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TODAY FARM NEWS

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As farmers suffer, NABARD offers soft loans to corporates

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), which is dedicated to promoting rural development by providing soft loans to State governments for social sector projects, has given hundreds of crores as loans to corporates on concessional terms.

In the Union Budget of 2011-12, Rs. 18,000 crore was allocated by the Centre to NABARD's Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), of which Rs. 2,000 crore was exclusively earmarked for the creation of warehousing facilities. While the allocation of Rs. 16,000 crore to the States was made by NABARD's State Projects Department, the allocation of Rs. 2,000 crore towards warehousing was entrusted to a new team set up on the recommendation of global consulting firm Boston Consulting Group (BCG), after being awarded the mandate for a repositioning exercise.

In a circular of September 27, 2011, NABARD, making a significant deviation from its earlier policies, included private entities as eligible institutions without consulting the RBI. In another circular of December 23, 2011, NABARD further revised the scheme, again without consulting the RBI, to provide private firms an interest rate rebate of 1.5%. In violation of the regulated 8% rate levied by RIDF, an avenue was created for flow of funds to corporates and release of the interest rate rebate to the borrowers directly by NABARD.

According to documents available with *The Hindu*, a total of Rs. 759 crore was disbursed, including as refinance at 8% to various banks to fund 516 warehouses and cold storage projects of private entities in March 16-31, 2012. Shubham Logistics Ltd, a subsidiary of the over Rs. 6,000 crore Kalpataru Group, was handpicked for a rebate of 1.5%, allowing it to access Rs. 115 crore under a government scheme at a concessional 6.5% rate of interest. Shubham Logistics would have paid a 10.5% rate of interest had the funds been sourced from the market. The company, which was disbursed a total of Rs 180.87 crore, to set up 18 warehouses,

became the beneficiary of a further 15% subsidy under another government scheme, entitling the company to a refund of over Rs. 20 crore.

The two schemes that were used to favour Shubham Logistics are Grameen Bhandaran Yojana which offers subsidy of 15% to 33.33% for construction of rural godowns. For corporates the subsidy is 15% of total financial outlay up to a maximum of Rs 28.12 lakh. Under the other scheme, 'Warehousing scheme under RIDF', banks are offered refinance at 8% which can be further reduced to 6.5% as an incentive for prompt repayment.

Documents reveal that the RBI has questioned NABARD's interest rate manipulations in financing warehousing projects without its permission and demanded a recall of the Rs. 759 crore allocated to private firms. Compliance with this directive means that NABARD will have to return the money to the RBI and raise debt from the market to honour its commitments. This is likely to hit NABARD's balance sheet by roughly Rs. 150 crore. The Ministry of Agriculture has further questioned irregularities in Shubham Logistics storage projects in Deesa, Banaskantha, pointing out that the project is ineligible for sanction of the subsidy.

Meanwhile, Aditya Bafna, Executive Director of Shubham Logistics Ltd (SSLL), a subsidiary of Kalpataru Power Transmission Ltd was appointed Director on the board of NABARD Consultancy Services Private Ltd (NABCONS) — a wholly owned subsidiary of NABARD — on January 15, 2010. He refused to comment on either the allegations of special favours or the conflict of interest arising from his appointment on the NABCONS Board.

NABARD's response to a RTI query reveals that it released Rs 13.3 crore to BCG for a 'repositioning' report that it admits has never been submitted. Sources in NABARD allege that an additional payment of Rs. 9 crore has also been released to "rollout the recommendations". NABARD Chairman Prakash Bakshi, under whose leadership these transactions were sanctioned, did not respond to detailed questions that were emailed to him on December 3, including on the fresh release of Rs 9 crore to BCG or what hit NABARD's balance sheet was likely to take after the repayment to RBI of the unauthorised fund transfers to corporates.

BCG's Chairman, Asia Pacific, Janmejaya Sinha did not respond to detailed questions regarding whether the firm had any exposure to working with any developmental financial institution prior to its consulting assignment with NABARD, especially in the Asia Pacific region,

the terms of reference and payment for the assignment or whether it was true that BCG was scouting for fresh business opportunities with the RBI.

Naidu dares Congress and YSRC to oppose his proposed crop loan waiver



TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu donning a coal miner's head gear meets the miners during his 'Vasthunna Mee Kosam' padayatra at Kuntala cross roads in Adilabad district on Sunday.-PHOTO: BY ARRANGEMENT

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday dared the Congress and YSR Congress to oppose his proposed scheme of crop loan waiver. He said these parties should stop criticising his endeavour to uplift the farmers from the dire crisis they were faced with.

Interacts with farmers

Mr. Naidu was addressing farmers at Nandan cross road in Kuntala mandal on day four of his 'Vasthunna Mee Kosam' padayatra in Adilabad district.

The TDP chief visited a nearby agriculture field and interacted with farmers before addressing a roadside gathering.

Mr. Naidu assured farmers of all possible help to bail them out of the critical situation. "I have already walked 1,100 kms only to know your problems," he said.

Review meeting

The TDP chief began his padayatra at about 3 p.m. after conducting a review meeting with leaders and workers of Mudhole Assembly constituency. He had met various leaders before that including D.B. Patel, a former Minister in Maharashtra government.

Mr. Patel had arrived at the Kuntala cross road night halt camp to express solidarity with the TDP leader. He is learnt to have appreciated the effort of Mr. Naidu towards benefitting the farmers.

Express solidarity

Mr. Naidu was also greeted by 20 Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti activists who had come from Nalgonda. A few Singareni coal miners too expressed solidarity with him during their meeting.

The padayatra crossed over into Nirmal Assembly constituency at Narsapur (G) village after traversing about 60 kms through Mudhole constituency in Adilabad district. He unveiled a bust of former Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao at Narsapur.

Apprehension over poor yield haunts tapioca growers

High cost of cultivation coupled with poor rains poses problems



tough call: A street vendor arranging tapioca for sale in Tiruchi. —Photo: M. Moorthy.

