the Andheripatti panchayat to allocate land on a water body for construction of school building at Pochampalli taluk recently.

K.M. Ramagoundar, State General Secretary, Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, presided over a demonstration held in front of the Pochampalli Taluk office. Over 100 members took part in the demonstration.



Addressing at the demonstrators, Mr. Ramagoundar said that a government land near Devankuttai Lake at Andheripatti panchayat in Pochampalli taluk was allocated for construction of mango pulp industry. Hence, the land would not be suitable for construction of school building for Ettipatti Panchayat Union School.

The authorities could allot a land on 150 acre 'poromboke' land at Ettipatti panchayat for the purpose of school.

He also demanded the PWD authorities to strengthen the breached bunds of the Andheripatti Lake as check dams on the South Pennar could improve ground water table in the surrounding area.

He also said that due to the failure of monsoon, mango and coconut farmers were affected due to lack of availability of water for irrigation. The association urged the government to grant Rs. 5,000 per tree as compensation to the farmers.

The association also urged the PWD to dig a canal to Sunnampatti Lake from Perugondapuram Lake to offset the water scarcity. The beneficiaries of the NREGS should be given Rs. 132 as daily wage as announced by the government instead of Rs. 75 which was now being disbursed by the officials.

The association urged the transport authorities to ply a town bus at 7.30 a.m. and 6 p.m. for Andheripatti village for the benefit of the students and public.

METTUR, August 17, 2012

Water pollution

The Mettur Government Hospital received a steady stream of patients since morning on Thursday with symptoms of vomiting and dysentery. A source in the hospital said that about 100 people, aged above 45, had come to the hospital for treatment. All were treated as in-patients. A special team of doctors was formed to tackle the situation. Health officials

dispatched a team of doctors to the area from where a majority of the affected had come from. Water pollution is suspected to be the reason.

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 76.82 feet on Thursday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 8,126 cusecs and the discharge, 1,992 cusecs.

Tuticorin, August 17, 2012

Farmers express concern over illegal suction of groundwater

Claim that their farmlands dry up sans required amount of water



Representation: A farmer airing his grievance at the farmers' grievance day meeting in Tuticorin on Thursday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

Many farmers voiced concerns over illegal suction of groundwater at several places and being supplied to industries in the district. They sought the intervention of officials at the grievance redressal meeting here on Thursday to curb the irregularity. The farmers from Tiruchendur, Srivaikuntam and Ottapidaram had unanimously voiced their concern over such violations in large scale and claimed that their farmlands were getting dried up sans required amount of water.

Presiding over the meeting, District Revenue Officer and Collector (in-charge) S. Amirtha Jothi, appealed to the officials to monitor the ground reality and punish the guilty on a war footing. He instructed the Tahsildars concerned to be vigilant and seize tanker lorries indulging in such wrongdoings.

Tamilmanian of Kurumbur said farmers in Tuticorin district were denied access to water from Manimuthar dam for agriculture purpose and no official had shown concern about the

interest of farmers in releasing water, which the Tuticorin farmers were entitled to. It was unfortunate that the grievance was being represented to the Executive Officer constantly but no action was being taken to address the issue.

The officer had remained absent often at meetings convened to initiate remedial initiatives against the farmers plight.

V. Sithavan of Karuppur demanded adequate facilities to store farm produce in godowns. The official replied that such facility would come up soon.

He also said a road to Kovilpatti from Naghalapuram was in a bad state and remained ignored for over four months. But Highways officials were not present to address the problem. Kandasamy of Srivaikuntam said desilting works had not been executed in 53 tanks and it would be a formidable task to harvest rain water during the monsoon showers. Funds were sought from government to take up such works, an official replied.

D. Ranjithsingh Dhanraj, Joint Director of Agriculture, Tuticorin and Kanagaraj, Personal Assistant to Collector (Agriculture) were present.

Tuticorin, August 17, 2012

Farm implements given to farmers



A helping hand: District Revenue Officer S. Amirtha Jothi (centre) distributing power weeders to farmers in Tuticorin on Thursday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

Power weeders were given to paddy farmers to offset the woes of labour shortage in the presence scenario. District Revenue Officer and Collector (in-charge) S. Amirtha Jothi gave away four power weeders to the farmers at the Collectorate in the presence of D. Ranjithsingh Dhanraj, Joint Director of Agriculture, on Thursday.

