

## Price of vegetables has come down



: On Sunday, the beginning of Tamil month – Marghazhi – there was a huge turnout at the B.B. Kulam uzhar sandhai.

With heavy arrivals, the shandy was filled with activity from as early as 7 a.m. Vegetables and fruits from nearby fields were fresh and affordable.

Ramachandran, a regular visitor to the sandhai, a resident of Viswanathapuram, said that prices of carrot, tomatoes were pretty cheap, when compared with last week.

It had almost fallen by 50 per cent in the sandhai. Similar was the case with brinjal and butter beans, he noted.

According to the agriculture officer K. Arumugam, who is in charge of the administration of the sandhai, said that carrot price was anywhere between Rs.12 and Rs.14 depending on the variety. Onion was selling at Rs.20 (big) and Rs.44 (small), potatoes sold at Rs.26 per kg, beans Rs.10. Cabbage, which had arrived in large numbers, was available at Rs.10 per kg, ladiesfinger Rs.12 and brinjal Rs.8.

As for fruits, the price of banana Rs 3 to 4 each piece, sapotta (Rs 14/kg) and guava Rs 35-40 was fast moving in the sandhai.

Many consumers claimed that guava was sold at Rs.45 and Rs.50 in department stores.

Almost a majority of the commodities prices had fallen by 30 to 40 per cent from the last week rates.

With absence of muhurtham (marriage or other festivities) and rise in the arrivals, the prices had come down.

But, the farmers' are pretty happy since the number of consumers had gone up manifold.

On Sunday alone, an estimated crowd of over 5000 had visited the sandhai here, Mr. Arumugam pointed.

There are a little over 70 types of vegetables available in the sandhai, which is open from 7 a.m. to noon or sometimes, it is even stretched beyond that, he summed up.

### **"Crop insurance will help farmers"**

Crop insurance will help sustain farmers who lose their crops this year. Failure of monsoon dashes hopes of farmers now. Hence, farmers should insure their crops, according to S. Kasivelu, District Coordinator, Agricultural Insurance Company of India.

Premium should be made before December 31. Insurance benefits would be released purely on assessment of the crop yield and not considering the rainfall factor, he said.

Farmers should bear in mind that compensation based on insurance would not be released within a short period.

Only after the visit of a team of officials from the Departments of Agriculture, Horticulture, Statistics and Revenue, the compensation could be extended.

Since many farmers had insured their crops during 2010, which received 711 mm rainfall, insurance amount was released to settle their claims for the declining yield. The insurance company has released Rs.4.8 crore as compensation for the crop loss to extent of around

60,000 hectares of 35,000 farmers, mostly of pulses, across Tuticorin district, Mr. Kasivelu told *The Hindu* here on Friday.

To eliminate middlemen, insurance amount was deposited to Primary Agriculture Cooperative Bank and it was being disbursed accordingly. Banana farmers would be entitled to receive compensation of Rs.28 lakh and chilli farmers with Rs.26 lakh as compensation for the crop loss in 2010.

He also added that affected farmers who had been waiting since 2008 for claiming the insurance benefits would receive it in the coming days. Around 6,000 farmers would be entitled to enjoy compensation of Rs.1.4 crore, Mr. Kasivelu added.

When contacted, M.R. Natarajan, District Development Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, said state-wide implementation of Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme would certainly be more farmer-friendly. Earlier, the scheme was launched on a pilot basis in some parts of Tamil Nadu, Mr. Natarajan said.

### **Delta farmers left at their wits' end**

With the storage at the Mettur Reservoir depleting fast, farmers in the Delta districts are at their wits' end

### **Water level**

Water level in the Periyar dam on Sunday stood at 116.20 feet (136 feet) with an inflow of 93 cusecs and a discharge of 300 cusecs. The water level in the Vaigai dam was 51.64 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 78 cusecs and a discharge of 60 cusecs. There was no rain in the region.

### **'Sell egg-laying chicken'**

The National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) has asked poultry farmers to sell egg-laying chicken when they are 65 weeks old to reduce the bird population and bring down production of eggs in order to maintain better price of the produce in the days to come. This is seven weeks ahead of the usual 72 weeks when egg-laying birds are generally sold for meat. Chairman of the NECC Namakkal Zone Dr. P. Selvaraj said that the decision to adopt this action was taken at a national level consultative meeting of the NECC that was recently held in Hyderabad, in which

representatives participated from zones all over India. He felt that the drop in production will result in increase in demand and price for egg and reap better profits for the poultry farmers. Meanwhile wholesale price of egg has climbed 23 paise on Saturday as it was fixed at Rs. 3.10 from its previous price of Rs. 2.87 on Friday.