: A tapioca farmer is one entity among the pantheon of agriculturists who does not know what the future holds for year after year. This year, thanks to poor rains, it is going to be tough to get even 50 per cent yield.

It is an annual crop whose products like sago, starch and maida are in good demand, mostly in Gujarat and Maharashtra. And, of course, in Kerala tapioca is a staple food as it contains 98 per cent carbohydrates.

Realising the problems that these farmers face, the State government established Sagoserve (The Salem Sago and Starch Manufacturers' Service Industrial Co-operative Society) in Salem in 1981.

Of the total tapioca area of 82,000 hectares, Salem district has 34,000 hectares. Though Perambalur has almost 50 per cent of farmers dependent on maize and 40 per cent on cotton, a number of them raise tapioca.

But they are still dependent on brokers\merchants and do not have the wherewithal to convert tapioca tubers into sago\starch unlike Salem which has 650 of the total 800 processing units in the State.

"We were getting Rs.600 for a bag of 73 kg (tubers) in 2008-9. Last year it declined to Rs.500 per bag. Now it is hovering around Rs.200-300," laments R. Perumal, a farmer who has been raising tapioca for decades.

This is a crop which requires considerable manual labour as well. The plants should be watered at least once 15 days. Besides, weed is a major problem and hence manual labour is an important component. Some farmers contend that the cost of cultivation an acre, which was about Rs.20,000 a couple of years ago, has shot up to Rs.40,000 now.

Due to poor rains this year, the tubers have not "matured" at all. "I do not expect more than 75 bags this year against the maximum of 150 bags that we get in a normal year," says Mr.Perumal.

Officials admit that against the normal annual rainfall of 861 mm, the district has recorded 564 mm so far. The northeast monsoon, which is the mainstay of this region, has also disappointed farmers.

"It is ironical that these farmers were getting higher prices when their cultivation cost was far less. Now the labour cost has shot up virtually by 100 per cent, and the price of fertilizers by 300

per cent. For instance, the price of potash, has skyrocketed from about Rs.250 before April 1, 2010, to about Rs.900 now,” points out Rajachidambaram, general secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam.

Mr. Perumal adds that the price of products like maida made from tapioca has been going up. From Rs.10 a kg in 2008, it now costs around Rs.40-50 a kg. “But the price of raw material has slumped.”

Hence, farmers demand that they get at least Rs.600 a bag to break even. “Against the current price of Rs.4 per kg of tapioca we should get least Rs.10 to term it remunerative,” they say.

Mr. Rajachidambaram laments that tapioca also does not have any minimum support price. Hence, there is absolutely no guarantee for the farmer.

Farmers encouraged to go in for short duration crop

About 37,500 hectares brought under SRI technique



progressive:A farmer adopting System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique at a field in Pudukottai on Sunday.

With the northeast monsoon playing truant, farmers have been making all efforts to save the standing samba crop in the district. In well irrigated areas, farmers share available water optimally, while most of them were yet to apply fertilizer due to paucity of water.

About 70,000 hectares had been covered under samba so far. It included a maximum area of 16,862 hectares in Avudaiyarkovil block followed by 11,913 in Aranthangi, 10,518 in

Manamelkudi, 6,775 in Kundrandarkovil, 6,731 in Iluppur, 6,679 Tirumayam, 3,980 in Alangudi, 3,171 in Gandharvakottai, 2,744 in Pudukottai and 1,933 ha in Ponnamaravathy block.

Agriculture department officials have been advising paddy cultivators to go in for short duration variety. They have been popularising the System of Rice Intensification and about 37,500 hectares had been brought under this technique, according to sources.

“Even the weather forecast for the first week of December indicating showers to Tamil Nadu has failed. Hence, we have been advising the farmers to go in for short duration varieties,” an official said.

The officials have also been advising paddy farmers to tackle the leaf folder disease in paddy. The disease is caused mainly due to the deposit of mist on paddy.

Protection scheme for farmers, a hit in Theni

Theni district stood first in the State in taking farmers’ protection scheme to landless farmers and farm labourers, said Collector K.S. Palanisamy.

He was distributing priceless mixies, grinders and fans to beneficiaries at Silvarpatti in Andipatti block near here on Saturday.

A total of 45,951 farm labourers have been benefited from the scheme in the district so far. Besides, 6,310 farm labourers have been receiving educational assistance, marriage assistance, funeral and other allowances. A sum of Rs.3.7 crore has been disbursed to them so far. “We have been monitoring implementation of the scheme. All petitions received on or before November 15 from beneficiaries should be cleared within 10 days. On completion of verification, financial assistance should be released to them immediately. Revenue officials should pay special attention to the petitions given by the farm labourers,” the Collector said. Massive propagation should be done to enable every farm labourers to know the scheme fully.

The district administration was keen on taking all schemes to all beneficiaries. While priceless goods lessened the burden of home makers, other schemes helped women gain economic independence and uplift.

“First, beneficiaries at village levels will be covered. In the second and third phases, we will cover beneficiaries in town panchayats and municipalities,” he pointed out.

Four gram gold for mangalsutra scheme was not only ensured hassle-free marriage to women but also encouraged young women to study well. If they have higher qualification, they will get more financial assistance, besides four gram gold. Such measure will automatically tempt women to study well and ultimately increase women literacy rate in the state.

Later, he gave away priceless goods worth Rs.94.93 lakhs to 1,758 beneficiaries.

Seeds of sorrow



Every 30 minutes, a farmer in India kills himself. Vidarbha, a cotton growing region in Maharashtra is the epicenter of this crisis” says an activist in documentary film 'Bitter Seeds'.

A film by Micha X Peled, it is being shown in the villages in Yavatmal district where many farmers have killed themselves.