The farmers from Alwarthirunagiri, Karungulam and Tiruchendur were the beneficiaries. Twenty power weeders would be given to farmers with a subsidy of Rs.15, 000 per equipment under integrated Cereal Development Programme in the current fiscal; Mr. Dhanraj said.

A target of 19, 400 hectares has been earmarked for the taking up paddy cultivation in Tuticorin district this year. Paddy is the major crop for cultivation in Tuticorin.

“With the distribution of the farm implements and sharing of expertise of officials in the interest of farmers, the Agriculture Department is aiming at improving paddy production. Apart from increasing productivity of paddy under System of Rice Intensification method, the department has also facilitated the usage of machineries for transplanting and weeding. Normally, productivity of paddy per hectare is 8.5 tonnes,” he said.

Due to uniform wide spacing adopted for planting, the conoweeder or rotary weeder was used for weeding. However, the use of conoweeder became less effective owing to the involvement of drudgery. The Department of Agriculture introduced the distribution of power weeders to replace the conoweeders under SRI demonstrations in 2011-12. Such demonstrations had been organised on a cluster basis with each of the cluster spanning across 20 hectares. Each SRI cluster was provided with a power weeder costing Rs.27, 400 on a total subsidy for being used by all its constituent farmers on a rotation basis. “The paddy power weeder, which works on petrol, covers an acre in an hour to an hour and a half depending on the soil. Hence, the machinery is highly economical besides labour and time saving,” Mr. Dhanraj said while replying to a query.

Bidar, August 17, 2012

‘Buy seeds from farmers’

Members of the Hind Mazdoor Kisan Panchayat staged a dharna here on Thursday against the Agriculture Department’s delay in paying seed growers and the government’s move to purchase seeds from multinational companies rather than farmers. The protesters said that nearly 500 farmers had grown over 6,000 quintals of seeds in the last three years, for which the department owed them over Rs. 45 lakh. They alleged that officials were delaying the payments claiming that the government had not released subsidy.

DAVANGERE, August 17, 2012

Farmers seek effective implementation of MNREGA

They take out padayatra from Harihar to Davangere



upset: Leaders of farmers submitting a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner in Davangere on Thursday.

A large number of workers and farm labourers, including women, from different parts of district on Thursday took out a padayatra from the Tungabhadra river in Harihar to Davangere demanding effective implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, jobs for all eligible people immediately after submitting applications and increasing the number of days of guaranteed work by at least a month in view of the severe drought.

The agitators met Deputy Commissioner S.S. Pattanashetty and explained their plight. Netravathi, leader of the labourers, told the official that panchayat development officers and the gram panchayat secretaries were reluctant to give application forms to job-seekers. She alleged that many officials were asking applicants if they knew masonry or such other skills, whereas the job guarantee scheme was meant for unskilled workers in villages, she said.

They alleged that officials invariably took eight to 15 days to provide jobs to eligible people. In many cases, jobs were offered several months after submitting applications and there was a delay even in providing job cards.

Chief executive officer of the zilla panchayat Hemachandra told *The Hindu* that he had convened a meeting of gram panchayat presidents, panchayat development officers and gram panchayat secretaries in Harihar and instructed them to provide jobs within seven days of the date of submitting applications.

He also directed them to make payments after completion of seven days of work.

- ***Demand to increase number of days of guaranteed work by at least a month***
 - ***Officials told to provide jobs within seven days of submitting applications***
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MANGALORE, August 17, 2012

Crop management

Krishi Vignana Kendra, Yekkur, will organise a training programme on integrated management of horticulture crops on its premises within the campus of College of Fisheries here on August 24, an official release said. Those interested should register their names on or before August 22. For registration, call 2431872. — Special Correspondent

KOCHI, August 17, 2012

Tamil Nadu fares better in coir sector: Minister

Cluster approach helped the State

: Minister for Rural Industries, Tamil Nadu, M.C. Sampath said here on Thursday that the importance given to the MSME sector by his State had helped the coir sector.

Addressing the valedictory session of a five-day international coir tech expo organised by the Coir Board, he said Tamil Nadu had earned the first place in production and export of coir fibre.

The Minister said the cluster approach adopted by his State had yielded good results. Six coir clusters were functional and eight more were being planned during the 12th Plan.

