

NEW DELHI, August 18, 2012

Sowing of paddy picks up

GARGI PARSAI

Sowing of kharif paddy has improved thanks to rain in some parts of the deficient areas, but it is still lower by 11.40 lakh hectares as compared to last year.

If compared with last year's sowing — a record foodgrains production year — at this time of the year, the area under paddy, pulses, coarse cereals, oilseeds and cotton is still lower.

An inter-Ministerial group that reviewed the situation on Friday was informed that monsoon deficiency was 15 per cent with parts of Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra continuing to face drought conditions.

Official figures show that kharif acreage is lower by 58.23 lakh hectares. Only sugarcane sowing has crossed last year's level by 2.29 lakh hectares.

Rice acreage is lower by 11.40 lakh hectares, coarse cereals have dipped by 23.70 lakh hectares, pulses by 12.07 lakh hectares and oilseeds by 6.66 lakh hectares compared to last year.

However, if compared with a normal year (average of last five years) — which officials will like to — then the total acreage is lower by 12.50 lakh hectares with paddy, oilseeds, sugarcane and cotton sowing slightly higher.

Even then, sowing of coarse cereals remains behind by 30.01 lakh hectares owing to poor rain in parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan. Cultivation of pulses is lower by 11.80 lakh hectare at this time last year due to lower sowing in Karnataka, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The good thing is that as a result of rain in parts of the country the reservoir position has improved. On Thursday, the average storage was nearly 82 per cent of last year's storage in the 84 important reservoirs that are monitored.

The Government will still wait and watch the situation till the end of the month to see if acreage improves.

PUDUKOTTAI, August 18, 2012

Training in precision farming in rose cultivation on Tuesday

: Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Vamban will impart specialised training to horticulture farmers on precision farming in rose cultivation at the KVK premises on August 21.

A large number of farmers of Alangudi, Gandarvakottai blocks in the district are involved in rose cultivation. These farmers pluck the flowers in the morning and send them to markets. Adequate urea, potash and basal fertilizers should be applied to the crop once in two years. Application of bio nutrients will help in elongating the freshness of the flowers, Collector V. Kalaiarasi said in a statement issued here on Friday.

She called upon the rose farmers to take part in the training programme and get their knowledge updated. Farmers could contact 04322 290321 for further details.

NAGERCOIL, August 18, 2012

Farmers hopeful of saving water-starved standing crops

The intermittent rain which lashed different parts of the district in the early hours of Friday up to noon has brought hope to the farming community of saving their water-starved standing crops raised on over 9,000 hectares in the first season.

Owing to rough weather, the ferry services to Vivekananda rock memorial as well as Thiruvalluvar statue were suspended to ensure the safety of tourists who visited Kanyakumari even as it was lean season. After sensing the rough weather, the fishermen attached to country boats at Kanyakumari, Kovalam, Manakudi, Colachel, Kurumpanai, Thengapattinam, Ramanthurai, Enayam and Kollencode did not venture into the sea for fishing. They shifted their fishing boats to the upper areas of the seashore.

The houses of few fishermen were surrounded with stagnating rainwater as well as sea water. According to a cross section of fishermen (elders), today being new moon day, the sea would

be rough as routine and hence the fishermen need not panic about the changes in the sea. They also said that the rain would continue for another two days.

However, the farmers in Nagercoil, Parvathipuram, Vadaseery, Kottaram, Thittuvilai, Aralvoimozhi, Thovalai, Ozhughinassery, Eraniel, Monday Market, Colachel and the tail-end areas of the district have expressed their satisfaction over the unseasonal rain due to climatic changes. It would definitely be helpful to them to save their water-starved standing crops, said A.Vins Anto, chairman of Kodayaru irrigation project (WRO) of Public Works Department.

The inflow of water in to Pechipparai dam was 240 cusecs as per 8.00 am and 22 cusecs of water in Perunchani dam. The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 3.60 feet, 33.60 feet in Perunchani, 3.18 feet in Chittar I and 3.28 feet in Chittar II.

PUDUKOTTAI, August 18, 2012

Three varieties set to sweeten experiences of mango growers

M.BALAGANESSIN

Horticulture department has planned to introduce three much sought-after and mouth watering species in the district under National Horticulture Mission scheme.

The district has potential for developing the varieties and we have planned to cultivate 'imampasanth', 'Ratnagiri alphonsa' and 'banganapalli' varieties.

Farmers would be given three options in cultivation technique, said M. Vijayakumar, Deputy Director of Horticulture. A subsidy of Rs. 24,000 would be released per hectare.

Normal, high density and ultra high density techniques would be recommended and farmers could choose any one of them for growing 100 plants, 400 plants or 1,625 plants respectively.

The department has also planned to develop cashew in a similar scheme. He said that the average yield per hectare would increase by at least 2.5 times over the normal procedure.

