

KALPETTA, August 27, 2012

Lifeline for Wayanad's traditional rice varieties

E.M. MANOJ

Tribal community to expand farming of such strains



Combined effort: I.C. Balakrishnan, MLA, inaugurates a paddy transplant festival in connection with the launch of 'Vayal Jyothi,' a rice seed multiplication project, at Thoduvetty, near Sulthan Bathery, in Wayanad district.

The Wayanad Tribal Development Action Council, a collective of tribal farmers in the district, has drawn up programmes to conserve and propagate the traditional rice varieties of Wayanad that are on the brink of extinction.

Vayal Jyothi, a traditional rice seed multiplication project, is being implemented by the organisation in association with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) here.

I.C. Balakrishnan, MLA, inaugurated a paddy transplanting festival held in connection with the project at Thoduvetty, near Sulthan Bathery, on Saturday.

"The project is aimed conserving and cultivating the traditional rice varieties that had been cultivated by the tribal farmers. Demand for the traditional rice varieties is on the rise owing to its high nutritional value. In the first phase, we are planning to multiply five of the 20 varieties and

provide it to tribal farmers in the district to meet the demand,” district panchayat vice-president A. Devaki, who is also the president of the organisation, said.

The five rice varieties - Gandhkassala, Jeerakassala, Chennellu, Kalldiyaran, and Adukkan - have been planted on two acres of leased land at Thoduvetti. Gandhakassala and Jeerakassala are scented varieties, Chennellu has medicinal properties, and Adukkan and Kalladiyaran are drought-tolerant having high nutritional value.

The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Authority under the Union Ministry of Agriculture had recently awarded Rs.10 lakh to the council for its activities in conservation and enhancement of agro-biodiversity of the region, giving emphasis to food crop diversity, and the project was launched utilising the interest of the amount.

The MSSRF is promoting a four ‘Cs’ approach such as conservation, cultivation, consumption, and community-centric commercialisation of the traditional genetic resources under the three-year project, N. Anilkumar, Director of the MSSRF, told *The Hindu* .

“We are planning to expand the cultivation of the traditional seeds to 25 acres next year. At a later stage, we will provide technical assistance to the members of the organisation to develop a sustainable market for the varieties by producing value-added products such as parboiled rice, rice flake, and flour from the produces under the brand name of the organisation,” he added.

PALAKKAD, August 27, 2012

Paddy, coconut farmers facing a crisis



Shortage of water for paddy cultivation and falling prices of coconut have ensured that the paddy and coconut farmers of Palakkad have practically no reason to celebrate Onam this year.

'Putthari' (fresh rice), one of the main items in the Onam feast, is obtained from the paddy harvested before Onam.

But this time there will be no 'Puthari' for the 'Onasadya' because the cultivation of paddy for the Onam feast has been delayed by more than one-and-a-half months.

Harvesting of paddy, which usually started in August, has not yet begun in most parts of the district due to shortage of rain.

The farmers who took loans to cultivate paddy are in a crisis.

"The farmers who were depending on the sale of paddy during Onam, to pay back their debts and meet the expenses of the festival are in tears," said Muthalamthode Mani, general secretary of Desheeya Karshaka Samajam.

Due to lack of water for irrigation in Malampuzha dam and Parambikulam group of inter-state reservoirs, the farmers have not been able to harvest the first crop and cultivate the second crop, he said.

Usually the cultivation of the second crop starts in September.

But this year the harvesting of the first crop will start in September and the second crop will be delayed by nearly two months.

"If the much awaited north west monsoon also fails then the farmers will have to abandon the second crop of paddy cultivation in most parts of the district," said Mr. Mani.

To make matters worse, many farmers are yet to get their payment for the paddy they sold to Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation, under the paddy procurement scheme of the State government in the last crop season, Mr. Mani said.

The coconut farmers of Palakkad, one of the major coconut producing districts of the State, are also in dire straits.

"There is no one to buy a coconut even for Rs.3," he said. The government's copra and raw coconut procurement schemes have not taken off, causing distress to the farmers.

“The farmers in the “rice bowl” of Kerala, which contributed nearly half of the paddy produced in the State, will be forced to abandon paddy and coconut cultivation, the mainstay of lakhs of farmers,” Mr. Mani said.

NAGAPATTINAM, August 27, 2012

How it prevents ryots from going to seed

P. V. SRIVIDYA



Oysul Karunai, at his field in Madapuram bordering Nagapattinam. Photo: Special Arrangement
As acres and acres of untilled land dotted the tail-end of the Delta this year, there lay a tilled stretch of some 20 acres in Madapuram in Thiruthuraipoondi, bordering Nagapattinam, in the first and only rains that lashed a few days ago.

Seventy-six-year-old Oysul Karunai awaits the second spell to re-till his fields and broadcast the seeds through direct sowing.

A botched PWD revetment in 1980 affected irrigation to his fields and the seed of an idea germinated from that crisis. He toyed with the idea of direct sowing. Until then, paddy had only conjured up images of raised nurseries and their transplantation to the fields, and direct sowing was unheard of.

So, when tiny green specks sprouted four days after the rains drenched the broadcast fields, Mr. Karunai did not foresee his experiment to save the day in the Delta that was then unified Thanjavur region, seven years later, in 1987. By then, he had perfected this system.

For Mr. Karunai, it was smooth until 1983 when rain played spoilsport. "I had ploughed the fields, broadcast seeds, but there was no rain for a month." When it eventually rained, he did not expect the seeds to germinate, but they did. The seeds would survive without rain for up to 35 days, and there would always be that one day's rain to bank on, believes Mr. Karunai, who brings 40 per cent of his 120 acres under direct seeding each year. If nothing, there would eventually be irrigated water.

Today, in the wake of the announcement of a delayed and scarce water release posing a challenge to conventional transplantation, Madapuram is being seen as the reference point for reviving mass-scale direct sowing.

In 1987, Mettur dam was opened on November 9 and shut 20 days later, that is, on November 29. "We toured the Delta, and in Madapuram, there were these green tracts amidst dry lands," says S. Ranganathan, general secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association.

"Immediately, we convened a meeting and wanted the administration to take it up." It was summarily announced that banks would have to lend for direct sowing. Until then, loans were extended only for conventional transplantation.

"We hold Madapuram as the Mecca of direct sowing," says Palaniappan, who was then a radio specialist for agriculture with the AIR, liaising with the administration and whose booklet on the experiment is the only registry of the 1987 project.

The experiment came to be termed as the "one-million tonne rice project," says Palaniappan. Over 2.10 lakh hectares were brought under direct seeding with a production of one million tonnes.

The earliest stray experiments were in the Pattukottai-Peravurani area, when there was absolutely no water in the Grand Anicut in 1977. "I had recorded them during one of my tours." But, it was in 1987 that the Madapuram experiment was noticed and replicated on a mass scale.

"On the midnight of August 14, I interviewed Oysul Karunai, in a desperate bid to spread hope among the farmers and also bring the administration on board to take direct seeding to every farmer." Mr. Ranganathan believes that direct sowing is the way out in times of the delayed release of water and water scarcity.