He said industrial development was one of the key areas of focus in the 2023 vision document prepared by the State government. Financial assistance given to cooperative societies as well as capital subsidy allotted to coir units had contributed to the improved performance of the coir sector in Tamil Nadu, he said.

Earlier, Coir Board chairman G. Balachandran said a coordinated approach by the government, entrepreneurs and people would be required to ensure sustainability in coir sector. The expo was conducted with a view to giving a new thrust to the coir sector and could produce positive results.

Mr. Balachandran said low wages and stiff competition from other sectors had affected the prospects of the coir industry. He lamented that despite the availability of new technologies, entrepreneurs from Kerala had been hesitant to launch fresh ventures in the sector. For instance, composite boards developed from coir were a good alternative to wooden boards, but there were no manufacturing units in Kerala while Karnataka had four of them. Machinery manufacturers, mostly from Tamil Nadu, who had participated in the expo, could generate business worth over Rs.60 crore, according to him.

A.C. Jose, former chairman of Coir Board, P.P. Thankachan, UDF convener, T.N. Pratapan, MLA, Subrata Hazarika, vice-chairman, Coir Board, and others spoke.

KANNUR, August 17, 2012

National agriculture park proposed

A proposal for integrating agriculture and allied institutions in and around the District Agriculture Farm at Karimbam here into an agriculture park named after Jawaharlal Nehru has been submitted to the government.

The master plan to develop and integrate the existing resources and farms attached to the agricultural institutions in and around Karimbam in Kurumathur panchayat into an agricultural park of national eminence has been handed over to Agricultural Minister K.P. Mohanan at a recent function at Karimbam.

The late Prime Minister being one of the prominent personalities who visited the farm and stayed at the rest house at Karimbam, the master plan proposes the park to be named as Jawaharlal Nehru National Agriculture Park.

The objectives of the park include promotion and support of novel initiatives such as farm, tourism, value addition, high-tech agriculture and livestock production, eco-friendly farming, conservation of biodiversity of the region, among others.

The institutions proposed to be integrated for development of the park are the District Agricultural Farm, Rural Agricultural Technology Training Centre, Extension Training Centre, Soil Testing Laboratory, State Agmark Laboratory, Indigenous Technology Centre, Rural Development and Self-Employment Training Institute, Pepper Research Station, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), and the Biodiversity Centre.

Proposals

The agricultural farm at Karimbam was originally started as an agriculture station by Sir Charles Alfred Barber in 1905 who had visited the area to register the biodiversity there. The rest house in the farm, built by Sir Barber, is a heritage building and apart from Nehru, the prominent people who visited it included Indira Gandhi, V.V. Giri, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and poet Cherussery.

K. Abdul Kareem, head of the KVK under the Kerala Agricultural University, who has prepared the master plan at the behest of the Agricultural Minister as also local MLA James Mathew, has said a heritage museum would be a key part of the agricultural park.

The heritage museum has been envisioned as a place to showcase rural craftsmanship, traditional lifestyle, weaving, kalaripayattu and folklore, Dr. Kareem said.

The farm being the oldest mango orchard in the State, the plan also proposes to develop it into a richest mango museum. "This is the only place in Kerala where hybridisation of mango

has been done,” Dr. Kareem said adding that an annual mango carnival has been among the activities proposed. The agricultural park is also envisaged to have crop museum, spice garden, fruit orchard, crop cafeteria and arboretum, among others. Centres of excellence in value addition and in farmers’ innovation are also planned. Promotion of organics in farming, development of a Malabari goat farm, expansion of plant nursery and seed production and promotion of rainwater harvesting technologies are also in the pipeline. The total land available for the park through integration of the existing institutions is 235 acres.

The Minister will hold a meeting of officials in Thiruvananthapuram on September 6 to discuss the master plan.

KOCHI, August 17, 2012

Forest officials felicitated

Fiat Justicia, a Kochi-based organisation, has honoured two forest officials for saving forestlands from land-grabbers.

At a ceremony, N.K. Sasidharan, chief conservator of forests, Eastern Circle, and P. Dhanesh Kumar, divisional forest officer, South Wayanad, were felicitated for their efforts to retrieve about 6,000 acres of forestland in the Nelliampathy Hills.

Former High Court judge K. Sukumaran, praised the efforts made by the two officials against heavy odds.