The farmers would also be encouraged to adopt drip irrigation, fertigation and forced flowering methodology under the programme.

Explaining the district's potential for developing vegetables, he said that the department has chalked out a plan for raising cucumber, cherry tomato, brinjal and bell pepper.

He also said that tubular structures would be set up under the 'poly green house' component. A target of 20,000 square metres has been fixed with a subsidy of Rs.65 lakh. The unit cost would be Rs.3.25 lakh per 1,000 square metre.

Normal, high density and ultra high density techniques will be recommended

THENI, August 18, 2012

Seedling planting system gaining ground in Theni

A subsidy of Rs. 15,000 per hectare will be given to farmers

Instead of conventional method of spraying seeds in the field, farmers cultivating toor dal (red gram) have started going for seedling planting system which is being popularised in the district. To begin with, 22 hectares had been brought under this new system, said Collector K.S. Palanisamy.

Talking to press persons here on Thursday, he said that a subsidy of Rs.15,000 per hectare would be given to farmers adopting this system. This method would bring down production cost and increase yield by two tonnes per acre. Moreover, the quantum of seeds would also come down drastically. Wastage of seeds could be completely eliminated.

Use of plastic bags to raise seedlings would help farmers get highest number of seedlings using very limited seeds. Maintenance cost was also less when compared to the traditional method. The subsidy target for toor dal cultivation under this new method was 422 hectares, he said.

Emphasis was given for precision farming in sugarcane cultivation. After the implementation of this technology, sugarcane production had gone up to Rs.150 tonnes per hectare. Some progressive farmers had introduced intercropping in sugarcane fields to improve their income.

Tomato and lady's finger were being cultivated in sugarcane fields, he said and urged farmers to adopt this system to boost their income.

A sum of Rs.20 lakh was disbursed as subsidy to 100 farmers under precision farming in sugarcane under precision farming technique. Farmers were advised to use limited amount of

fertilizers to protect cultivable lands. Minimum use would meet requirement of plants and will not pollute land.

The district administration had conducted farmers' festival in 99 villages in April and May, benefiting 20,639 farmers. In 2011-12, paddy was cultivated in 15,597 hectares and 89,100 tonnes were harvested. Small grains were raised in 25,966 hectares with an yield of 1,47,505 tonnes. Pulses production was 20,531 tonnes.

VELLORE, August 18, 2012

Unfinished drainage affects organic farm



Plastic waste and garbage carried by the drainage channel constructed by the Vandranthangal panchayat seen accumulated in front of an agricultural land.— Photo: D. Gopalakrishnan

An incomplete drainage channel constructed by the Vandranthangal village panchayat in Katpadi panchayat union has led to discharge of solid waste and sewage into an organic farm being developed by SOLAI (Social Life Animation India) Program, a non-governmental organisation in Christianpet.

A visit to Vandranthangal revealed that the drainage channel ends abruptly near the SOLAI organic farm, as a result of which plastic waste and other garbage carried by the channel got accumulated at the head of the channel in front of a private patta land. Besides, human excrement owing to open defecation in the drainage channel is carried along with the sewage and finds its way into the organic farm developed by SOLAI.

What with the sewage being discharged into the organic farm for the last seven years, agricultural workers are not able to enter the field to carry out any farming activity.

R.T. Rajan, Honorary Director, SOLAI Program, told *The Hindu* that more than 200 trees, including 160 fruit trees for which saplings were given by the Department of Horticulture under the National Horticulture Mission in 2007, withered at the yield stage in 2010 because of the damage caused to crops by sewage which entered the land.

Repeated requests by the NGO to the Vandranthangal village panchayat to prevent further discharge of sewage into its organic farm by completing the drainage channel and providing scientific disposal of waste has not yielded any result.

Therefore, in March , Mr. Rajan wrote a letter to the District Collector requesting him to visit the farm and take steps to prevent further discharge of sewage into the farm.

He sent another letter to the Collector on August 4 requesting him to instruct the officials concerned to immediately attend to the problem and encourage innovative initiatives being taken by SOLAI in the field of rural development.

Mr. Rajan said that SOLAI has already obtained certification of the Indian Society for Certification of Organic Products (ISCOP) for the two-hectare organic farm which it had developed on the eastern side of the road, on which it had cultivated, harvested and sold ADT-37 paddy variety. ISCOPI is an agency authorised by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Ministry of Agriculture, for the certification of organic farms which meet the NPOP (National Programme for Organic Production) standards. But, the NGO did not apply for certification for the damaged land as NPOP standards did not permit human excrement in the land.

He said that even if the panchayat stops further discharge of waste into the organic farm, it would take a minimum of three years for the NGO to reverse the damage and make the land fit for organic farming.