While community nurseries are seen as a welcome move, they would still require many times the water for direct seeding. Direct sowing would require wetting of fields and not water stagnation for nurseries and transplanted seedlings.

Water to be released on September 17 would take a fortnight to reach the tail end of the Delta in Nagapattinam.

Farmers here are faced with the possibility of submergence of transplanted seedlings by the north-east monsoon, due to the delay in setting up of nurseries.

However, there is a certain reticence over open advocacy for direct sowing. Farmers and officials fear it could bring down the State's bargaining power with Karnataka. The 1987 contingency experiment of dire mass scale direct sowing had found skewed references to underplay the plight of the Delta farmers by Karnataka, says a source.

"But, why not we see it as perfecting a system of planning a crop with less water and more productivity?" asks Mr. Ranganathan. After all, there will still be water scarcity now even with community nurseries.

The same view is echoed by Mr. Palaniappan. "It is a contingency plan, not an alternative plan."

Mr. Ranganathan adds that "concepts such as direct sowing, used in times of distress, should not dilute the State's case for legitimate share of Cauvery water."

KOZHIKODE, August 26, 2012

Better deal sought for landslide-hit farmers

Government preparing report in haste, says panel

A five-member panel, which conducted a study on the landslide at Pullurampara and surrounding areas, has called upon the government to draw up a more fruitful rehabilitation package for the farmers who suffered loss in the incident.

The panel, led by environmentalist A. Achyuthan, appealed to the government to conduct a geographical study in the landslide-hit areas and take up appropriate measures to mitigate such crisis in future.

Presenting the findings of the panel before the media here on Saturday, Prof. Achyuthan said it was a rain-induced landslide and not one triggered by a cloudburst.

DOWNPOUR

He said the team could find evidence of a downpour in the region that led to the landslide. The panel members, S. Sreekumar, K. Sreedharan, E. Abdul Hameed and K.T. Radhakrishnan, said the government was yet to conduct a scientific study on the issue and assess the actual loss to farmers in the area.

The compensation announced was very little and would not address the concerns of the victims' families, they said.

Prof. Achyuthan and Prof. Sreedharan alleged that the government was preparing a report in haste without seeking the opinion of the victims. The farmers who lost large tracts of farmland should be given separate land and a monitoring committee should be formed to ensure that the farmers got compensation.

Referring to the lack of disaster management measures, the panel said such disasters could occur again in the region which would worsen the situation.

As a preventive measure, the government should set up rain-gauge stations in hilly areas and issue timely warnings to those residing in vulnerable areas.

The report of the study, which was conducted under the aegis of the Kelu Ettan Study and Research Centre, would be submitted for the consideration of the government next month.

The panel would also convene a meeting of the landslip-hit families and collect their opinion regarding a suitable rehabilitation package.

BANGALORE, August 24, 2012

25 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka every month

NAGESH PRABHU



• In this 2011 file photo, farmers in Chikmagalur, Karnataka feed their tomato crop to cattle as the prices crashed. Photo: PTI

Year	No. of suicides
2003-04	708
▶ 2004-05	271
▶ 2005-06	163
▶ 2006-07	346
▶ 2007-08	342
▶ 2008-09	337
▶ 2009-10	290
▶ 2010-11	242
▶ 2011-12	187
▶ 2012-13	23

Hassan district reported highest number of suicides by farmers (309), followed by Bidar (220), Chikmagalur (213), Belgaum (205) and Chitradurga (193)

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Agrarian distress claims 2,909 farmers in last decade

The farming sector in Karnataka has been going through a painful phase since the last few years and a whopping 2,909 farmers committed suicide across the State during the last one decade (2003-04 to July 31, 2012).

With farming becoming economically unviable owing to various factors, the data provided by the State Agriculture Department revealed that on an average 25 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka every month in the last 10 years. As many as 1,077 farmers ended their lives since the BJP came to power in the State in 2008.

The tragic incidents primarily occurred due to agrarian distress caused by crop loss on account of drought, floods and diseases; debts; high farming cost, particularly fertilizer; and low returns due to faulty policies of both State and Central governments, says R.S. Deshpande, Director, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore.

The growth rate of the agriculture sector has been erratic during the last five years. According to Economic Survey, the sector recorded growth of 12.4 per cent of Gross State Domestic Product in 2007-08, 2.3 per cent in 2008-09, 3.6 per cent in 2009-10, 13.3 per cent in 2011-11 and – (minus) 2.9 per cent in 2011-12.

The State faced three consecutive droughts during the S.M. Krishna regime (2001-2004) and two consecutive droughts during the BJP rule (2011-12 and 2012-13). With declaration of 140 taluks as drought-hit in the current sowing season, the State is facing the worst drought in the last 40 years.

Top five

Officials of Agriculture Department told *The Hindu* that Hassan district reported highest number of suicides by farmers (309), followed by Bidar (220), Chikmagalur (213), Belgaum (205) and Chitradurga (193) in the last one decade.

The number of suicide cases reported in 2003-04 was 708, 271 in 2004-05, 163 in 2005-06, 346 in 2006-07, 342 in 2007-08, 337 in 2008-09, 290 in 2009-10, 242 in 2010-11, 187 in 2011-12 and 23 cases till July 31, 2012-13.

Of the 2,907 cases reported, a committee set up to sanction compensation rejected 1,548 cases and sanctioned compensation of Rs. 1 lakh to 1,258 cases. The panel is yet to decide compensation in 101 cases, officials said. As on July 31 this year (2012-13), 23 cases of suicides have been reported from eight districts. Six cases have been reported from Haveri, Chamarajangar (5), Mysore (4), Hassan (3), Bellary (2), and one each from Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu and Belgaum districts.

Package

ISEC research study (2011) noted that implementation of the Prime Minister's Rehabilitation Package (Rs. 2,689.64 crore) in six districts of Belgaum, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Hassan, Kodagu and Shimoga had not helped small and marginal farmers. In fact, better-off farmers benefited from the package, it said. However, officials claimed that the number of cases had come down in the last couple of years because of implementation of various schemes such as disbursement of crop loans at less rate of interest from cooperative banks (zero per cent up to Rs 1 lakh and 1 per cent up to Rs 3 lakh), implementation of crop insurance schemes and sale of farm inputs at subsidised prices.

NAMAKKAL, August 27, 2012

Drip irrigation scam report to be filed today

Six teams of officials of the Horticulture Department from Chennai, who launched, on Friday, an enquiry into the alleged scam in sanctioning funds to farmers to set up drip irrigation, are expected to submit a report to higher authorities on Monday.

Enquiry

The enquiry was conducted based on a complaint from V. Mahalingam of Namakkal, a retired Agriculture Department official.

RTI Act

"According to information collected through the Right To Information Act, farmers who could not avail of this benefit due to the alleged foul play by some officials and companies that installed

the system in the fields, nearly 40 to 50 per cent (around Rs. 8 crore to 10 crore) of the total subsidy allotted for the district was not properly utilised,” the complainant claimed.

