

Crop holiday inevitable for second time in rabi season

Declaring crop holiday in Krishna Delta is a foregone conclusion and the State government needs to complete the formality as early as possible to help the farmers take up the alternative crops.

The water needed for taking up rabi crop in the entire ayacut is more than 160 tmcft of water, which is not available in the reservoirs.

High Court orders

Taking into consideration the drinking water needs in March, April and May next year, and High Court order not to draw below the MDDL for irrigation, the State government is not in a position to release water.

With water need tapering to 'zero' power generation has been stopped at Nagarjunasagar Dam from December 6.

With water levels on Friday pegged at 863 feet at Srisailem Reservoir (Against 834 feet of MDDL) and 523.2 feet at Nagarjuna Sagar Project (Against 510 MDDL), there was no scope for taking up the paddy sowing in kharif season.

Alternative crops

Some farmers in Krishna and Guntur districts have already begun land preparations for sowing millets, black gram and moong dal crops in entire Krishna Delta as 300 cusecs was being released from the Prakasam Barrage.

Only 30.4 tmc used from NSP

During the current kharif season rain gods came to the rescue of the farmers and the Irrigation Department at a time when there was no water released for 90 days from the beginning of the season. Heavy rainfall yielded 50 tmc of water that could be utilised for Irrigation in Krishna Delta. "We only used 30.4 tmcft from the NSP and another 12 tmcft may be needed to complete this season by January," Irrigation SE K.L. Narasimhamurthy told *The Hindu* .

Meeting today

On Saturday, the Chief Engineer Irrigation will hold a meeting with Guntur and Krishna Superintendents of Engineers on finalising the plans for taking up works valued at about Rs.800 crore on canals and drains. While only earthen works of desilting and widening will be taken up on drains, all components, including modernising structures and regulators will be taken up.

Online procurement of paddy will benefit millers

Stating that the idea of bringing all rice mills into the online fold was to save time and money for millers and to ensure them hassle-free transactions, Joint Collector A. Babu on Friday said, after Nellore and Guntur, East Godavari would become the third district in the State to introduce e-procurement of paddy.

Addressing a training and awareness programme on procurement management system, organised by the Civil Supplies Department for the benefit of rice millers, Mr. Babu said, from filing of applications to according permissions, everything would be done online in the new mode so that the millers need not visit the civil supplies office. "You can sit in your mills and monitor the procedure by using the online facility. All you have to arrange is a computer, Internet connection, printer, and scanner. Basic knowledge in computers is enough to take care of the online transactions," he explained. Mr. Babu said each rice mill would be given a user ID and password and the data would be interlinked with the departmental portal of the Food Corporation of India.

He advised the millers to give accurate figures of the opening balance and fill in all the details of the farmers from whom they were procuring paddy.

The objective of the project was to ensure transparency in the procurement process, he explained.

Cash incentive to be given to best performing milk shed

Officials told to step up procurement for realising vast potential of Khammam Dairy



Andhra Pradesh Dairy Development Co-operative Federation limited Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Mohammed Ali Rafat inspecting Vijaya dairy milk packets after inaugurating Vijaya dairy parlor at Khammam on Friday.— PHOTO: G.N. RAO

A cash incentive of Rs 50,000 will be sanctioned to one of the best performing milk sheds at the State level in terms of supply of quality milk, said A P Dairy Development Cooperative Federation (APDDCF) Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Mohd. Ali Rafat.

Speaking at a felicitation function organised in honour of the model dairy farmers at Khammam Dairy premises here on Friday, Mr Rafat called upon the farmers to ensure cleanliness during milking and supply of quality milk to the consumers through Vijaya Dairy.

He asked the officials to step up procurement of milk from the current 9,000 litres to at least 30,000 litres for realising the vast potential of Khammam Dairy.

Earlier, Mr Rafat inaugurated Vijaya Dairy Parlour in front of the Zilla Parishad office building here. Speaking on the occasion, he said an action plan has been devised to enhance milk procurement and promote the sale of Vijaya milk and milk based products in the State.

It envisaged sale of 70 percent of the procured milk in the respective districts to minimise the transportation expenditure, overcome the losses and steer the dairy units on the path of financial growth.