More than 200 trees, including 160 fruit trees, withered at yield stage in 2010

MANDYA, August 18, 2012

Farmers protest for water release

Farmers, under the leadership of the former Speaker Krishna, laid siege to the office of the engineer of Hemavati irrigation project in K.R. Pet on Friday demanding immediate release of water into canals in K.R. Pet taluk. Agitated farmers raised slogans against officials and gheraoed them protesting against their “anti-farmer” stand. The farmers lifted the siege after they were assured that water would be released into the canals.

NALGONDA, August 18, 2012

Arrangements on for display of mechanised farm equipment

Collector N. Mukteswara Rao on Friday asked officials of the Agriculture, its related departments, DRDA, DWAMA to speed up arrangements and work in coordination for successfully holding a farm mechanised equipment exhibition on a large scale here.

Addressing a review meeting of the officials in the Zilla Parishad hall, Mr. Rao asked them to conduct a vigorous awareness campaign and ensure active participation of ‘adarsh rythu’, representatives of farm organisations and cooperative institutions.

He suggested to them to conduct week-long training programmes for farmers taking part in the exhibition.

The Collector wanted representatives of various equipment manufacturers to provide details, along with applications, of the subsidies being made available to ryots. He entrusted the job of setting up stall for the exhibition to AP Agros and NABARD to organize awareness campaigns with bankers.

He asked DRDA and DWAMA project directors to involve various affiliated organisations in the exhibition.

Rajeshwar Reddy, DRDA Project Director, Narsimha Rao, Joint Director of Agriculture, and department officials Jayarao, Nagamurali, Veeraiah, Shekhar Reddy, Veerashankar of NABARD, James, SBH lead bank manager, attended the meeting.

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- *Nalgonda Collector addresses a review meeting of officials*
 - *Officers told to ensure active participation of Adarsh Rythus*
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Business Standard

Wednesday, Aug 18, 2012

Vagaries of monsoon boost jaggery prices

Dilip Kumar Jha & V D S Rama Raju / Mumbai/visakhapatnam August 18, 2012, 0:58 IST

Deficiency in rainfall this monsoon has started weighing on jaggery with its prices jumping up to 10 per cent since the beginning of the month. The sweetener's upward march also got support from lower production during the last season amid rising consumption.

In Vashi Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) market, jaggery supply has deteriorated in the last one month as jaggery production units (kolhus) have halted production due to exhaustion of sugarcane. As a consequence, traders are supplying to mandis from cold storages which they had stored during the peak cane crushing season. Arrivals in Vashi APMC have declined by 40-50 per cent in the past month to around 240-250 tonnes. The supply shortage has pushed jaggery prices of all varieties in Vashi APMC market up by Rs 300-400 to trade between Rs 3,200 and Rs 4,500 a quintal.

“More than the deficient rainfall, lower production and carryover stocks in the market are pushing up the price during the ongoing lean season. Until, new arrivals begin, prices would remain firm,” said Deepak Shah, president, Bombay Gur Merchants' Association.

According to trade sources, jaggery production during the last season was lower by 10-15 per cent as the government in Uttar Pradesh asked sugar mills to crush the last cane supplied. Sources estimate total jaggery production at 10 million tonnes during the last

season.

For the viability issue, sugar mills generally do not crush cane with less than 7-7.5 per cent of recovery. But, under pressure from the government, mills especially in state advised price (SAP) states crushed as much cane supplied to them irrespective of recovery.

In a move which could support jaggery's upward trend, Indian Meteorological Department estimated 19 per cent rainfall deficiency so far this season resulting into an estimated 10 per cent lower cane crop this year. Proportionate decline in jaggery production cannot be ruled out, said Hapur-based jaggery trader Vijendra Kumar Bansal, proprietor of Durgadas Narayandas. The sweetener from old stock was also quoted at Rs 29,000-30,000 a tonne, higher by Rs 3,000-3,500 in Anakapalli, Andhra Pradesh, India's second-largest jaggery market.

"Vagaries of monsoon rainfall are fuelling jaggery prices," said K L N Rao, president, Anakapalli Jaggery Merchants Association and added, "Jaggery prices have gone up by around 10 per cent."

"Barring Western Uttar Pradesh, jaggery price has risen in all regions including Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Apparently, the trend is likely to continue until the new season output hits the market," said Arun Khandelwal, president, Federation of Gur Traders, Muzaffarnagar.

In fact, this year, jaggery traders of Anakapalli market have enjoyed good profits by disposing of their old stocks. Traders procured about 23,000 tonnes of jaggery for stocking from farmers on an average price of Rs 22,500 a tonne, and about 60 per cent of their stock was sold to other states at Rs 26,500 a tonne.

Since past two weeks, these prices have increased rapidly and now traders from other states are offering jaggery at Rs 29,000-30,000 a tonne, K Buchi Raju, senior trader at Anakapalli market, said. As of date, Anakapalli traders are still holding about 6,500 tonnes of jaggery, but this stock will also finish very shortly with good price, he added.