Allotment

“Some farmers got the fund more than once to install the system in the same land. Some others have installed it in a small portion but managed to get allotment of subsidy for the entire area. Some others did not install drip irrigation at all managed to get the funds sanctioned,” he added.

“We have to wait for the report to get a clear picture,” an official said.

SANGAREDDY, August 27, 2012

Farmer commits suicide

K Chandra Reddy (50), a farmer of Narmetta village, committed suicide by consuming pesticide on Saturday.

According to police, Reddy had drilled nine bore-wells in the past two years and only one or two yielded water, which was not sufficient to meet the requirement. Power crisis added to his problems. The cotton crop he grew dried due to lack of water. He had also sold some of his agriculture land to repay the loans taken for the marriages of his daughters and for farming. His debts were not cleared. Worried over the situation, he committed suicide by consuming pesticide. His body was found at the farm on Sunday morning. Police registered a case and are investigating.

CHENNAI, August 27, 2012

Boost for animal husbandry in State

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Sunday announced a slew of measures to give a fillip to the development of animal husbandry sector.

According to a press release, the Chief Minister has ordered to set up 50 sub-centre hospitals anew so as to extend the veterinary medical facilities to remote villages and about Rs.1.06 crore had been allocated for it.

Assistance

With the assistance of National Dairy Development Corporation, a modern milk powder plant was being set up in Ammapalayam, Tiruvannamalai district, with a capacity to process 2,00,000 litres of milk per day and eventually produce 20 tonnes of dry powder per day. The plant would start its production by next July.

In addition to the already-released amount of Rs.45.74 crore, an amount of Rs.11.51crore would be given.

The Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University's Research and Training centres are to be established in Tiruvannamalai, Krishnagiri and Vilupuram districts at a cost of Rs.2.4 crore.

The Chief Minister also ordered transfer of lands of 177.92 acres for Veterinary College and Research Institute, Orathanadu, Thanjavur.

ERODE, August 27, 2012

Turmeric to fetch more

The Centre has said that it will consider fixing a higher minimum support price for turmeric as the growers are facing a crisis from a steep fall in the price of the spice, which is grown in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

“The growers’ plea for fixing a minimum price of Rs. 9,000 a quintal for turmeric is reasonable. Definitely, I will inform Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar who will certainly give a positive reply,” Minister of State for Agriculture Charan Das Mahant said here.

PALAKKAD, August 27, 2012

KTDC plan for orange farm wilts

: The move to construct a tourism resort on 10 hectares of land given from the Nelliampathy Orange and Vegetable Farm to the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) and to include it under the ‘Emerging Kerala’ programme will not materialise as the farm is a reserve forest that attracts provisions of the Forest Conservation Act of 1980.

The farm has 325 hectares of land and 10 hectares from it was handed over to the KTDC in 2003 to set up a Yatri Nivas with assistance from the Central government. The orange farm was established in 1943 to supplement the fruit and vegetable supply during the Second World War.

Nemmara Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Raju K. Francis told *The Hindu* here on Sunday that the entire 325 hectares of land was a “reserve forest that was handed over to the Agriculture Department to cultivate fruits and vegetables in 1943. The Central Forest Conservation Act of 1980 will not permit any non-forestry activities in the area without prior sanction from the Central government.”

Former DFO of Nemmara Dhanesh Kumar said that when the farm authorities sought permission to start a dairy farm in 2010, it was denied as the entire farm attracted the 1980 Act.

He said the 25 acres of land given to KTDC from the farm at Pullumedu was an evergreen forest with large tree growth. This forest cannot be cleared for construction purposes or any other non-forestry activities as it was a reserve forest.

This areas was also encroached upon by the landless tribal people of Nelliampathy, but they were evicted in 2003. He said the Public Works Department had sought permission to construct a Guest House in the land allotted to them from the farm but was denied permission in 2010.

Opposition

Meanwhile, the Kerala Natural History Society has opposed the move to start a new tourism resort in Orange Farm.

Secretary of the society L. Namsivayan said that “unregulated tourism has already turned a bane on Nelliampathy. Unlike in other forest tourism areas, the Forest Department has no control over Nelliampathy.”

Though there are no bar-attached hotels or liquor shops at Nelliampathy, all liquor brands are freely available and some of the lawns of the estates double up as ‘open bars’ after dusk.

He said that though plastic has been banned at Nelliampathy, one could see large number of empty bottles of liquor and water, plastic, and rubbish strewn all over the place. Since

Nelliampathy faced serious environmental degradation, no more non-forestry activities should be allowed in this ecologically fragile forest area, Mr. Namasivayan said.

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- *Nelliampathy farm is a reserve forest*
 - *Governed under Forest Conservation Act, 1980*
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ERODE, August 27, 2012

Farmers suffer heavy loss as strong winds wipe out banana trees

TN Palayam is the worst affected block in the district



Nature's fury: Heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms caused heavy damage to the banana crop in Gobichettipalayam block.

Banana crop in more than 50 acres was damaged during the rain accompanied by strong winds that lashed many parts of Erode district during the last week.

Many parts of Sathyamanagalam, TN Palayam and Gobichettipalayam blocks in the district experienced light to moderate showers accompanied by gusty winds on Friday night and Saturday that left hundreds of banana trees damaged.

The TN Palayam block bore the brunt as at least 17 hectares of banana trees were completely destroyed. Farmers in Nambiyur and Vemandampalayam suffered heavy losses as the strong winds wiped out most of the trees that were in the fruit-bearing stage. More than 6,000 banana

trees in Nambiyur block were damaged during the rain. Farmers urged the State government to take steps to compensate their loss.

Many farmers in the district took up banana cultivation by getting crop loans from the bank. Only if the government compensated the loss, we would be able to repay the loan and avail credit for taking up next crop, they said. A significant number of turmeric growers in TN Palayam and Sathyamangalam blocks switched to banana crop following the drastic fall in the prices of the spice. We cultivated banana as it fetched a good income. But the rain caused huge damage to the crop, they said.

Preliminary estimates after a survey conducted by the Horticulture Department identified that trees in more than 17 hectares got damaged in the strong winds on Friday and Saturday.

Sources in the department said that TN Palayam was the worst affected block in the district and a detailed report on the crop damage had been submitted to the government.

The department would recommend the government to announce compensation to the affected farmers, sources added.

TIRUCHI, August 27, 2012

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 76.38 feet on Sunday, against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,193 cusecs and the discharge, 2,003 cusecs.

TIRUCHI, August 27, 2012

Credit offtake for kuruvai season disappointing

G.SATHYAMOORTHY

By and large the credit offtake during the kuruvai season in the district this year has been disappointing. Though the area under kuruvai cultivation is 6,000 hectares, which is just a pittance compared to the cultivation area in districts such as Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam, the farmers had to totally depend on bore wells and well irrigation because of the inability of the State government to release water from Mettur Dam for irrigation .

According to official sources, who do not want to be identified, as against the July target of Rs.150 crore for crop loan, the achievement has been around Rs.100 crore in respect of cooperative banks.

Their annual target is around Rs.400 crore.

Against a target of Rs.260 crore their crop loan achievement for 2011-12 was Rs.326 crore.