Capturing the helplessness of cotton farmers in the region, the film tells the story of a cotton growing farmer Ramkrishna Kopolwar of Telang Takali village in Yavatmal district.. It was here that the first case of farmers' suicide of the district was reported in 1997 when a cotton farmer Ramdas Ambarwar killed himself.

The film also relates the life of Ramdas Ambarwar's daughter Manjusha who wants to become a journalist and highlight farmer's issue. It captures how BT cotton seeds are sold in the villages of Yavatmal district with a promise that there will be no pest attack on the crops and the yield will be much higher.

The film portrays how seed company Monsanto was able to enter Indian market following a U.S. complaint to the World Trade Organization (WTO) which forced India to open its door to foreign companies. To produce higher yields, BT cotton requires more water and fertilizers to be applied according to a precise timetable but 90 per cent of the Vidarbha farmers have no irrigation facilities and are rain dependent. Monsanto Company refutes the allegation. In an interview to Micha X. Peled, Dr. Gyanendra Shukla, Director, corporate affairs, Monsanto India says, "Suicide is a common phenomenon in every society. People end their lives due to various factors. There is absolutely no connection between the genetically modified seeds and farmer's suicides. BT cotton is using 80 per cent less insecticides for control of bollworms as a result there is overall reduction in the use of insecticide in the cotton crop in India."

For millennia, Vidarbha's farmers have cultivated cotton using seeds from their own plants. In 1970, hybrid seeds were introduced. They significantly increased the yields, but with time required doses of costly fertiliser and insecticide. In 2002, genetically modified BT cotton seeds arrived. Like the hybrid variety, they are non-renewable and must be repurchased every year. Today they dominate the market.

According to agricultural scientist Dr. Vandana Shiva, who is featured in the documentary, "the conventional seeds were made completely unavailable and through vigorous campaigning, BT seeds were imposed on the farmers. GM engineering disturbs the physiology and the metabolism of the crops, so we have had crop failures in the GM cotton in a drought year and also in the case of too much rain. Or new pests start to occur again because the plant has been weakened."

Other issues related to the farmers are also highlighted in the film. Eighty per cent of Vidarbha farmers fail to receive bank loans. They are forced to borrow from moneylenders who charge exorbitant rates and operate illegally.

The screenings are being organised by the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a social group working among farmers here. Vidarbha has witnessed a large number of farmers' suicide in last few years and this year until November 12, the number was 624, according to the VJAS.

After the screening at Yavatmal, many farmers were in tears. Motiram Chavhan who owns five acres of farm land says, "The film shows the ground reality and if this situation continues, you won't find a farmer in this region."

Two farm schools opened in Madurai to teach water saving techniques

Two farm schools - at Veerapandi and at Podhumbu - in Madurai West Block have been opened to train and disseminate on water saving techniques and among others to the farmers in this region.

In the absence of rain and poor storage in reservoirs, regular farming activities had shrunk, according to data available with the agriculture department.

The water, which was released from Vaigai reservoir for paddy crops to the extent of 1.50 lakh acres being raised in the district, had been suspended recently due to fall in water level.

Sensing the need to adapt to latest technology on as many fronts possible in the process of farming operation, the officials have swung into action to prepare farmers' to get familiarised with innovative farm activities and the use of new machines. The water management in irrigation had suddenly captured an important slot for a majority of the farmers, officials said.

With the aid of revolving fund, the agriculture department officials here have opened two farm schools in which 25 farmers' each are undergoing training right from transplanting techniques. The farmers' are selected from each block in the district and as a part of training, they are also taken to exposure visits within and outside the State. For needy farmers, seed money of Rs 10,000 is provided, which is interest free for six months and is repayable on easy terms.

The farm school is an initiative which would instil confidence on farmers' and through such exposure they could acquire knowledge and implement it in their farms, said Deputy Director (Agriculture) S. Kanagaraj.

At a time, when farmers are keeping their fingers crossed due to severe water shortage, the initiative is expected to bring in hope and optimism. Some of the trainees at the farm school in Podhumbu said that the System Rice Intensification technique consumed less water and facilitated higher yield. The cost incurred in raising paddy per acre too in SRI method was relatively less and in the absence of skilled labourers, mechanisation has given us hope, they summed up.

The initiative, which is covered in six classes, is expected to rope in more farmers prepared for the next season, said Deputy Directors G.R. Saranath Babu and Ravichandran.

Workshop on eco-friendly farming techniques held in Madurai

Nearly 1,000 women farmers from Southern districts of Tamil Nadu converged in Madurai for a two-day conference to discuss about eco-friendly and collective farming techniques.

“We encourage women farmers to opt for diverse farming, where at least 35 varieties of crops could be cultivated in one acre of land. Our prime objective is to ensure safe food through adoption of natural methods and encourage growing of millet in dry land”, said Sheelu, president of Tamil Nadu Women’s Collective, based in Chennai and an organiser of the event.

At the conference organised by Women’s Collective and ‘Kalanjiyam Women Farmers Association’, as many as 22 resolutions were passed.

“Though a large number of women are actively involved in agricultural activities, no proper recognition has been given to them.

The women agriculturalists should be provided with farmer’s identification card’, said S. Ponnuthayee, one of the members of Women’s Collective from Tirunelveli. According to Ponnuthayee, collective farming technique has been tried in Tirunelveli district and has produced good result.

L. Balamani, a farmer from Nilgiris district said most of the vegetables cultivated in the district are exposed to chemicals. “After attending the conference I am aware of the availability of a wide range of alternative natural fertilisers and pesticides. Now I know that the use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers amounts to slow poisoning, I am planning to adopt eco friendly and natural farming methods in future”, she added.

The farmers also expressed their grievance on the skyrocketing price of seeds and fertilisers. “The government should announce special incentives to help farmers instead of helping the fertiliser firms. Aged farmers should be given pension”, read the resolutions passed in the conference.