Collector Siddharth Jain explained about the ongoing efforts to promote the sale of Vijaya milk in active partnership with the members of self-help groups under the Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA) in Khammam town and other places in the district.

Later, Mr Rafat flagged off two mobile milk parlours in the town.

Farmers slow in repaying loans

Could the unusually laggard recovery of crop loans in Adilabad be attributed to the promise of a waiver by Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president N. Chandrababu Naidu? The answer is yes; at least going by feedback from bankers.

The bankers also foresee tardy repayment of loans by farmers in Telangana as the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) too had announced to write off loans once it comes to power, of course in the yet to be formed State. Party chief K. Chandrashekhara Rao committed himself to the waiver at a meeting in Nizamabad recently.

Among the worst hit due to the slow rate of recovery of crop loans is the Adilabad District Cooperative Central Bank (ADCC), which is in the second month of its recovery drive. All the Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) functioning under it are struggling to recover their advances to farmers.

For example, only Rs. 2 lakh of a total disbursement of Rs. 6 crore of crop loans has been recovered by the Adilabad PACS so far. Normally, over Rs. 30 lakh is collected by our Society during November-December through repayments made by our members," pointed out Y. Venkat Reddy, secretary of the PACS.

Reluctant to repay

He says members are reluctant to repay their loans expecting the waiver to come soon. Not even those who are known to be prompt in their dealing with the PACS are inclined to repay at this juncture.

"The prompt ones were denied benefits of the crop loan waiver in 2008-2009 as they had already repaid their loans. They do not want to lose out any such development this season," Mr. Venkat Reddy said.

"The slow rate of recovery could also be on account of the bad season. Only 50 per cent of trading has been completed so far and repayment could pick up in due course," hoped Lead District Manager, P. Ravi Kumar.

The cumulative disbursement of crop loans in the district is as high as Rs. 877 crore of the target of Rs. 920 crore. "It will certainly be a tall order for banks to recover the money if farmers are unwilling to repay," opined a banker. "Anticipating the recovery to be very poor, we have adopted another method to increase the rate. We are deducting money from the savings accounts operated by farmers with us," the banker said.

Residents push for paddy cultivation



Even as paddy cultivation area is shrinking in the State, Vadakkakam Residents Association, consisting of members from around 112 families of Ward 18 and 19 of Pallippuram panchayat, has come forward with the idea of reviving paddy cultivation in their locality. As part of this endeavour, paddy was cultivated in around 30 cents of land, with the active support from Krishi Bhavan and local panchayat, and also with active involvement of association members. The harvesting was inaugurated by panchayat president Chinnamma Dharman recently.

--O.K. Sugunan, President, Vadakkakam Residents Association.

Edappally Residents Associations Eakopana Samithi, through its activities during the last two years, has proved that basic development activities can be effectively executed at the residents' association level in our society, especially in urban areas. ASTRA (Agricultural Scheme through Residents Associations), an agricultural scheme formulated by Save Kerala Movement, was successfully implemented by the Edappally Residents Associations Eakopana Samithi in 50 cents of land with the help of Changampuzha Central Residents Association, Edappally.

A garbage ground was transformed into a model agricultural field by the Eakopanasamithi. The success of this first project led the YMCA Ernakulam to offer 3 acres of land for organic cultivation under ASTRA at the YMCA home premises, Thrikkakara. This project is being jointly carried out with the help of Thrikkakara Residents Associations Apex Council and Save Kerala Movement.

Yet another ASTRA project is being undertaken by the Ponevazhi West Residents Association Edappally. Apart from improving organic vegetable yield, such projects also promote positive thinking and co-operation. We plan to spread the message of ASTRA throughout the State and have sought the help of Agricultural Minister K.P. Mohanan at the inaugural function of ASTRA

project. The Ponekkara Central Residents Association and Ponevazhi West Residents Association recently held an Eye Testing Camp with the help of Ahalia Foundation Eye Hospital.

K.G. Radhakrishnan, Secretary, Ponekkara Central Residents Association.

Farmers reiterate demand for fair price



A large number of land-losers, under the banner of 'Bhoo Santrastara Horata Samiti', on Friday took out a padayatra from Kuditini to Bellary urging the government to fix a reasonable price for their land.