The actual achievement figures for the first quarter would be available only by the first week of September.

The Annual Credit Plan for 2012-13 puts the target for crop loan at Rs.1,672 crore for the district.

However, the district administration exudes confidence that kuruvai cultivation has touched 5,625 hectares, though farmer leaders like Rajachidambaran have expressed scepticism over this claim.

J.Sekar, Joint Director of Agriculture, Tiruchi district said, at the farmers' grievances meet here on Friday, that samba-thaladi cultivation is expected in 60,000 hectares in the district.

Preliminary steps for raising nurseries are afoot, he added. Mr.Sekar announced that the certified seeds of high-yielding paddy varieties, fit for samba, such as White Ponni, AST19, ADT 39, Co ® 49, Co ® 50, and BPT 5204 were available in all the block agricultural extension centres.

Of the total 581 tonnes of seeds stocked, about 44 tonnes had already been distributed.

Similarly, 3,485 tonnes of urea, 1,980 tonnes of DAP, 2,820 tonnes of potash, and 3,955 tonnes of complex fertilizers were available with the primary agricultural co-operative banks and private outlets.

Collector Jayashree Muralidharan, who was in the chair, told the farmers that a number of governmental assistance were available for members who have enrolled under Chief Minister's Farmers' Protection Scheme.

They include scholarship for children's education, marriage assistance, solatium for death due to natural causes, assistance for those who have met with accidents, and pension for agricultural labourers. T.Thyagarajan, District Revenue Officer, participated.

Against the July crop loan target of Rs. 150 crore only Rs. 100 crore has been achieved

TIRUNELVELI, August 27, 2012

Farm equipment demonstration held

The Department of Agricultural Engineering conducted a demonstration on how to use Rotovators and Laser Levellers in a field at Chidambarapuram under Kuruvikulam union in the district recently.

While the Rotovators remove the weeds completely and prepare the land for cultivation, the Laser Levellers make the land even and fit for cultivation by razing the elevated areas and filling-up the pits with the removed soil.

Farmers from Chidambarapuram and other neighbouring villages participated in the demonstration, an official statement issued here said.

KASARAGOD, August 27, 2012

'Motivate youth to take up farming'

The younger generation needs to be motivated to engage themselves in farming along with imparting higher education, artist P.S. Puninjithaya has said.

The noted painter was inaugurating the Onam celebrations organised by the Kasaragod Press Club on Sunday. The parents should take special care in grooming their children with basic knowledge in farming practices. The media also could play a major role in creating awareness among the youth to revive the rich agriculture tradition of the country, he added.

On the occasion, Mr. Puninjithaya also painted the picturesque Bekal beach on a small canvas quickly, amazing the gathering. The function was presided over by Press Club president K. Vinod Chandran. Senior journalists from the district took part in the day-long cultural and entertainment programmes.

KOCHI, August 27, 2012

Better infrastructure for copra procurement sought

Price Support Scheme remains out of reach of common farmers

The Coconut Development Board (CDB) has urged the authorities concerned to ensure better infrastructure for copra procurement under the Price Support Scheme (PSS).

A major handicap towards the production of Fair Average Quality (FAQ) copra for supply to the procurement agencies is the lack of infrastructure for copra making, the Board said in a recent communication to the Union government.

With the formation of Coconut Producer Societies (CPSs) by the Board, the grassroots-level association has materialised. A minimum of 330 driers are required to convert at least 10 per cent of the production of coconut to copra and undertake procurement operations so as to create an impact on the prices of coconut and copra. The possibility of funding at least 200 driers has to be explored on an urgent basis. The CDB has initiated action for the funding of 20 number of copra driers to be provided to the Federation of CPSs. The CDB had also addressed the local self-government institutions in all the 14 districts in May 2012 to consider funding for copra driers on a panchayat-level to the CPSs and on block-level and district-level to Federation of the CPSs so that a community- based infrastructure is created for copra-making.

If the provision of copra driers to the CPSs can be effected through the schemes of the different departments under the State government, the situation of low prices and low procurement under the PSS can be solved to a great extent and the farmers could realise a remunerative income. Mobilisation of funds of the local self-government institutions for 100 driers through the departments concerned and the Planning Board and exploring the potential for funding of 80-100 driers through government schemes will enable the provision of more infrastructure for copra processing which is the major stumbling block in the procurement operations.

Support sought

The infrastructure can be created by providing support to the farmer producer organisations like the CPSs and Federation of CPSs so that the benefit of the project reaches the targeted end user. A subsidy of 50 per cent for the copra driers will prove beneficial since the CPSs are in the nascent stage of formation. The approximate cost involvement for 200 driers works to around

Rs.24 crore. Extending a support of 50 per cent subsidy will require a budgetary provision of Rs.12 crore. The procurement process under the PSS is still out of reach of the common coconut farmers. The CPSs under the Board have started supplying FAQ copra to the procurement agencies and the CDB experience with copra supply through the CPSs states that the farmers are subjected to numerous hurdles in the procurement process. This makes them shy away from the PSS supply even when price difference between open market price and MSP is as high as Rs.10-13 a kg of copra. The situation is that the government of India has announced a MSP, but the benefits of the same are not reaching the coconut farmers owing to these procedural problems. The procurement process has to be eased out, transparency ensured in inspection of the lots and in the payment process.

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- *Board seeks 50 per cent subsidy for copra driers*
 - *Calls for more transparency in payment process*

VISAKHAPATNAM, August 27, 2012

Efforts on to cover farmers under crop insurance scheme

The state government is making efforts to bring farmers not covered under the crop insurance scheme under the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS). Farmers who were taking crop loans from the nationalised banks had been covered but hundreds of farmers who are outside the crop loan cycle have not been covered under the insurance scheme so far. Special drive had been launched in this regard during the past couple of agriculture seasons. There was an overwhelming response to the campaign undertaken by the department of agriculture to insure their crops.

The main objective of the scheme is to bring the entire farming community under its ambit. Hitherto only farmers who utilised crop loans of nationalised banks were benefited under the scheme. There were hundreds of farmers who do not come under the credit plan of the government. Now the government is making efforts to popularise the scheme through its rural network and avail the insurance benefits. However for small and marginal farmers the government was paying a part of the premium.

Efforts are being made to bring all categories of farmers, small and marginal farmers apart from tenant and share-crop farmers under the insurance scheme.

A 10 percent subsidy is extended by the government on premium payment to small and marginal farmers. The in-charge Agriculture joint director Sai Lakshmeswari told *The Hindu* that the objective of the NAIS is to provide a measure of financial support to the farmers in the event of crop failure as a result of drought, natural disasters and incidence of pests and diseases, for restoring the credit eligibility of farmers after a crop failure for the next season, to encourage farmers to adopt progressive practices and help stabilize farm income particularly in the event of natural disasters.

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- *Hitherto only farmers who utilised crop loans of nationalised banks have benefited*
 - *A 10 per cent subsidy is given on premium payment to small and marginal farmers*

COIMBATORE, August 26, 2012

Training course at TNAU

A training programme in commercial production of fruits and vegetable products will be held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University on August 30 and 31.