The farmers also urged the government to introduce sale of millets in Public Distribution System. “The government should also consider providing healthy alternatives like millets to school students under the noon meal scheme”, said A. Paunthai, a farmer from Usilampatti in Madurai district.

The members insisted that uninterrupted power supply should be provided to farmers.

Sugar factory increases procurement price

Aska Cooperative Sugar Industries Limited (ACSIL) in Ganjam district will procure sugarcane at enhanced price for the sugarcane crushing season 2012-13.

According to the factory authorities, this year the sugarcane procurement price was increased to Rs. 2,270 per ton. During the last sugarcane crushing season, the procurement price was Rs. 2,210 per ton. According to Ganjam District Sugarcane Growers’ Association (GDSCA) vice-president Narayan Jena, the enhanced price is still less than the association demand.

Cane growers declare ‘crop holiday’

Alleging that they were not getting remunerative price despite heavy investment, sugarcane farmers in Zaheerabad have decided to declare a crop holiday. Increasing investment cost, lack of proper power supply, non-availability of labour, dwindling ground water levels and not getting proper price for the produce were being stated as some of the reasons for their decision at a meeting here on Saturday. The farmers claim that they were losing about Rs. 20,000 per acre. – Staff Reporter .

Pepper prices may marginally decline in futures market: study

Weak export demand, increase in import of cheaper produce blamed



India has slipped from the fourth position to the fifth in the global pepper exports' market.— File Photo

A price forecast study has indicated that Indian black pepper prices may marginally decline in the coming months in the futures market owing to the twin impact of the weak demand for the Indian produce in the export market and the increase in imports of cheaper produce from Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

However, the tight supply in domestic markets and good domestic demand ahead of festivals could limit the fall in pepper prices, according to a price analyses conducted by the Market Intelligence Centre of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore.

The study, which is based on data for the last 11 years from Gonikoppal and Sakleshpur markets and a survey of the pepper traders besides an econometric analysis, has tried to forecast the prices till March 2013.

Price during harvest

According to the study, black pepper prices are in the range of Rs. 360-Rs. 390 a kg during the harvest. The good yield prospects and lower uptake by international buyers may prevent the prices from crossing the Rs. 400-mark, according to C.P. Gracy, Principal Investigator of the UAS, Bangalore's Market Intelligence Centre.

She hastens to add that the forecast is based on the current market sentiments and could vary with any changes in the market situation and EXIM policies.

The study points out that the demand for Indian pepper in the international markets has remained low due to price disparity. Pepper shipments from India to the international market were being quoted at \$ 8,475-\$ 8,600 a tonne, while the produce from Indonesia and Vietnam was available for about \$ 1,500 a tonne lower than the Indian prices.

What has made the situation complex for India is that global pepper production is expected to increase by 7.2 per cent to touch 3.20 lakh tonnes this year with a sharp rise in Brazilian, Indonesian and Vietnamese output.

According to the study, the domestic consumption of black pepper in 2012 is expected to be 42,500 tonnes while the exports are estimated to be around 17,500 tonnes. India has slipped from the fourth position to the fifth in the global pepper exports' market, behind Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil and Malaysia, according to the International Pepper Community's estimates for this year.

Imports

According to report from traders, India's pepper import in 2012-13 is expected to increase by 50 per cent compared with the last year to touch 26,000 tonnes, the study notes.

The study has advised farmers to release the stock slowly into the market to keep the prices firm. The escalation in cost of production of black pepper also has put pressure on spot pepper prices this year.

Pepper is popularly known as black gold as it has global commercial importance. Kerala leads in pepper production in India by accounting for over 60 per cent of the country's production, followed by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, the major pepper production comes from Kodagu, Hassan, Chikmagalur and Uttara Kannada.

Paddy farmers a confused lot

Farmers in the district who have raised paddy nurseries in anticipation of good harvest in rabi season, are in confused as to go ahead with transplantation of the seedlings from nurseries to the main fields or drop the cultivation at nursery-stage itself to minimise the losses.

Reason for it is the continuing poor monsoon coupled with insufficient release of water from reservoirs for irrigation.

Already, it has been a poor season for paddy in the district this year with acreage under the crop been almost nil in the just-ended kharif season.

According to official statistics, paddy nurseries have come up on 110 acres to produce the seedlings required for 1,300 hectares of paddy cultivation during the just-commenced rabi season.

K.C.M. Balasubramanian, a progressive farmer and a former agriculture economist of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, told *The Hindu* that in the present drought-like situation, it would be 'technically' unwise to go for transplantation to main cultivable areas as preparatory works in the main field itself requires lot of water.

"But with paddy is seen as a major grain crop, the district administration could try out a solution to ensure transplantation by going for micro-level interventions.

"Accordingly, the farmers who are struggling the most for the water need to be identified and then provide them with at least six hours of uninterrupted power supply daily for almost two months as 'emergency cases' to enable them draw groundwater for irrigation," he said.

Considering the seriousness of the situation and protect the paddy acreage, the department of agriculture is planning to enthruse the farmers to go for a 'modified' implementation of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique so that whatever water available through canal irrigation could be judiciously used.

"Use of SRI methodology has advantages as it requires 'reduced height of standing water' when compared to traditional cultivation practices," Joint Director of Agriculture M.K. Sherif said.

This apart, the department will also be distributing power weeders at subsidised rates to remove weeds for ensuring better root growth and power sprayers to help farmers fight pest attacks.

Farmers learn water saving techniques

Two farm schools - at Veerapandi and at Podhumbu - in Madurai West Block have been opened to train and disseminate water saving techniques to farmers.

In the absence of rain and poor storage in reservoirs, farming activities had shrunk, according to a data available with the agriculture department. Water released from Vaigai dam for paddy crops to irrigate 1.50 lakh acres had been suspended due to fall in water level.

Hence officials have swung into action to prepare farmers to get familiarised with innovative farm techniques and the use of new machines. With the aid of revolving fund, the agriculture department officials have opened two farm schools in which 25 farmers are undergoing training right from transplanting techniques.