About 10,000 acres in Veni Veerapur, Kuditini, Kolagallu, Haraginadoni and surrounding places have been marked for acquisition by the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board on behalf of ArcelorMittal and Brahmini Steels.

The farmers have alleged that the KIADB officials had fixed a very low price for their land in violation of the norms laid down in the Land Acquisition Act. They have staged protests and dharna on several occasions, seeking a better deal.

Meanwhile, U. Basavaraj of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha (KPRS), has charged the government and the KIADB with cheating farmers to favour industrialists.

Polappa of the samiti, has urged the government to concede their demands, failing which farmers would prevent companies from stepping onto the land allotted to them.

The farmers later submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner.

Sugarcane loads mount at mill

Technical snag at Vellore Co-operative Sugar Mill delays crushing



Sugarcane lorries waiting inside Vellore Co-operative Sugar Mills in Ammundi near Vellore on Friday. Photo: D. Gopalakrishnan

Farmers supplying sugarcane to the Vellore Co-operative Sugar Mill at Ammundi are in dismay after the mill reportedly developed technical snag nearly five days ago. As a result, heaps of sugarcane brought in lorries and tractors have been waiting to be crushed on the mill premises for the last five days.

K. Kannaiah Naidu, president of Vellore Cooperative Sugar Mill Cane Growers Sangam', said that at least 5,000 tonnes of sugarcane had piled up at the mill waiting to be crushed after the boiler in the mill developed a technical snag on December 10.

"The mill was expected to open on December 5 but it opened only on December 10. However, the tube of the boiler developed some problem and work came to a standstill the same day. About 250 tonnes of sugarcane was crushed on that day. Since then, cane growers have been waiting anxiously to get their produce crushed," he said.

Another 5,000 tonnes of sugarcane in the fields is yet to be cut, he said, adding, "The mill has a capacity of crushing 2,500 tonnes of cane a day. Last year, it functioned only for four months. They had eight months to look into the maintenance of the machinery, yet this kind of snag has occurred now, affecting hundreds of farmers."

Mr. Naidu said the delay in crushing might lead to loss for the farmers. "Cane growers will face a loss of at least Rs. 4,000 per load," he said.

Sathish Kumar, a cane grower from Kamburajapuram, had brought eight tonnes of sugarcane to the mill. "I am waiting since Monday for the cane to be crushed. The mill authorities tell us that the boiler has developed some problem and have kept us waiting. The mill is functioning very slowly and I have to cut more cane cultivated on three acres of land. I am clueless of what is going to happen to the cane," he said.

He added that several cane growers like him were affected badly due to delay in crushing. L. Prabhakaran, a cane grower from Chinna Ramanathapuram near Tiruvalam, had brought seven tonnes of sugarcane to the mill. "I will certainly incur a loss of Rs. 1,000 a day as the wait seems to continue," he said.

Rhinoceros beetle infestation in coconut trees

The emergence of Rhinoceros beetle, the main pest of coconut and oil palms, once again in large numbers in coconut farms mainly in Udumalpet, Gudimangalam, Madathukulam, Pongalur and Dharapuram blocks, is posing threat to yield.

To prevent its spreading, the agriculture department is all set to go on a massive campaign to educate the farmers on how its breeding could be controlled.

Prices of small onions soar high

Prices of small onions have risen sharply at the wholesale market here on Friday owing to poor arrivals and sharp increase in exports. Large quantities of onion have been exported to Sri Lanka and East Asian countries from Dindigul.

At present, wholesale of price of onion has shot up to Rs.60 a kg from just Rs.25 a kg last week. In retail market, prices of onions are hovering around Rs.68 to Rs.70 a kg.

Normally, this market gets its supply regularly from Andipatti and Cumbum in Theni district, Sengurichi, Gujliamparai, Vedasandur and Iyyalur in Dindigul district, Udumalpet, Tiruchi and neighbouring state Karnataka.

With no supply from Dindigul, Theni and Tiruchi districts owing to lean season, arrival is at an all time low.