Those interested can attend the training by paying Rs. 1,000 in the form of a Demand Draft drawn in favour of Dean (Agricultural Engineering), payable at Coimbatore. For details, call 0422-6611268.

NAGERCOIL, August 26, 2012

Release water to save crops: farmers

The farmers who attended the farmers' grievance day meeting held here on Friday have urged the district administration to release water from Mambazhathuraiyar dam to save thousands of hectares of withering crops in and around Villukury areas near Thuckalay.

The dam has been designed in such a way that it irrigates a total of 905.76 acres. Though the water level in all the major dams including Pechipparai, Perunchani, Chittar I, Chittar II and Mukkadal was depleting following the failure of south-west monsoon, the Mambazathuraiyar dam has the maximum storage level. But due to certain reasons, the water from the dam has not yet been released for irrigation purpose and owing to this, the crops irrigated by the dam's ayacut areas were withering away, pointed out the representatives of various farmers' associations.

In a reply, the Executive Engineer, Water Resource Organization (PWD), Subramoinan, said that they have sent proposals to the Government seeking permission to release water from the dam. The water would be released once the orders were received, he added. Quite a large number of representatives of Water Users' Associations complained that without obtaining proper approval from the Public Works Department, land promoters, owners of private engineering colleges and owners' of private plantations were constructing bridges across the irrigation channels, which resulted in the obstruction of free flow of water for irrigation purpose up to the tail end areas.

Moreover, they also complained that while executing development works, panchayat and town panchayat administrations were demolishing sluices of the irrigation tanks. The farmers have also urged the Collector, S. Nagarajan, to send a proposal to the Government to declare Kanyakumari as a 'drought-hit' district.

KOZHIKODE, August 26, 2012

Better deal sought for landslip-hit farmers

Government preparing report in haste, says panel

A five-member panel, which conducted a study on the landslip at Pullurampara and surrounding areas, has called upon the government to draw up a more fruitful rehabilitation package for the farmers who suffered loss in the incident.

The panel, led by environmentalist A. Achyuthan, appealed to the government to conduct a geographical study in the landslip-hit areas and take up appropriate measures to mitigate such crisis in future.

Presenting the findings of the panel before the media here on Saturday, Prof. Achyuthan said it was a rain-induced landslip and not one triggered by a cloudburst.

Downpour

He said the team could find evidence of a downpour in the region that led to the landslip.

The panel members, S. Sreekumar, K. Sreedharan, E. Abdul Hameed and K.T. Radhakrishnan, said the government was yet to conduct a scientific study on the issue and assess the actual loss to farmers in the area.

The compensation announced was very little and would not address the concerns of the victims' families, they said.

Prof. Achyuthan and Prof. Sreedharan alleged that the government was preparing a report in haste without seeking the opinion of the victims. The farmers who lost large tracts of farmland should be given separate land and a monitoring committee should be formed to ensure that the farmers got compensation.

Referring to the lack of disaster management measures, the panel said such disasters could occur again in the region which would worsen the situation.

As a preventive measure, the government should set up rain-gauge stations in hilly areas and issue timely warnings to those residing in vulnerable areas.

The report of the study, which was conducted under the aegis of the Kelu Ettan Study and Research Centre, would be submitted for the consideration of the government next month.

The panel would also convene a meeting of the landslip-hit families and collect their opinion regarding a suitable rehabilitation package.

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- *'Compensation announced is very little'*
 - *'Set up rain-gauge stations in hilly areas'*
-

HYDERABAD, August 26, 2012

Bt cotton farmers face major crisis

K. VENKATESHWARLU

Crop attacked by bollworm at the crucial flowering stage

Cotton farmers across Telangana are in for a rude shock with Bt cotton being attacked by bollworm, *Helicoverpa armigera*, the very pest that it is supposed to resist and repel, in large areas of Warangal and neighbouring districts.

A chance visit by senior agriculture scientist L. Jalapthy Rao to some cotton fields in Warangal on Wednesday brought to light the havoc played by the pest during the last few days. The attack has come at a critical stage of flowering, posing a grave threat to the survival of the crop.

“It is going to impact yields”, he told *The Hindu* on his return to Hyderabad.

He had visited about 20 villages in the five mandals of Kesamudram, Nekkonda, Gudur, Nallaballi and Parvathagiri after he suspected the attack on few of them in Alakampeta village. He had gone there on an invitation by farmers to see their chilli crop.

On seeing unusual shape of the buds and fading foliage of the Bt cotton crop nearby, he said he was surprised to see the pests when he cut open some of these buds.

“The pests are deeply entrenched and I am not sure why this is happening. Not only buds, leaves too were under attack by another pest, *Spodoptera*, though Bt cotton II is to prevent it.”

Resistance to bollworm

Dr. Rao, who retired as Registrar of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agriculture University, said there could be two reasons for such sudden pest attack.

“It could be either Bt cotton developing resistance to bollworm or there could be a problem with the quality of the seeds.”

He has reported the matter to the Agriculture Department and appealed to the officials to visit the cotton crop areas to undertake a thorough study.

Given the fact that Andhra Pradesh has emerged as leading cultivator of Bt cotton, with the crop extending to about 57 lakh acres, the cotton growers could face a major crisis.

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- *Not only buds, but leaves too are under attack by another pest, Spodoptera: farm expert*
 - *'It could be due to crop developing resistance to bollworm or problem with seed quality'*

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, August 26, 2012

NABARD accused of choking credit support to farmers

The Kerala State Cooperative Agricultural and Rural Development Bank (CARD Bank) has accused the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) of choking refinance support to agricultural development banks in Kerala.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, Card Bank president Solomon Alex and managing director K.Ramachandran alleged that the apex bank had embarked on a mission to shift its focus from agricultural credit to corporate lending.

They said NABARD was imposing unreasonable restrictions on disbursement of funds to be used by cooperative agricultural banks as loan assistance to farmers.

“The latest restriction is the condition making it mandatory for primary cooperative banks to furnish an audited statement by a chartered accountant to become eligible for assistance. Banks have to choose from a panel of CAs selected by NABARD. The extra financial commitment in appointing a CA is too heavy for most primary banks. Besides, the accounts of these banks are regularly audited by a government mechanism. Adding another layer of audit makes no sense,” Mr.Alex said.

He added that cooperative agricultural banks in Kerala had moved the Chief Minister and MPs from the State with a memorandum highlighting the issue. “We are also planning to bring this to the attention of the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister.”

Mr.Ramachandran said the new restrictions represented a clear deviation from the basic mandate of NABARD and a repositioning strategy focussing on corporate lending.

He said it had far-reaching implications on the nation's food security.

“Earlier, the apex bank had decided to stop share capital contribution and replace the debenture system of sanctioning funds to the States with a credit system that requires banks to mobilise 10 per cent of the loan assistance. It also stopped assistance for loans taken by farmers on the Kissan credit card scheme.”

Mr.Ramachandran alleged that NABARD was using its new business strategy to wriggle out of its commitment to the agriculture sector.