The farmers are selected from each block in the district and as part of their training, they are also taken to exposure visits within and outside the State.

Farming activities go eco-friendly

Nearly 1,000 women farmers from Southern districts of Tamil Nadu converged in Madurai for a two-day conference to discuss about eco-friendly and collective farming techniques.

“We encourage women farmers to opt for diverse farming, where at least 35 varieties of crops could be cultivated in one acre of land. Our prime objective is to ensure safe food through adoption of natural methods and encourage growing of millet in dry land”, said Sheelu, president of Tamil Nadu Women’s Collective, based in Chennai and an organiser of the event.

At the conference organised by Women’s Collective and ‘Kalanjiyam Women Farmers Association’, as many as 22 resolutions were passed.

“Though a large number of women are actively involved in agricultural activities, no proper recognition has been given to them.

The women agriculturalists should be provided with farmer’s identification card’, said S. Ponnuthayee, one of the members of Women’s Collective from Tirunelveli. According to Ponnuthayee, collective farming technique has been tried in Tirunelveli district and has produced good result.

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The farmers also expressed their grievance on the skyrocketing price of seeds and fertilisers. The farmers also urged the government to introduce sale of millets in Public Distribution System.

Water and power crises set to hit rabi

Adverse impact likely on the production of foodgrains besides pulses and oilseeds



Bleak:According to officials lack of water in irrigation projects kept cultivation of paddy below normal by about three lakh hectares in kharif.–File Photo

Insufficient water in reservoirs and worsening power supply position have cast a shadow on the prospects of the ongoing rabi season in the State. It follows a not so encouraging kharif season which was hit by drought conditions in some parts of the State and untimely rains in some others.

It is likely to have an adverse impact on the production of food grains in particular besides pulses and oilseeds. Officials of the Agriculture Department stated that lack of water in irrigation projects had kept cultivation of paddy below normal by about 3 lakh hectares in kharif. It was taken up in 23.5 lakh ha during the season against normal coverage in 26.48 lakh ha.

Below normal

Cultivation of oil seeds, groundnut being the prime crop, and pulses was also below normal at just above 80 per cent of normal coverage. As if it was not enough, untimely rains caused by Nilam cyclone and later have damaged standing crops in advanced stage in over 5.25 lakh ha including paddy in about 3.25 lakh ha.

As a result, the production of paddy in kharif has been estimated to be at less than 60 lakh tonnes against the last kharif's output of over 85 lakh tonnes. The crop damage caused by rains and floods will bring down the production further and surely it's not good news for people who are already experiencing the pinch of increasing rice prices, said an official of the Civil Supplies Corporation.

Cultivation of crops is not encouraging either in the current rabi season since insufficient water for irrigation, strain on groundwater table and poor power supply position have left the coverage of different crops at 15.95 lakh ha till last week against the normal extent of 18.41 lakh ha by this time. Again, paddy cultivation is badly hit as it was transplanted only in half of the normal extent by last week – 0.88 lakh ha against 1.76 lakh ha, a senior official of the Agriculture Department explained.

The prospects of rabi cultivation gathering momentum appear bleak as the gross water storage in all reservoirs in the State, except the inter-state Tungabhadra project which serves ayacut in Anantapur, Kurnool and Kadapa districts, is as much as 256 tmcft less on Sunday than what it was on the same day last year.

Soil in Kolli Hills lacks organic carbon, nitrogen and potash, says study

Tests conducted on soil samples to determine level of macro and micro nutrients



Providing information: A soil consultant offering suggestions for better crop productivity to a farmer from a tribal community at Valapurnadu Panchayat atop Kolli Hills in Namakkal district, on Friday.-Photo: Special Arrangement

Study on the availability of micro and macro nutrients in soil samples collected from Valapurnadu Panchayat atop Kolli Hills reveals that it lacked three of the four main macro ingredients – organic carbon, nitrogen and potash.

“On the other hand availability of zinc (micro nutrient) is also below average,” M. Janakiraman, a Soil Pedologist and Consultant said.

He said this after distributing soil health cards to farmers in that Panchayat on Friday.

Testing soil quality and suggesting appropriate solutions to suit farmers was taken up under the Alleviation of Poverty and Malnutrition in Agro-biodiversity Hotspots that is carried out by M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in collaboration with the University of Alberta, Canada.

Principal Investigator of the project S.A. Siddick told *The Hindu* that their project is aimed at alleviating the woes of persons from tribal communities by helping them earn more by increasing productivity of their major cash crops such as tapioca and hill banana by enabling them to understand the quality of their soil better.

He said that a total of 415 – dry and wet land – samples were collected from over 200 hectares of cultivable land that is owned by 1,000 farmers, in June 2012.

Tests were conducted to analyse the four macro nutrients (organic carbon, nitrogen, potash and phosphorous) and four micro nutrients (zinc, manganese, copper and iron).

Analysing the reports, Mr. Janakiraman said that organic carbon is highly deficient as persons from tribal community have not applied it for decades.

On the other hand a large portion of naturally available organic carbon has been eroded from the sides of the hills by the rains.

However, phosphorous is available in abundance but it cannot be absorbed by the plants.

Mr. Siddick observed that farmers indiscriminately used complex fertilizers, resulting in further increase in phosphorous, which suppresses other nutrients from reaching the plants.

“This has resulted in drop in the yield as farmers are able to harvest an average 60 bags (70 kg each) of tapioca. Properly following advice that they were given will help them harvest upto 100 bags per acre.

“They were asked to use a lot of organic manure such as poultry litter that is available in large quantities in Namakkal. A small quantity of urea and potash should be mixed with the litter to make up the deficiency of macro nutrients. Using three tonnes of litter per acre equals use of 10 tonnes of cow dung,” he added.