Now, Dindigul wholesale market receives just 1,500 to 1,800 bags. (Normally, arrival is around 5,000 to 8,000 bags a day and in peak season, three to four truck loads of onions are received in the market.)

With no arrivals from Karnataka, particularly from Mysore, exporters are vying with each other to procure the entire arrivals from different parts of the district, leaving miniscule to local retailers.

Ninety per cent of the arrival has been shipped to Sri Lanka and the rest to Malaysia and Thailand.

Shrinkage in area under onion cultivation is also a prime reason for poor arrival.

Usually during this season, domestically grown small onions come to the market and help regulate supply till the arrival of onions from Karnataka in the month of January and February.

Last year during the same period, due to slump in exports there was crash in price and onions were sold between Rs.5 and Rs.7 a kg. Small farmers were worst affected. Many farmers had failed to harvest the produce as the procurement price did not even match labour wages.

Having burnt their fingers, many farmers abandoned onion cultivation and shifted to other crops in the next season, say wholesale traders.

Unlike big onions, exports play a crucial role in fixing prices of small onions. Its impact is felt not only in Dindigul but also in Theni. Local people have to shell out a huge sum for buying small onions. Large procurement is being done at Tiruchi market also.

THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

14.12.2012 P.M

15.12.2012 A.M

14thdec 2012 P.M

More Bengal farmers turn to Atlanta potatoes



Lufthar Rahman and his neighbours at Abhirampur village in Hooghly in West Bengal have sowed more Atlanta variety of potato this year. It is for use by PepsiCo India for making flakes and other Frito-Lay products.

The political opposition to contract farming notwithstanding; at least 30 per cent more farmers entered into agreements with PepsiCo this year. The area under cultivation has also gone up by over 15 per cent to 7,000 acres.

Dominant trend

According to Ram Pada Pal, President of West Bengal Cold Storage Association, nearly 13,000 farmers have entered into a contract arrangement with PepsiCo for supply of Atlanta potatoes.

“The number of farmers engaged in contract farming of potatoes in Bengal has witnessed a steady increase from just about 1,800 in 2008-09 to 10,000 in 2011-12,” Pal told *Business Line*.

PepsiCo’s procurement from the State is set to rise to 70,000 tonnes this season compared with 60,000 tonnes last season.

Bengal is the largest supplier of potatoes to Frito-Lay's India operations, accounting for almost 30 per cent of the company's total procurement, which was about two lakh tonnes in 2011-12 spread across nine States.

The rise in the sowing area for Atlanta potato is despite farmers earning less than half for cultivating it compared to the usual Jyoti variety in 2011-12.

Assured returns

PepsiCo had promised Rs 580-600 a quintal depending on the quality of produce in 2011-12 to its contract farmers. However, the wholesale price of Jyoti potato ruled between Rs 1,200 and Rs 1,300 a quintal during the year.

"Though Jyoti was fetching higher prices this year, the yield was relatively lower. Moreover, returns from Jyoti potato vary from year-to-year depending upon the yield and other factors, whereas in the case of PepsiCo we get an assured price," Rahman said.

PepsiCo, Rahman said, has agreed to pay Rs 600-640 a quintal for 2012-13.

Apart from fetching an assured price for producing the Atlanta potato, farmers also stand to gain by selling some of the rejected potatoes in the open market.

According to farmers, the company procures only potatoes that meet its specifications.

"Last year, I had produced about 726 quintals of Atlanta potatoes, of which nearly 115 quintals were not procured by the company. I sold these along with the Jyoti variety earning nearly Rs 1,300 a quintal," another farmer said.

Area under wheat up; rice coverage trails

The area under rice continues to trail despite sowing of rabi crops gathering momentum.

Data from the Agriculture Ministry showed wheat plantings at over 227.45 lakh hectares (lh) against last year's 220.82 lh.

Wheat acreage is now three per cent higher, year on year, and sowing has been completed on nearly 80 per cent of the normal sown area of 286.4 lh.

Wheat acreage is up in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, while it is lower in Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka and Haryana. The country had produced a record 93.9 million tonnes of wheat last year. The Government had asked farmers to complete wheat sowing in northern India by November 30, as the late-sown crop is vulnerable to terminal heat damage during February-March.