He observed that Kerala was being denied assistance despite its eligibility for more funds on account of being the State with the lowest risk factor under an independent analysis done by NABARD.

Card Bank, he said, had achieved a recovery of 95.95 per cent on loans during the year ending July 30, 2012. The bank's non performing assets were assessed at only 4.28 per cent.

The 51st annual general body meeting of CARD Bank held here on Saturday approved a credit outlay of Rs.1,650 crore for various sectors during the year 2012- 13, representing an increase of Rs.385 crore.

An amount of Rs.482 crore has been allocated for agriculture and allied activities, Rs.700 crore for housing and Rs.468 crore for rural industries, small traders and personal loans.

Mr.Alex said the bank had set a deposit mobilisation target of Rs.100 crore for the current year.

The meeting approved an agricultural food security and safe food programme aimed at promoting hi-tech agriculture and organic farming. A pilot project focussing on organic horticulture and marketing of vegetables will be implemented this year.

CARD Bank vice-president M.V. Sasikumaran Nair, general manager George Kuriakose, and directors K.A. Chandran and Mohammed Basheer were present.

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Monday, Aug 27

Max Min
32° | 27°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 70

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:57

Sunset: 06:22

Barometer: 1007

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Tuesday, Aug 28

Max Min
31° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Aug 29	Thursday Aug 30	Friday Aug 31	Saturday Sep 1	Sunday Sep 2
32° 26°	32° 27°	31° 27°	29° 25°	29° 25°
Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

27 AUG, 2012, 08.00AM IST,

Counting on gains from corn: Maize prices may rise in India in the short term



Maize or corn records the highest production in the world and is important for its wide variety of applications, ranging from food and feed to industrial products, and more recently, as an alternate fuel.

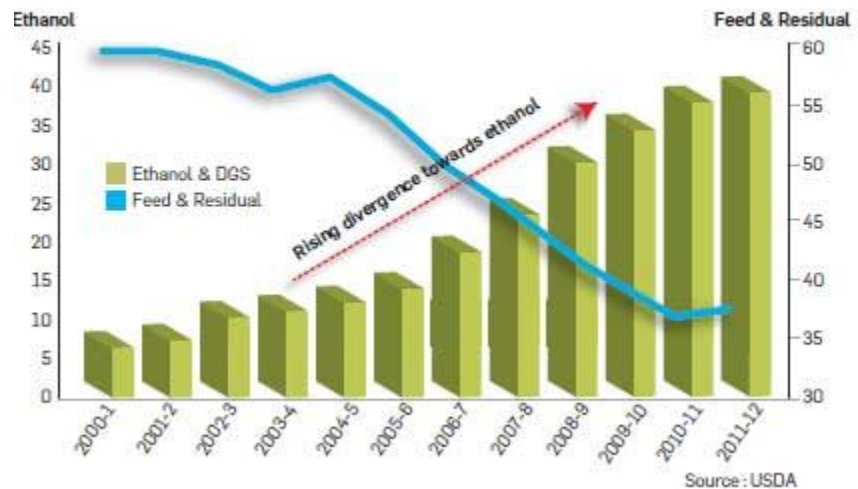
In India, maize is the third most important food crop after rice and wheat, and is a promising option for diversification in agriculture since it is more resilient to changing climate. In recent years, it has seen a notable growth rate and has contributed significantly to the national economy.

The global corn demand-supply balance sheet is influenced mainly by the US, which is its largest producer, consumer and exporter, accounting for over 39%, 33% and 52% share, respectively. The second largest producer, China, has a negligible share in the global corn trade due to its huge domestic consumption. The global maize production has grown at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.31% over the past decade and was 873 million tonnes in 2011-12. The consumption has grown at a comparatively slow pace and was 862 million tonnes.

However, the global corn consumption is characterised by a shift in usage pattern due to the increasing use in the US for ethanol production and less for livestock feeding.

Changing pattern of maize consumption in the US (% share)

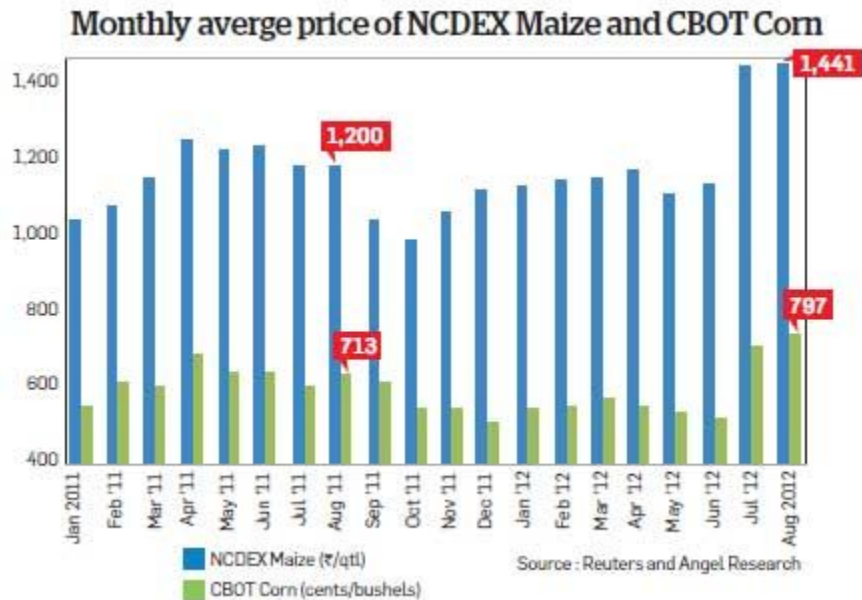
Ethanol accounted for over 6% share in the US consumption in 2000-1 and rose to over 40% in 2011-12. On the other hand, the share of feed and residual use declined from 59% in 2000-1 to 37%. The diversion towards ethanol in the US is exerting pressure, ending stocks that are depleting each year and pushing prices higher.



For CBOT Corn, 2012 is a remarkable year with prices breaching historical high levels due to worries over the US corn output, which has been hit by the worst drought in 56 years. India holds a minuscule share of around 2% and 3% in the global maize production and export, respectively. In India, maize is grown in both kharif (75%) and rabi seasons (25%), and the major producing states—Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar—account for over 65% share in the total production.

Indian maize production has grown at a CAGR of 4.9% over the past decade and was 21.5 million tonnes in 2011-12, while domestic consumption has grown at a CAGR of 3.28% and stands at 18-18.5 million tonnes now. With an increase in yield in the past five years, India is in a position to ship the exportable surplus to the global markets, but since it's share is negligible, the domestic prices are not highly correlated with the international corn prices.

The correlation between NCDEX Maize futures and CBOT Corn futures, which was around 0.66 in the past year, has increased to 0.93 in the past two months. While the global corn prices rose by 40% during this period amid US output concerns, domestic prices shot up by 30% due to the attractive global prices and poor monsoon in India.



Maize accounts for over 50% of the total kharif coarse cereal production and sowing under the total coarse cereals complex is down by 13% as on 17 August 2012.