Farmers were also advised to use Phosphobacteria (a biofertilizer) to convert available phosphorous to be usable by the plants.

“Recommendation were also given to make optimum use of vermin compost and to inter crop tapioca (that grows for one year) with pulses and millets that can be harvested in 60 and 90 days respectively,” he observed.

Farmers welcome inclusive insurance scheme

Among the measures announced by the State government in the Rs.69.88 crore package to save samba crop in the Cauvery delta districts, farmers have widely welcomed the insurance cover to be provided by the government by paying the entire premium so that a farmer can get Rs. 8,962 per acre in case of crop loss.

Coupled with this amount is the relief to be provided under the State disaster relief fund to the tune of Rs.4,000 to Rs.5,000 per acre making the total benefit to farmers Rs.13,692 per acre.“The government has brought all farmers under the insurance cover. This will achieve two things, farmers will know the importance of insurance and instead of asking for relief every time when they loose the crop, they will insure the crop and it will solve their problem,” opined farmers in the delta.

Except for loanees, who take co-operative loans, who are automatically covered under insurance as the premium is taken from their loan amount, there was not much awareness among non-loanee farmers of crop insurance

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, Dec 10

Max Min

30.8° | 22.4°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 94

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:20

Sunset: 05:43

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Dec 11

Max Min

31° | 22°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Dec 12	Thursday Dec 13	Friday Dec 14	Saturday Dec 15	Sunday Dec 16
31° 21° Partly Cloudy	25° 23° Overcast	25° 23° Overcast	25° 23° Cloudy	23° 22° Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 77

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 07:03

Sunset: 05:25

Barometer: 1012



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

09.11.2012 P.M

10.12.2012 A.M

09^hdec 2012 P.M

Amira announces prize scheme for basmati buyers

Amira Pure Foods Pvt Ltd has announced a scheme offering a prize of Rs 100,001 through a scratch card to those who buy their yearly requirement of basmati rice from the company.

Introducing “bharti” (new crop season) for a second consecutive year in Gujarat, wherein many people stock their annual requirements of various commodities, Mr Yogesh Arora, Senior General Manager, said the company’s premium branded traditional basmati rice range will be made available in 10 and 25 kg packing. Amira Pure Foods will also launch the same plan in Maharashtra, he said.

Growers want farm costs panel at State level

Leaders of farmers’ associations, agricultural economists, agricultural scientists and non-governmental organisations have called for establishment of CACP (Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices) at the State level. They felt that this is important to ensure ‘income security’ to the farmers.

The Commission should have several centres to collect information on various components of production to scientifically ascertain the cost of production.

They felt that it is important to calculate the cost of production at the local level in order to have correct assessment of support prices.

The present system, they argued, is far from the reality and miserably failed to recognise the actual costs involved in farming.

Participating in a discussion here on Friday on the likely components for an exclusive budget for agriculture, they called for subsidies for all farmers holding five acres or less.

“If the Government wants to protect the interest of general consumers, it should provide the farmers with subsidies to offset the losses they are suffering,” S. Malla Reddy, Vice-President of the CPM-affiliated All-India Kisan Sabha , said.

The cost of fertilisers and other inputs have gone up by 80 per cent, but the Government increased the prices just by 8 per cent.

“The Government should decide the prices of essential commodities just like the way it decides the support prices,” he said.

Yerneni Nagendra Nath, President of Farmers’ Federation of Andhra Pradesh, demanded that the Government should consider the cost of labour as it did in National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

“The labour costs they are paying as per NREGS have resulted in an increase in the cost of agricultural production. It should apply the same labour costs while calculating costs under CACP,” he said.

Muduganti Sridhar Reddy of Bharatiya Kisan Sangh called for making agriculture a profitable venture.

“We should move away from the concept of minimum support price. It, in fact, should be a profitable job,” he said.

Coonoor tea turnover rises 28%

Despite subdued support from exporters, this week’s turnover of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions which ended on Friday has increased by 28 per cent over last week, thanks to good domestic demand.

Overall, a higher volume was sold even as the prices rose to a record high.

Export to Russia was selective. “Russia has received a fresh spell of snowfall halting transportation in many cities. Snow-covered vehicles not fitted with snow-piercing wheels obstruct traffic movement. Waterways continue to remain frozen. Our importers contend that tea movement is hit. While the demand for hot tea has increased during this harsh winter, uncertainty in transportation forces us to be cautious at this week’s auction”, an exporter told *Business Line*.

However, upcountry buyers stepped up their purchase of quality teas as they could procure orthodox teas here for Rs 97 a kg against Rs 189 in the North and CTC teas for Rs 93 against Rs 146 up North.

Consequently, average price this week rose to Rs 94.16 a kg from Rs 93.61 last week. This was the highest price fetched so far this calendar.

The demand pushed up the volume sold to 12.77 lakh kg from 10.03 lakh kg last week. This was the highest volume sold in 18 weeks.

Consequently, the overall turnover increased to Rs 12.02 crore from 9.39 crore last week.

This marked a gain of Rs 2.63 crore or as much as 28 per cent in just one week, reveals an analysis of the market reports.

Power, water shortage to hit rabi paddy in AP



Paddy farmers in Andhra Pradesh are going to have a tough time in rabi season too. Lack of water in all the major reservoirs and severe shortage of power will make it difficult for the farmers to go for water-intensive paddy crop this time.

The Government officials have been advising the farmers to shun paddy this time and go for maize and other crops that require less water.

The sowing patterns so far clearly indicate a steady growth in the non-paddy crops. Paddy was sown in 88,000 hectares, just 50 per cent of the normal figure of 1.76 lakh ha. This is less than the last year's position of 1.27 lakh ha. The State grows paddy in 15 lakh ha in the rabi season.

"Farmers in all the regions in the State are advised to raise irrigated maize and sunflower as an alternative rice as the groundwater turning scarce," an official of Ministry of Agriculture said.