KOZHIKODE, August 17, 2012

Farmers try a new tapping method

With the number of skilled rubber tappers largely coming down in villages, a group of hillside farmers in Kozhikode are planning to try a new method which can replace the traditional, and strenuous, way of collecting latex from rubber trees.

More than 100 persons have already registered with a local trust in Thamarassery, which offers field training in the method, named ‘needle tapping,’ with the support of an expert farmer from Thodupuzha.

The technique, yet to become popular among the traditional farmers, makes use of a specially made knife that is thrust into the bark of the tree. The latex is channelled to a suitable container.

The number of openings is decided considering the size and growth of the rubber trees.

Longer life

Unlike the traditional system, which makes circular incisions on the bark, the new method harms the tree less and hence the lifespan of the tree could go up.

S. George, a farmer who has already trained many in the method, says it can attract new generation farmers who are struggling to thrive in the field owing to their lack of expertise in the traditional tapping method. "Needle tapping is very easy to learn and one can practise it within hours after the training," he adds.

Needle tapping is possible even in four-year-old rubber trees as against the completion of a seven-year-term in the conventional method.

Not expensive

According to Mr. George, changing to the new method is not much expensive either as he will have to invest only Rs.500 to purchase the knife and bear the small expense for the pipes to collect latex.

Though the Rubber Board is yet to give green signal to the practice, the settler families here are planning to give it a shot as it does not damage the trees. Rahul Kuttappan, a 28-year-old farmer from Kuppayakkode, says he is planning to introduce the new method in his one-acre rubber plantation on an experimental basis.

This medical physicist-turned farmer is also confident that he can pick up the technique at a field training programme at Ambayathode on September 21.

In 'needle tapping,' circular incisions are not made

THRISSUR, August 17, 2012

Farmers' Day

The College of Veterinary & Animal Science, Mannuthy, will hold a programme 'Karshakarkku Vendi' (For the farmers) as a part of Farmers' Day celebrations on Friday. The programme provides an opportunity for the farmers to visit college departments, labs and farms. A free medical camp will be facilitated at the Kokkala Veterinary Hospital as a part of the programme.

GUNTUR, August 17, 2012

Chilli research centre to be set up in Guntur

Agriculture Minister Kanna Lakshminarayana has said that the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has committed itself to setting up a research centre for chilli in Guntur.

A proposal to set up a similar research centre for turmeric in Nizamabad was given the formal nod by the ICAR, Mr. Lakshminarayana told mediapersons after holding a review meeting here on Thursday.

Both the research centres were targeted to be established in the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2017-22).

The State government had agreed to the bifurcation of Guntur revenue mandal into urban and rural mandals for administrative convenience.

The existence of the Guntur Municipal Corporation in Guntur mandal and the resultant work burden on revenue officials and staff and the procedural difficulties in issuing various certificates to students and other sections necessitated the creation of separate revenue mandals.

Housing

Mr. Lakshminarayana said steps were being taken for getting G+3 type houses constructed for those whose applications were pending in the city limits. Nearly 29,800 applications for house sites were pending, but permission was being given for construction of houses in view of the difficulty in providing land. A total of 120 acres of land would be required for constructing houses and 75 acres had so far been identified. Steps were being taken in consultation with top officials of the Housing Department. About 15,000 applicants would benefit in the initial phase, the Minister said.

hindustantimes
Fri, 17 Aug 2012

weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Friday, Aug 17

Max Min

35.2° | 25.3°

Rain: 2

Humidity: 84

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:56

Sunset: 06:28

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast





Rainy


Saturday, Aug 18

Max Min

35° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday Aug 19	Monday Aug 20	Tuesday Aug 21	Wednesday Aug 22	Thursday Aug 23
				
34° 27° Rainy	33° 28° Rainy	31° 26° Rainy	31° 26° Rainy	32° 26° Rainy

Airport Weather	<input type="text" value="Delhi"/>	Delhi	Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs	Sunrise: 7:14	
			Humidity: 89%	Sunset: 17:48	
			Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1004	

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

16 AUG, 2012, 07.50PM IST, BLOOMBERG

Rubber rises from 3 year low amid debate on export cap

BANGKOK: Rubber rallied from the lowest level in almost three years before a meeting of the world's top three producers to consider export cuts. January-delivery rubber gained 0.9% to end at 209.5 yen a kilogram (\$2,654 a tonne) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange after settling at the lowest level on Tuesday for the most-active contract since October 2009.

Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, which represent around 70% of global supply, will discuss plans to limit exports, said Thailand's farm ministry. The [International Tripartite Rubber Council](#) meets in Bangkok to find ways to respond to slumping prices, it said in a statement. "We have to see if the meeting will have clear and strong measures to shore up prices," said Chaiwat Muenmee, an analyst at Bangkok-based commodity broker DS Futures Co.

"Short-covering" after a decline on Tuesday and US economic data helped boost prices on Wednesday, he said, referring to investors reversing bets on declining prices. Futures lost 20% this year amid concerns over the slowing global economy as the European debt crisis deepened. "Prices have dropped more than would be justified by fundamentals," Yium Tavarolit, chief secretary of the International Rubber Consortium, said by phone.

"Demand is still growing. Car sales in China increased on year and Bridgestone's sales in the second quarter expanded," he said. Industrial production in the US probably rose 0.5% last month after a 0.4% gain in June, according to the median forecast of economists in a Bloomberg survey. The January-delivery contract dropped 0.2% to close at 21,335 yuan (\$3,354) a tonne on the Shanghai Futures Exchange.

Poor monsoon to fuel food, non-food prices

By ENS Economic Bureau - NEW DELHI

16th August 2012 12:05 PM

Prices of food and non-food articles are likely to increase on the back of drop in agricultural production due to the impact of deficient monsoon rains, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) said in its latest report.

“We expect the South-West monsoon to remain deficient and the major crop production to decline by 2.3%. This decline in output of major crops is expected to add to the already high inflation seen in food articles,” CMIE said.

According to CMIE, prices of food articles, especially cereals, pulses, oilseeds and vegetables are likely to rise further from current levels.

“We expect the food inflation at 9.7% during 2012-13, against our previous projection of 9.1%,” it added.

Headline inflation in July dipped below the 7% mark to a 32-month low of 6.87% on the back of non-revision in diesel, LPG and kerosene prices coupled with a favourable base. The rainfall has been deficient by 21% across India during the crucial monsoon period of June to August. Moreover, water levels in reservoirs around the country are reportedly 20% below normal levels with the situation more acute in south India.

Food prices have started to climb particularly for rice, soya and sugar.

According to latest data, states that grow kharif crops like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, parts of Maharashtra, west UP received deficient rainfall even in July leading to decline in acreage of major crops by 10%.

According to HSBC Chief Economist for India & ASEAN Leif Lybecker Eskesen, there is a need to reduce the volatility of agricultural output and close the productivity gap between the agricultural sector and the rest of the economy over the medium term.

“In addition to increasing irrigation, output can be pumped up through further efforts to increase the use of good quality seeds, improve soil fertility, strengthen water management, and step up mechanisation. The latter will also require more reliance on larger scale farming,” he told Express.

Meanwhile, international commodity prices are expected to rise on account of the drought-like situation in the US and combined with the depreciating rupee, imports are likely to push up domestic food inflation.

Cardamom growers want open market sale

George Joseph / Chennai/ Kochi Aug 17, 2012, 00:07

Cardamom growers of Idukki district in Kerala have urged the Union government to opt for the open market system instead of auction trading.

A section of the growers in a recent meeting also wanted floor price for cardamom as the market was depreciating. The average price now is Rs 750 a kg from 900 during March-April.

According to growers, fresh supply dropped 50 per cent in the beginning of the current season as bad weather affected plantations. Extreme summer and later poor monsoon damaged the plants widely across the district, which accounts for around 60 per cent of the production.

The price is being decided by only a handful of traders at the auction centres, said a Kattappana-based grower, adding they had to sell according to this price. In most cases, traders collect cardamom from farmers at lower than the average price in the auction. Traders who have the licence from the Spices Board can participate in the auction. As there is no open market sale for the spice in the producing centres, farmers have to depend on these traders and the prices quoted at the auction centres.

Reji Njallani, president, Human Rights Protection Council for Farmers, a newly-formed association of various crop farmers, told Business Standard they were finding it difficult to carry on with the cultivation as the per kg cost of production comes to around Rs 800. Moreover, rise in wages and labour shortage have hit them hard. Though the average daily wage for plantation workers has increased to Rs 400, they still could not employ easily as their number is less compared with the demand. Crops like cardamom and pepper are highly labour-intensive.