The maize output in India may fall marginally this season amid poor rains and lower sowing, but the scenario will be clear by end-September, when harvesting begins.

A strong demand amid global supply tightness will keep the upside intact in the spot market and prices may gain by Rs 50-60 per quintal from the current Rs 1,410 per quintal in the short term. However, the upside may be capped if the government imposes export curbs to ease supply in the domestic market. When the harvest begins towards the end of September, maize prices may face downside pressure and test the Rs 1,275-1,300 per quintal levels in the spot market during peak arrival period.

Commodity update

Commodities	Unit	Price (₹)	Change (%)	
			1-week	1-year
METALS				
Aluminium	₹/kg	147	-0.34	11.36
Copper	₹/kg	441	2.56	6.52
Gold	₹/10 g	30,515	2.04	9.75
Nickel	₹/kg	1,055	2.23	-8.89
Silver	₹/kg	57,510	6.04	-11.91
Zinc	₹/kg	146	1.74	14.01
FOOD PRODUCTS				
Chilli	₹/100 kg	7,000	0.0	-22.22
Turmeric	₹/100 kg	9,500	0.0	-19.49
Cardamom	₹/kg	800	-1.23	-20.00
Rajma	₹/100 kg	8,600	-2.27	79.17
Potato	₹/50 kg	675	0.0	107.69
Maize	₹/100 kg	1,900	-9.52	26.67
Sugar	₹/100 kg	3,800	-1.30	22.58
Refined soy oil	₹/100 kg	7,850	0.64	16.30
Wheat	₹/100 kg	1,630	12.41	39.32
ENERGY				
Crude oil	₹/ BBL	5,399	2.86	39.19
Natural gas	₹/mmBtu*	157	2.62	-12.20
OTHERS				
Lead	₹/kg	139	1.46	9.02
Rubber	₹/kg	159	-6.47	-18.04
Castor oil	₹/100 kg	9,200	10.84	-11.54

Prices are rounded off. Data as on 23 August; *mmBtu = 1 million British thermal unit
Source: ETIG Database



Tips for first-time investors

It is necessary to keep a close watch on production in the domestic as well as global markets. In India, maize is used not only for human consumption, but also by the poultry and starch industry. So, it is important to track the seasonality of demand in these sectors. The export-import policies, sowing and monsoon progress, and carryover stocks are some other factors to be kept in mind while making trading decisions.



Trading strategy

The NCDEX maize October prices are currently trading at around ₹1,500. It can find support at ₹1,400/1,340 and resistance at ₹1,600/1,680 kg in the medium term.

Business Standard

Monday, Aug 27, 2012

West Bengal to allow inter-state transfer of potato after October

Anindita Dey / Mumbai August 26, 2012, 0:24 IST

The West Bengal government has decided to curb its decision to restrict inter-state transfer of potato after October. The new harvest starts coming into the market from November.

Senior officials said this advisory to restrict sale of potato outside West Bengal has been issued to cold storages in the state to tackle the shortage of potato in the local market since the state crop has not been very good. They added that it is not a ban but an advisory which was issued for an indefinite period to members of cold storages urging them to first supply to the local markets and then consider supplying outside the state.

This decision is important since West Bengal is one of the major suppliers of potato in the country along with Uttar Pradesh. While harvest from Uttar Pradesh is used for current consumption, West Bengal potato is stored. This is a rare instance when a state has barred transport of its commodity to other states, said officials close to the development.

Currently, potato prices are quoted at Rs 1,200-2,800 a quintal across India. West Bengal and Uttarkhand, where the current harvest is on, are the only two states which have registered a decline in prices since July compared to 4-22 per cent rise in other states.

The state government is of the view that cold storages in the state receive lot of government subsidies and therefore they are obliged to first serve the state government's needs and demands of the local markets and then consider shipping the surplus outside, if available.

However, industry experts said the central government is silent on this issue. Ministry officials are of the view that fruits and vegetables are covered under the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) which is a state subject and, thus, they cannot intervene beyond a point. Industry observers said the ministry of agriculture, while amending the APMC Act has specifically sought amendments to keep fruits and vegetables out of the Act. By keeping fruits

and vegetables out of the Act, a farmer will be free to sell his produce anywhere without joining any market structure. Besides, cold storages receive a major part of their subsidy from the Centre and the government has powers to intervene in essential commodities . Potato, onion and tomato are considered essential vegetables upon which the ministry of food has a jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, the current report of the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF) stated that about 35 per cent of stored stocks of potato from cold storages have been supplied in different markets of the country. The balance quantity is sufficient to meet the coming months' requirements. Some time back, the Union ministry of agriculture had called for a report on the nationwide storage of potato and onion, in the backdrop of the rising prices of vegetables. The ministry, in co-ordination with the ministry of food, keeps checking on the prices of onion, potato and tomato.

There has been a sharp increase in potato prices, currently at Rs 1,150-2,300 a quintal (Rs 11.5-23 a kg), against Rs 510-600 a quintal (Rs 5-6 a kg) in the same period last year. However, market sources said the price may only rise another Rs 4-6 a kg and then remain range-bound, due to consumer buying resistance and decisions to curb use. Official sources said states have been asked to step up anti-hoarding mechanisms to 'unlock' the stored potato.

Nine brokerages penalised for ignoring guar margins

Sanjeeb Mukherjee & Ajay Modi / New Delhi August 26, 2012, 0:14 IST

The National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange of India (NCDEX) has levied penalties on nine brokerages, including Religare and Motilal Oswal, for irregularities in funding margins of clients in futures trade of guar gum and guar seed. The total penalty imposed on these brokerages is Rs 90 lakh, or 0.1 per cent of the amount on which margin money wasn't collected (Rs 900 crore).

The penalties were levied after a detailed investigation by NCDEX on futures trade between October 2011 and March 27, 2012.

Confirming the move, an NCDEX spokesperson said, "On the basis of inspection by the exchange, it has imposed and collected penalties on some members for short-collection of margins from clients. Inspection of members is a regular feature and wherever such

irregularities are detected, appropriate penal action is taken.”

UNDER SCANNER

- 9 brokerages penalised include Religare and Motilal Oswal
- Action after NCDEX investigates futures trade between Oct 2011 and Mar 27, 2012
- Few months ago, 9 other brokerages were penalised for similar offence and were made to pay a penalty of Rs 1.26 cr
- The investigation into that case was conducted by NCDEX and the FMC

Penalties have also been imposed on Anand Rathi Commodities, Emkay Commotrade, Sushil Global, Navjeevan Trade, Inventure Commodities, Sharda Commodities and Sushil Rathi Commodities. Most of these are Mumbai-based firms.

The penalty imposed on Motilal Oswal, about Rs 27 lakh, was the highest. “We do collect sufficient margins, as prescribed by commodity exchanges, in the form of initial, exposure and special margins. However, in a particular case, we had collected initial and exposure margins, while the special margin was collected only partially. The client had an outstanding position before imposition of the special margin in the contract, which he continued to carry forward. This was reduced over time. Hence, the exchange levied a penalty on us,” said Ajay Menon, director and chief operating officer, Motilal Oswal Securities.