Yerneni Nagendranath, President of Farmers' Federation of Andhra Pradesh, admits that the season was not favourable to grow paddy. "The Government has been claiming that it will give power for seven hours. But going by the availability, it is unlikely that we get not more than four hours. So, it is good for farmers either to avoid paddy or reduce the acreage in proportion to the availability of water and power," he told *Business Line* on Sunday.

The Government had not released water under Nagarjunasagar and Sriramsagar in the kharif season. This situation is likely to continue in the rabi season too, if the levels in the reservoirs are any indication.

The storage level at Nagarjunasagar stands at 162 tmc (thousand million cubic feet) as against 182 tmc recorded last year. The Sriramsagar reservoir reports 50 tmc (66 tmc).

Crop yields fall by up to 6% this kharif season

The yields of major crops, including rice, oilseeds, sugarcane and cotton, fell by up to 6 per cent during the kharif season compared to the previous season due to delayed monsoon, according to a Agriculture Ministry official.

Kharif (summer sowing) season commences in June with the onset of monsoon and the harvesting is done in September and October.

“The yield rates of major kharif crops like rice, cotton, oilseeds, sugarcane, etc. at an all-India level in the recently completed season compared to the previous one shows that yields have gone down mainly due to delayed and deficient monsoon rains,” the Agriculture Ministry official said.

The yield of rice, a major kharif crop, fell by 4 per cent to 2,185 kg per hectare in the 2012-13 season from 2,284 kg per hectare in the year-ago period, the official added.

Similarly, the yield rate of oilseeds declined to 1,073 kg per hectare during the current kharif season as compared to 1,124 kg per hectare in the previous season.

The yield of sugarcane fell by 6 per cent to 65,753 kg per hectare from 70,317 kg a hectare during the same period.

Coarse cereals yield saw a decline of 5 per cent to 1,478 kg per hectare in the 2012-13 kharif season against 1,561 kg per hectare in the last season, whereas, cotton yields fell marginally to 489 kg per hectare from 491 kg per hectares.

However, the yield of pulses showed an upward trend and rose to 552 kg per hectare in the current kharif season as compared to 543 kg per hectare in the previous season.

The official said the crop yields in the recently over kharif season are not final and are based on preliminary assessments.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

10.12.2012 A.M

Surge in wheat and oilseeds' output but pulses a concern

Sowing of wheat, oilseeds and pulses, the three major rabi crops, saw a strong upward trend during the week ending December 7, making up for much of the shortage so far in this regard. However, overall output of pulses could be affected because of the late revival of rain.

According to the latest data from the agriculture ministry, wheat has been sown on 18.33 million hectares till Thursday, 0.16 million hectares more than the corresponding period of last year and 0.62 million hectares more than the normal area (defined as average sown in the past five years).

The big boost has come from Madhya Pradesh, emerging as a major producer. The data showed wheat had been planted on 3.88 million hectares till last week, almost 18 per cent more than the same period last year. Usually, wheat sowing takes place on 4.2 million hectares in MP during the season. In 2011-12, the state produced a record 12 million tonnes of wheat, marginally behind Haryana — till now, the latter and Punjab were the only ones termed the country's 'wheat bowl'. Overall, farmers produced an all-time high of 94 million tonnes of wheat last year.

MIXED RESULTS ON THE SOWING FRONT

Crop	2011-12	2012-13	% change
Wheat	18.16	18.33	0.93
	18.33		
Pulses	11.71	11.61	-28.5
	11.61		
Oilseeds	7.14	7.19	0.62
	7.19		
Coarse cereals	4.78	4.81	-0.85
	4.81		
Rabi rice	0.14	0.1	0.7
	0.1		

All figures in million hectares

Source: Department of agriculture

Officials said if this trend continued and the weather remained benign, MP could produce another bumper harvest. The general rise in sowing also means that freezing the wheat MSP at the 2011-12 level has not discouraged growers, as was being anticipated.

In pulses, the area sown has shown remarkable improvement in recent weeks; as of Thursday, it was just 100,000 hectares less than last year. Still, experts are worried about the final output. "Pulses are predominantly sown in rainfed areas and so, if there is late revival in showers, as has happened this year, the final production does suffer," said Ramesh Chand, director of the National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research. Till Thursday, pulses were sown on 11.61 million hectares, as against 11.71 million hectares last year. Output during the kharif season was estimated at 5.26 million tonnes, 33.4 per cent less than last year.

PTI adds: The yields of major crops, including rice, oilseeds, sugarcane and cotton fell by up to six per cent during the kharif season compared with the previous season due to delayed rains, said an agriculture ministry official.

India annually produces 17-18 million tonnes of pulses, bulk of which is in the rabi season. If pulses output falls this year, on account of low rainfall during the first two months of the southwest monsoon, the import bill would rise. India imports two to four million tonnes annually of pulses.

Oilseeds had been planted on 7.19 million hectares till Thursday, 54,000 hectares more than last year. Mustard is the oilseed grown most widely during rabi.

In all, crops were sown on 42.06 million hectares till Thursday. The previous total for the entire season was 61.37 million hectares.

Sugar shares dip as UP government declares SAP for sugar cane

Shares of sugar manufacturing companies are under pressure in early morning trades on reports that the Uttar Pradesh (UP) has increased State Advised Price (SAP) for sugarcane procurement by more than 15% to Rs 275-290 a quintal for 2012-13 compared to last year. SAP is the price below which mills cannot buy cane from farmers.

“According to the government, this would translate into total sugarcane payments of Rs 21,500 crore to farmers this crushing season compared to Rs 18,200 crore during 2011-12 – a rise of Rs 3,300 crore higher,” the Business Standard report suggests.

Among the individual stocks, [Balrampur Chini Mills](#) has dipped almost 7% at Rs 57 on the BSE. Triveni Engineering and Industries was down 5% at Rs 20, followed by Shree Renuka Sugars (down 4% at Rs 33) and Bajaj Hindustan (down 2% at Rs 27).



THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

10.12.2012 A.M

Quepem locals irked by errant watermelon folk

QUEPEM: Locals from Quepem, irked by the perennial parking mess and congested traffic, alleged that despite signboards erected in several places, watermelon vendors are occupying the two-wheeler parking place at the side of the main road leading to Cuncolim, thereby giving scooterists a tough time.

Over a year and a half ago, during the tenure of then Quepem municipal council chairman Manuel Colaco, the QMC had in a [resolution](#) decided to erect different types of signboards around town. The body has even hired an agency to prepare a parking masterplan, and paid it almost 30,000. The QMC then forwarded that plan to the deputy collector of Quepem to issue the notification.

Locals alleged that despite the QMC decision to erect signboard for an efficient parking system, the QMC is not enforcing the decision, and instead, the body collects sopo from watermelon vendors and allow them to occupy parking place which is reserved for two-wheelers.

Filomeno Pereira, a senior citizen, said, "Quepem is a central point for the people of Curchorem, Sanguem, Rivona and other villages for their official work, as all the important offices such deputy collector's office, are situated here. The traffic police do their duty only during the Sunday baazar, and during [the rest](#) of the week, only two traffic cops are seen performing their duties in front of the mamlatdar's office." Blaming the police for the failure to control traffic, he further said that the traffic police do not allow two-wheelers to park their vehicles in spaces reserved for four-wheeler parking, but they allow watermelon vendors to occupy two-wheelers parking space.

Another citizen, who declined to be identified, said, "The traffic police has failed to control traffic particularly the parking of the vehicles. The QMC has marked a roughly 150-metre long stretch of road as a buffer zone for 'no parking', starting from the Quepem market, as it is narrow and has a sharp curve. The stretch is accident prone and risks increase when mining trucks were plying. The traffic police allow heavy vehicles including trucks and buses to park along this stretch."

Benefits of rose water

Generations of women have used rose water as part of their skin care regime. It isn't uncommon to hear grannies extolling its benefits and not without reason.

Rose water and rose oil are one of the oldest skin care and grooming products. It used to be added to baths as also to treat mild skin conditions. They are found in many cosmetic products these days.

Here are a few ways how rosewater works wonders for you:

1. Since rose oil has anti-inflammatory properties, using rose water can help in reducing the redness from irritated or over-heated skin.
2. It is a great cleanser and aids in removing oil and dirt accumulated in clogged pores. Thus preventing acne and pimples.
3. It has astringent like properties, which is why it is used after facials and clean ups to close open pores. Applying rose water after steaming tightens capillaries, reduces redness and blotchiness.
4. The aroma of roses is said to be a powerful mood enhancer. It rids you of feelings of anxiety and promotes emotional wellbeing, thereby making you look relaxed. Since it is de-stressing, it

helps you sleep better which means you will wake up feeling fresh.

5. The best and easiest way to use it is to apply it at night. It helps clear all impurities that your face has collected through the day.

Farmer attempts suicide after jumbo herd destroys his ragi crop

COIMBATORE: A 55-year-old farmer attempted to kill himself by slitting his throat with a sharp edged weapon after a herd of elephants destroyed his Ragi crop for the third consecutive time in Thalavady region, Erode district. The victim was initially rushed to Thalavady government hospital from where he was referred to [Coimbatore Medical College Hospital](#) for further treatment. According to family members, the victim fell into a state of total depression on Saturday night when he witnessed a herd of elephants trampling and eating his freshly cut load of Ragi (finger millet) which was laid on the field for drying.

According to police, K Puttumadhan (55), a resident of Thalavady had sown Ragi in his two acre agriculture land. He was keeping a close watch over his crop this year as elephant herds destroyed his Ragi crop in 2011 and 2010 causing severe economic loss.

"Similar incidents occurred in the past during the last two months and my Father Puttumadhan decided to try sowing Ragi once more hoping that he will be able to ensure that it is safely harvested and transported to the local markets," said P Raj, son of [Puutumadhan](#).

Hasanur police said that they will probe the matter further after Puttumadhan's health condition improves. Raj also added that his father was staying awake and keeping a close watch on the field as he had cut his Ragi and had spread it on the field to ensure that it dries under direct sunlight.

"A herd of elephants entered our field on Saturday night and started eating Ragi. My father was keeping a watch on the crop and desperately tried to deter the elephants from causing further

damage. At least five elephants had entered our field" Raj added.

Local farmers joined Puttumadhan to try and chase the elephants away but in vain.

Puttumadhan was reportedly depressed after the incident. His neighbours found him with a slit injury on his throat on Sunday afternoon and immediately rushed him to [Thalavady hospital](#).

Hasanur police was alerted and a case is expected to be registered soon. Puttumadhan has been admitted to the [Intensive Care Unit](#) of Coimbatore Medical College Hospital.

FDI would be scrapped if NDA is voted to power: Murli Manohar Joshi

Senior BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi has said that Foreign Direct Investment in retail would be scrapped if NDA was voted to power in 2014 general elections.

Training his guns at the UPA, Joshi said as per Transparency International report, FDI failed in five countries in which it was introduced earlier and added that it was not going to benefit small traders and farmers.

He told reporters last evening that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) would be scrapped if NDA was voted to power in 2014 general elections.

Joshi alleged that the Walmart balance sheet said that the company has spent Rs 5.3 crore dollars to educate Indian politicians and claimed that this money was given to allow FDI in retail in the country.

Joshi said that due to the opposition of BJP, FDI was not introduced in the insurance sector and rejected the Centre's theory that FDI would enhance sale in fruit and cereals by 40 per cent but said that it would increase sale only by a thin margin of five to seven per cent.

Asked why the BJP proposal against FDI was defeated in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, he said in both houses most of the members spoke in our (BJP) support but they did not vote for us due to personal gains.