He said shifting to the open market system could ensure a price range of Rs 1,500-2,500 a kg for cardamom. India produces 13,000 tonnes annually but this time it would be below 9,000 tonnes. The shortage, however, is not yet reflected on the price line because of the auction system.

There is good demand for cardamom in the global market as Guatemala, the world's largest producer, is selling around 25,000 tonnes annually. Exports from India was 1,175 tonnes in 2010-11 and at an all-time high of 4,650 tonnes in 2011-12, according to the Spices Board.

Though there is good demand, India is not able to exploit the overseas market, said farmers. Due to the growth in global demand, a number of African countries like Nigeria and Ethiopia have started cultivating cardamom in a big way.

Poor monsoon hits onion output prices may rise

Anindita Dey / Mumbai Aug 17, 2012, 00:03

The availability of onion is likely to be low and its price might rise due to a delayed new crop.

According to data collected by the National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF), the kharif onion crop in the country is 30-40 per cent less compared to last year. The harvest will be delayed by a month as sowing started in late July and arrivals will start only by the end of October, after completing the four-month cycle. Usually, the onion crop arrives by the end of September, said official sources.

In the process, the government is giving emphasis to the onion crop in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, where it is grown through planting of bulblets as against sowing of seeds in other parts. Officials said the Union agriculture ministry has already announced diesel and seed subsidy for farmers. Farmers are also being advised to grow green onion. "This could cater to the local demand, whereas the normal onion could be sent to far-off places where there is no availability," said official sources.

Maharashtra and Gujarat are the two major states where late kharif onion is grown. Currently, prices are hovering at Rs 3,300-4,000 a quintal across varieties in various markets. Incidentally, while wholesale onion prices have gone up month-over-month in July-August, prices have, in fact, declined across markets substantially year-on-year for the same period in 2011.

Onion production in Nashik in Maharashtra and Karnataka was affected due to a late monsoon and preference of farmers to grow soybean and maize as substitute crops due to better prices. Due to deficient rain, farmers have now shifted to pearl millets (jowar), also fetching high price as fodder. However, local sources said as the monsoon advanced by the end of July and August, onion sowing has gained pace.

"Transplanting of seedling started from mid-July and will go upto mid-August. Seed sowing is expected to start after the first fortnight of August and will go upto mid-September," said official sources involved in onion production. While the complete harvest will not arrive till the end of September-mid October, there will be availability around October-December, they added.

Similarly, in another major growing state, Gujarat, only 10-15 per cent area has been covered under the kharif crop compared to last year because of delayed and inadequate rain. Seed sowing for the late kharif onion crop is expected to start by mid-August if rain is adequate in the coming days, said

official sources.

Around 2.95 million tonnes (mt) onion were stored in May and June and the current arrivals in the market are from the stored stock, which amounts to a consumption of 35-40 per cent stored stock.

According to the NHRDF report, the area under onion in Maharashtra is expected to be low by around 50 per cent due to delayed monsoon. About 25-30 per cent area under the kharif onion crop is expected to be covered in Karnataka as compared to the previous year. In Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, too, the area is considerably low due to inadequate rain.

However, the area under bulblets-planted kharif crop will be the same as last year, especially in Rajasthan, where 30-35 per cent area is expected to be covered under kharif onion through seedling planting in comparison to last year. The planting of bulblets has started for kharif production and is expected to continue till the end of August. Under similar conditions, around 50 per cent of the area is likely to be covered in Punjab and Haryana and 25 per cent in Uttar Pradesh.

In Madhya Pradesh, 25-30 per cent of the area is likely to be covered under kharif, as compared to the last year.

Pepper down 0.24% on profit-booking

Press Trust of India / New Delhi Aug 16, 2012, 12:17

Pepper prices declined by 0.24% to Rs 44,500 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators engaged in booking profits amid subdued export demand at prevailing higher prices.

Thin supplies in the spot markets and lower output concerns due to deficient rains in major producing regions restricted the fall.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, pepper for delivery in August fell by Rs 105, or 0.24%, to Rs 44,500 per quintal, with an open interest of 839 lots.

September pepper lost Rs 60, or 0.14%, to Rs 43,550 per quintal, with an open interest of 4,471 lots.