A spokesperson for Anand Rathi Commodities said there was no communication between NCDEX and the company regarding the matter. Jayant Manglik, president (retail distribution), Religare Securities, said, “We have paid the amount sought by the exchange and recovered it from the client whose margin was short.”

The consumer affairs ministry has ordered an investigation into the futures trade of guar gum and guar seed during October 2011 to March 2012, following abnormal fluctuations in prices.

“Bank details of the nine brokerages are also being sought by NCDEX,” said a senior consumer department official.

A few months earlier, nine other brokerages were also found guilty of a similar offence; they had to pay a penalty of Rs 1.26 crore. The investigation into that case was conducted by NCDEX and the Forward Markets Commission.

THE HINDU Business Line

Rains pound north India, peninsular interior

Vinson Kurian



Heavy rainfall warning for Odisha, Kerala and Lakshadweep on Monday.

Thiruvananthapuram, Aug. 26:

The vigorous spell of monsoon continued over southwest Andhra Pradesh and adjoining south interior Karnataka in peninsular interior.

Less-intense ('active') monsoon was on view over coastal and north interior Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana and coastal Andhra Pradesh during the 24 hours ending Sunday morning.

Rains for North

In the north, a fresh spell of rains has broken out over Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh. Towards the east, it covered east Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.

The overall rain deficit stayed at 14 per cent as on Saturday evening, with the promise of even more rains over the next few days in various parts.

The latest low-pressure area persisting over northwest Bay of Bengal is responsible for the current spell of the monsoon.

A series of typhoons (cyclones) in the northwest Pacific/South China Sea too has helped sustain the monsoon flows when it was needed most. Typhoons Bolaven and Tembin are the latest ones.

Exceptional situation

It is unusual for strong more than one typhoon to operate in an ocean basin, which goes to signal the exceptional circumstances under which the late monsoon surge has prospered.

An India Meteorological Department (IMD) update has warned of the possibility heavy rainfall for Odisha, Kerala and Lakshadweep on Monday.

Heavy rainfall may also lash Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Telangana during the next two days.

Over west coast, the Konkan, Goa and coastal Karnataka belt could expect the monsoon to be in peak condition for the next three days.

An extended forecast valid until Wednesday predicted thundershowers over western Himalayan region and plains of northwest India.

A similar forecast is valid for Central India, Odisha, Gujarat, Telangana, Marathwada and madhya Maharashtra as well.

AP tobacco crop size fixed at 170 mkg

Hyderabad, Aug. 26:

The Tobacco Board has fixed the crop size for Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa at 170 mkg for the crop season 2012-13.

“We have arrived at this figure after taking the Indian Tobacco Association’s (ITA) request into consideration. We also have kept in mind the international scenario, farm prices and export prices,” G. Kamalavardhana Rao, Chairman of the Tobacco Board, said in a statement.

The board held a meeting here on Sunday to discuss the crop size and other issues regarding the crop. The crop is highly regulated in the country, keeping in view global concerns and also the interests of tobacco-growing farmers.

On the issues of shifting barns from auction platforms such as Keesara and Thorredu to other tobacco-growing areas of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the Board agreed to consider the requests. They will be allowed either to shift or sell barns. “We will consider their pleas case by case,” he said.

The board will seek the permission from the Union Ministry of Commerce to redistribute the leftover crop of 1.76 m kg during the year 2011-12 crop season to all the soil regions equally.

Assam unrest exerts demand pressure at Coonoor tea auction

P.S. Sundar



Coonoor, Aug. 26:

Assam unrest continued to exert demand pressure from upcountry buyers at Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions resulting in about 92.5 per cent of the 13 lakh kg offered in Sale No: 34 being sold with average prices raising Rs 2 a kg over the previous week.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC market at Rs 161 a kg. Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 142, Shanthi Supreme Rs 140, Hittakkal Estate Rs 139, Blue Monte speciality Rs 137, Deepika Supreme Rs 136 and Ambukal Estate Rs 135. In all, 136 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Highfield Estate got Rs 207, Chamraj Rs 200, Corsley Rs 180, Kairbetta Rs 173 and Havukal Rs 170. In all, 29 marks got Rs 100 and more.

“Quality orthodox brokens were dearer by Rs 5-10 a kg. CTC leaf market gained Rs 2-3. Orthodox dust grades got Rs 2-3 more. CTC dust market was dearer up to Rs 3,” an auctioneer said.

On the export front, Pakistan bought in a wide range (Rs 66-96 a kg) and the CIS (Rs 67-87). There was some purchase for European ports at Rs 71-97.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 65-67 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 100-135 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 75-80 for plain dusts and Rs 100-140 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Flour mills face wheat shortage in Punjab, Haryana

PTI



Chandigarh, Aug 26:

Despite record procurement of wheat from Punjab and Haryana this year, flour mills and biscuit makers in both the agrarian states are facing severe shortage of the crop, which has led to 30-35 per cent jump in prices of wheat-based products in the last one month.

Saying that Central government failed in “assessing” severe shortage of wheat in the market, flour mill owners asked the government to enhance the supply of wheat in these states and keep a check on hoarders exploiting the situation.

“We do not have wheat in the market to procure in spite of the fact that Punjab is one of the largest producers of wheat in the country,” Punjab Roller Flour Mill Association President Naresh Ghai told PTI.

“Because of the opening of wheat export, wheat purchase from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan has also shrunk considerably,” Ghai rued.

Flour mills claimed that because of non-availability of wheat in the market, most of the mills are now on the verge of closure.

In Punjab and Haryana, there are about 130 flour mills, which have requirement of 1.70 lakh tonne of wheat per month.

Shortage of wheat has also fuelled the prices of wheat-based products, like wheat flour, to rise by Rs 3-4 per kg in last one month.

“Prices of wheat flour and other products like maida will further go up if Centre did not intervene and take corrective measures to enhance wheat supply as FCI has bulk of wheat in its godowns,” Ghai said.

Echoing similar sentiments, Ludhiana-based Kitty brand bread maker Ramesh Mago said prices of biscuits and bread would also jump soon in the wake of big gap between demand and supply of wheat.

According to traders, wheat price has shot up by 35 per cent in last one and half month to reach a mark of about Rs 1,600 per quintal.

“The Central government has failed in seeing the wheat situation that has led to shortage in the market,” Ghai said.

The supply of 1.65 lakh tonne of wheat by FCI under Open Market Sales Scheme (OMSS) for July, August and September was exhausted in the first month itself, according to traders.

“The small flour mills could not get wheat under OMSS as big traders managed to buy wheat in anticipation of high rate due to its export,” Haryana Flour Mills Association President C P Gupta said.

Problem for flour mills has also compounded as they did not procure enough wheat when crop procurement was going on for Rabi Marketing season this year.

Punjab and Haryana saw record procurement of wheat at 129 lakh tonne and 86.69 lakh tonnes, respectively, while private traders bought just 2,000 and 1,000 tonnes of crop in both the states.

“The Centre should release wheat in sufficient quantity in Punjab and Haryana so customers could get wheat based products at low rates and we can run our mills” said Ghai.