Due to drought conditions in Karnataka and Maharashtra, traders are expecting delay in

new jaggery arrivals, so we can fetch good earnings on our old stock, Raju said.

"Anakapalli region also recorded very low rainfall. Thus, we are anticipating minimum 45-60 day delay in new jaggery arrivals. Due to this, traders of Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand are paying more prices for existing stocks, which are very low in quantity," he added.

THE HINDU Business Line

Weak monsoon, price controls pose challenge for fertiliser firms

Mumbai, Aug 18:

The weak monsoon and Government control over pricing pose a major challenge for fertiliser companies. The outlook for P&K (phosphatic and potassic) fertilisers, in particular, may remain subdued due to sharp increase in prices. This has already led to a fall in demand in the last few months.

There are expectations that the Nutrient-based Subsidy (NBS) rates for P&K fertilisers may be reduced next fiscal, leading to a further increase in retail prices. The absence of any major decontrol of urea prices indicates challenging times ahead for P&K fertilisers, said an ICRA report.

Despite partial decontrol of non-urea fertilisers in the past, the fertiliser sector remains one of the most regulated sectors, said the report. Amongst these, the urea sector, which accounts for about 50 per cent of fertiliser consumption, is completely regulated, where the retail price is fixed and subsidy is variable in order to ensure cost plus return (of 12 per cent post-tax RoE).

In the case of non-urea sector such as DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) and NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) fertilisers, the subsidies are fixed with considerable pricing freedom — granted since April last year. The outlook for the urea sector is neutral with delayed action on policy announcements leading to a status quo, it said.

Urea consumption

K. Ravichandran, Senior Vice-President and Co-Head, Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said price-driven factors are increasingly impacting consumption pattern among fertilisers. Partial price deregulation, lower subsidies and weak rupee have significantly widened the retail price difference between urea and non-urea fertilisers, thus skewing the consumption in favour of urea.

“In the near term, poor monsoon indications and inventory overhang of non-urea fertilisers, should, however, negatively impact demand in the P&K sector,” he said.

India’s dependence on fertiliser imports has increased at a rapid pace due to the delay in completion of various expansion projects. Currently, imports constitute about 27 per cent of urea consumption and 68 per cent for DAP. Additionally, India is deficient in primary sources of fertiliser inputs such as natural gas, rock phosphate and potash. It is also dependent on imports for intermediates such as phosphoric acid and ammonia.

In order to contain the overall fertiliser subsidies, the Government is likely to continue reducing NBS rates for P&K, which may necessitate further increase in retail prices. In the absence of major decontrol of urea prices, this may continue to impact the demand for P&K fertilisers, said ICRA.

FDI in retail will help farmers: AP CM

Eluru (West Godavari), Aug 18:

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy said on Saturday that he was in favour of foreign direct investment in the retail sector as it would help farmers. Reddy said this at a convention of farmers in the Horticulture University at Venkataramannagudem in West Godavari district.

“The farmers will definitely stand to gain if FDI in the retail sector is allowed. Many cold storages and go-downs will be established for preservation of perishable agricultural produce and better marketing facilities would fetch better prices for farmers. Keeping in view these advantages, I have conveyed my consent in a letter to the Prime Minister. Many other states are opposing the proposal, but I have no problem with it,” he said.

Fertiliser imports to attract 1% additional duty

K. R. Srivats

Vishwanath Kulkarni

New Delhi, Aug 18:

The Finance Ministry has made it clear that import of certain fertilisers such as urea, di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) and muriate of potash (MOP) would attract additional customs duty of 1 per cent.

These fertilisers now attract basic customs duty ranging from 2.5 to 5 per cent.

By clearly specifying the additional duty of customs at 1 per cent for such fertilisers, the revenue department has cleared the air on whether the duty rate (countervailing duty) should be 6 per cent or 1 per cent.

There was some confusion at the ground level as to whether the countervailing duty should be 6 per cent or 1 per cent. This has now been clarified and it is not a new impost, official sources said.

For fertilisers, excise duty stood at 6 per cent if Cenvat credit is taken by the manufacturer. If the Cenvat credit is not taken, then the excise duty is at 1 per cent, it was pointed out.

No major impact

The Finance Ministry move to clarify on the additional levy will not have any major impact on the prices for end users, industry sources said. Urea is currently imported on government account through various entities such as MMTC and IFFCO, among others.

Phosphatic fertilisers are de-controlled and the private players import both the raw material as well as end-products. India is heavily dependent on imports of phosphatic and potassic fertilisers (P&K) either in finished or raw material form. The prices of P&K fertilisers are already much higher than urea, which has prompted farmers to shift to the latter.

The Centre has so far forked out Rs 35,402 crore towards fertiliser subsidy this fiscal as against budgetary estimate of Rs 65,592 crore.