Marketmen said continued profit-booking by speculators after recent gains and reports of lower exports led to the fall in pepper futures prices.

Exports declined as the Indian product failed to find buyers at current levels in overseas markets.

However, thin supplies in the market and deficient rains in key growing regions, which could hurt output, capped losses, they said.

Turmeric recovers by over 1% on low rains **Press Trust of India / New Delhi Aug 16, 2012, 12:24**

Turmeric prices recovered by 1.26% to Rs 6,088 per quintal in futures trade today as participants enlarged their positions even as the export demand remained subdued.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, turmeric for delivery in October traded Rs 76, or 1.26%, higher at Rs 6,088 per quintal, with an open interest of 6,575 lots.

September turmeric traded at Rs 62, or 1.07%, higher at Rs 5,880 per quintal, with an open interest of 17,690 lots.

Marketmen said the rise in turmeric futures was due to fresh positions created by participants, largely on reports of a decline in the area under cultivation and low rains in key growing regions, but subdued overseas demand at these prices restricted gains.

Cardamom gains 1% on spot demand **Press Trust of India / New Delhi Aug 16, 2012, 14:01**

Cardamom prices rose by Rs 12.70 to Rs 1,218 per kg in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions, tracking a firm spot market trend on pick up in demand against restricted arrivals from producing belts.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in October rose by Rs 12.70, or 1.05%, to Rs 1,218 per kg, with a business turnover of 31 lots.

September cardamom moved up by Rs 10.30, or 0.88%, to Rs 1,186 per kg in 213 lots.

Marketmen said fresh buying by speculators, tracking a firm trend at the spot markets on pick up in demand, pushed up cardamom futures.

Sugar declines over 1% on profit-booking **Press Trust of India / New Delhi Aug 16, 2012, 15:35**

Amid profit-booking by speculators after recent gains and subdued demand in the spot markets, sugar futures today fell by Rs 39 to Rs 3,500 per quintal.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in August traded Rs 39, or 1.10%, lower at Rs 3,500 per quintal, with an open interest of 440 lots.

The September contract shed Rs 32, or 0.92%, to Rs 3,432 per quintal, with an open interest of 44,710 lots.

Marketmen said the fall in sugar futures prices was due to profit-booking by speculators, release of additional quota by the government for the September quarter and sluggish spot demand.

THE HINDU Business Line

More area seen under guar this year as sowing picks up



NEW DELHI, AUG. 16:

Planting of guar has picked up in the key State of Rajasthan, with the growing areas receiving good showers in recent weeks.

Trade sources expect the guar acreage to be higher than last year's 3 million hectares as farmers, lured by high returns, are expected to plant more.

"The acreage till date in Rajasthan is about 1.5 times more than last year and will touch 4.5 million hectares," said B.D. Agarwal, Chairman and Managing Director of Vikas WSP Ltd, an exporter in Sri Ganganagar.

Planting is still going on and will continue at least till August 20, he said.

"Despite delayed monsoon, the situation is quite comfortable and we expect a good harvest," Agarwal said.

The shares of Vikas WSP were trading closer to the yearly-high level at around Rs 73.15 on the BSE on Thursday.

The pick-up in rain has reduced the country's overall deficit to around 15 per cent till date.

Rain shortfall in east Rajasthan stood at 7 per cent, while in west Rajasthan, it was 30 per cent.

GUAR ACREAGE

Last year, 1.3 million tonnes of guarseed were produced. Including Haryana, Punjab and parts of Madhya Pradesh, where farmers are said to have switched over from crops such as cotton, the total acreage under guar is expected to be higher than last year.

"Initially, there were some concerns over the delay in monsoon. However, with the recent rain, the situation is pretty okay now," said Purshottam Hissaria, Chairman, Guargum Exporters Association.

Guarseed, sown in the kharif season during July-August, is harvested from November onwards.

The guar gum, extracted from the seeds, is used as a thickening agent and additive in food products such as instant soups, ice creams and processed meat products.

Guar gum is also used for applications in paper, textiles, ore floatation, explosives and fracturing of oil and natural gas formations.

DEMAND PROSPECTS

Agarwal said the demand for guar gum was mainly from countries such as the US and Canada, which were tapping shale gas reserves.