While acreage under most crops is higher on year, rice sowing is lagging. Pulses sowing has finally caught up and is higher than last year. Coverage of pulses improved to 121.22 lh (120.60

lh). The Government is banking on the rabi pulses crop to tide over the shortfall in kharif output due to erratic rains.

Rice acreage is currently at 1.42 lh, against 1.95 lh last year due to lower acreage in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Sowing of oilseeds too has got a boost on account of higher minimum support price and better soil moisture in growing areas. Oilseeds have been sown on over 79 lh so far this season, up from 74 lh during the same period a year ago. While mustard acreage is up 3.3 per cent on year at 63.6 lh, groundnut acreage is 15.4 per cent higher at 3,52,000 ha and that of sunflower at 6,62,200 ha (3,15,300 ha).

Coverage of coarse grains is marginally higher at 53 lh (52 lh). The overall area under rabi crops is higher than last year's coverage. Rabi crops acreage stands at 482 lakh hectares (lh) compared with 469.7 lh during the same period last year, according to the Agriculture Ministry.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

15.12.2012 A.M

Delayed irrigation projects under scanner in Chhattisgarh

The delay in starting a few irrigation projects in the state has put the Chhattisgarh government under the scanner for allegedly helping the industries in the state.



The opposition Congress party on Friday charged that the BJP government in Chhattisgarh was giving priority to the industries than the farmers when it came to give water from its resources. The issue came up during the Question Hour in the Chhattisgarh Legislative Assembly.

The members sought the status of many projects including Mahanadi-Tandula link project and Hasdeo Minimata irrigation project. These projects were announced by the state government earlier. Even the proposals had been included in the annual plan of the state.

Chhattisgarh Minister for Water Resources Ramvihar Netam said that the survey work for the Mahanadi-Tandula link project was in progress while the work on Hasdeo Minimata project was near completion. The reply charged the opposition members who grilled the state government on the issue. "It is very unfortunate that the survey work for the project that will generate still going on while the work on the project that will supply water to the industries is on near completion," Leader of Opposition Ravindra Choubey said. From the Hasdeo project, water would be supplied to 49 power plants coming up in Janjgir district, he added. The Congress legislators said almost three years had passed after the government announced the Mahanadi-Tandula link canal project. This would enhance irrigation capacity in Durg district. "It is

unfortunate that even in three years, government could not complete the survey work," Choubey said.

The opposition members urged the minister to take up the projects that have farmers' interest on priority. Netam assured that the state government would start the work on the project as soon as the survey work was completed

Mahindra to begin tractor production at AP plant next month

Mahindra and Mahindra will commence production of tractors next month at its new facility at Zaheerabad in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh.

M&M currently has its automobile plant spread over 343.36 acres of land at Zaheerabad, 136-km from Hyderabad, where its products like UV (Maxx), 3-wheelers (Champion Alfa), Light Commercial Vehicles and buses are manufactured.

It now has employee strength of 641 and a vehicle assembly capacity of 218 vehicles per day.

M&M is investing Rs 300 crore on the new tractor manufacturing facility where it intends to manufacture 90,000 units per annum, providing direct employment to about 2,000 persons.

Briefing newsmen at the end of a meeting with industrialists here this afternoon, AP Major Industries Minister J Geeta Reddy said contrary to claims, the state was witnessing significant growth on the industrial front.

"Of the 115 proposals we have received during the Partnership Summit last January, 10 have already gone into production while another 73 are under implementation.

In fact, AP's industrial growth rate in 2011-12 stood at 7.33 per cent, as against the national average of 3.95 per cent," the Minister said.

Of the 69 investment proposals cleared by the State Investment Promotion Board, headed by the Chief Minister, 21 units have already started production with an investment of Rs 20,176 crore and employment creation of 41,605.

Four more units, set up with an investment of Rs 3468 crore, were ready to commence production and another 40 (Rs 58,689 crore) were under implementation.

"Investors from countries like Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden and Queensland are coming to the state with investment proposals. The investment scenario in the state is encouraging, compared to other states, despite recession. AP is now ranked No.3 in industrial growth after Gujarat and Maharashtra," Geeta Reddy said.