He expected global demand to increase as countries such as Brazil, Argentina and China have also announced plans to tap shale gas.

Officials in the Rajasthan Agriculture Department concurred with exporters on the pick-up in guar planting.

"The acreage will be better than last year," an official said.

Spot prices of guarseed in Rajasthan are trading at Rs 15,000 a quintal, at half the level of Rs 30,000 a quintal in May.

Guar gum prices are ruling at around Rs 450 a kg, Agarwal said.

Futures trade in guarseed is banned at present.

Coconut Board seeks ban on palm oil import



KOCHI, AUG. 16:

The Coconut Development Board has sought a ban on palm oil import in view of the steep fall in coconut oil prices.

The Board asked the State Government to impress upon on the Union Commerce Ministry to restrict or introduce a total ban on the import of palm oil through south Indian ports. The CDB also urged the Union Government to provide incentives for the export of coconut oil.

Senior officials said that palm oil is the major competitor for coconut oil in the State. Coconut oil is used as edible oil in Kerala and neighbouring regions of Tamil Nadu. Therefore, a ban on the import of palm oil through the southern ports will lead to an increased demand for coconut oil.

The CDB also urged the Chief Minister to put pressure on the Union Government to lift the quantity restriction on the export of coconut oil and to allow bulk packing in south Indian ports.

According to statistics available with the CDB, import of refined oil (RBD palmolein) during November-May increased by 97 per cent and touched 10,84,033 tonnes compared with 5,51,327 tonnes in the previous year. During the same period, crude palm kernel oil import increased by 82 per cent, and crude palm oil by 14 per cent.

However, coconut oil export is limited to a maximum of 10,000 tonnes. Such a restricted quantity can only be exported in branded consumer packs up to 5 kg each.

Since domestic as well as international prices are almost at a par with each other, the export market is competitive for coconut oil. The huge ethnic population of south Indian people in the West Asian countries is another advantage. Currently, they are catered by coconut oil from Sri Lanka and the Philippines, the officials added.

Foodgrains output likely to be better than 2009 drought year: Govt



The Hindu The total foodgrains output (rice, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses) is likely to be higher than 2009 level because the number of drought-hit areas is less this time,

NEW DELHI, AUG 16:

Despite deficient monsoon rains, the country's foodgrains output this year is likely to surpass that of the 2009 drought year, the Government said today.

Monsoon rains have been 15 per cent deficient between June 1 and August 1, and four states — Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra — are facing drought-like situation.

“Despite weak monsoon, total foodgrains production is expected to be better than 2009,” Minister of State for Agriculture and Parliamentary Affairs Harish Rawat said at the Golden Jubilee celebration of state-run National Seeds Corporation (NSC).

The total foodgrains output (rice, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses) is likely to be higher than 2009 level because the number of drought-hit areas is less this time and the Centre is better prepared to tackle the drought situation, he said on the sidelines of the event.

Rice production

There may not be much impact on the production of rice — the key kharif crop, he said, adding that the contingency plans prepared for 320 districts are being implemented.

In 2009, the country faced a severe drought in 338 districts, lowering foodgrains (rice, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses) output by 16 million tonnes in 2009-10 crop year (July-June) at 218.11 mt.

Drought relief

On relief measures to drought-hit states, Rawat said some mitigation measures have already been announced. The Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) on drought, headed by Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, is likely to meet to consider further relief measures after the discussion on the subject in Parliament.

“Parliament may discuss the drought (situation) anytime during the monsoon session. We wish to have discussion on this subject and take the advise of Parliament that will us to take further relief measures,” he said.

Central aid

The minister further said that Karnataka and Rajasthan have submitted a memorandum seeking Central aid. A Central team has been constituted to visit these states for assessing the drought situation and submit a report soon.

“A committee of secretaries will then analyse the report and based on their recommendations, the Central assistance will be declared,” he explained.

Last month, the Centre had announced a relief package of about Rs 2,000 crore to states facing drought-like situation, 50 per cent diesel subsidy to farmers to save standing kharif crops and raised the subsidy on seeds of various kharif crops.

Kharif acreage

As per the official data, total area under the Kharif (summer) crops so far is down by nearly 9 per cent at 80.20 million hectare from 87.96 million hectare. The fall in area is steep under coarse cereals and pulses.

India produced record 257.44 mt of foodgrains in 2011-12 crop year.