### **Delta farmers left at their wits' end**

With the storage at the Mettur Reservoir depleting fast, farmers in the Delta districts are at their wits' end as the available water will meet the requirements only for a few more days.

The water level at the reservoir stood at 42.48 feet on Sunday with a storage of 13.40 thousand million cubic (tmc) feet. The prospect of the standing samba and thaladi crop on 1.05 lakh hectares in Thanjavur district and 1.50 lakh hectares in Tiruvarur district is depending entirely on the release of water from Karnataka, farmers say.

At present water is discharged from the reservoir at 11,500 cusecs and is released on turn system in the Cauvery and Vennar from the Grand Anicut. While the discharge into the Vennar was 5000 cusecs over the last five days, the Cauvery is getting water at 6000 cusecs. The Grant Anicut canal is receiving about 2500 cusecs.

Farmers who spoke to *The Hindu* say this is not sufficient and at least 9,000 cusecs each should be released into Cauvery and Vennar.

Though the government has initiated spraying of chemical solutions over the standing samba crop to mitigate water stress in the two districts, scientists say this can only be a temporary measure. Under the programme, Pink-Pigmented Facultative Methylobacterium (PPFM) and sodium chloride are sprayed using boom sprayers, mobile sprinklers and rain gun. These solutions will prevent evaporation of water from the crop and help sustain it for 10 to 15 days.

S. Ranganathan, secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association, said Karnataka should release at least 10 tmcft of water to save the crop which is in a crucial stage.

P.R. Pandian, State council member of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, and a farmer of Kottur in Tiruvarur district said unless one or two wettings were done immediately, the crop in Tiruvarur district which is at boot leaf stage (pre-flowering stage of 75 days) and flowering (80 days) could not be sustained.

In Nagapattinam district, farmers are beginning to see the folly of raising samba under the situation. “In hindsight, we realise samba cultivation should not have been taken up,” says Alexander, Tail-end Farmers Association, Mayiladuthurai.

Except for parts of Mayiladuthurai that banks on groundwater, tail-end areas of Vennar division are hard hit. The welcome relief has been the assured 12-hour three-phase power supply for groundwater irrigation in Mayiladuthurai. However, this covers barely about 5,000 ha.

The promised subsidy of Rs. 600 per acre to engage diesel engines for pumping out water from community water bodies is not seen as a relief for two reasons. There is insufficient water in farm ponds, community ponds and tanks. Further, with the water already being pumped to salvage the standing crops, water in the ponds are fast depleting and will last for less than a week.

“Besides, nobody knows when the subsidy will be disbursed, and farmers already facing the prospect of loss fear spending more money,” says Kaveri Danapalan, general secretary, Cauvery Farmers Protection Association.

According to farmers, the standing crops in the post-tillering stage (ear-head initiating stage) need more water to survive. Crops need water for growth and sprayers and sprinklers promoted by Krishi Vigyan Kendras in the eleventh hour to prevent transpiration loss in crops are futile exercise, says Mr. Danapalan.

Fields in Thalainayar, Keezhvelur, Keezhayur bear signs of drought condition. Says V. Subramaniam, district secretary, Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, “In a week, farmers would start letting in cattle to feed on dead crops.”

### **SHG products at women's mela**

Selection of SHG products to be displayed at the state-level women's mela in Chennai to mark Christmas and Pongal festivals will be done at the Women Development Office in the town on December 17. All the SHG members in the district were advised to take part in the selection process along with their products.

The selected products will be displayed at the mela scheduled to commence on December 20 and ending on January 20, according to a press release from the district administration here on Saturday.

### **Mettur level**

Water level at Mettur Dam stood at 42.45 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. Inflow was 1,397 cusecs and discharge 11,524 cusecs.

### **Promotion of SHG products**

Members of women self-help groups have been given an opportunity to promote products manufactured by them. They can bring samples of the products manufactured as a team under the support of Mahalir Thittam officials to the Collectorate on December 17. Officials would assess the quality of products and offer guidance on marketing. Since a State-level exhibition of SHG products is to be held from December 20 to 30, the members could utilise the opportunity to add more value to their products, Collector Ashish Kumar said in a statement.

### **Farmers to stage dharna today**

: Members of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha will take out a procession and stage dharna here on Monday demanding that G. Somashekar Reddy resign as chairman of the Karnataka Milk Federation for his involvement in misappropriation of funds and cash-for-bail scam. In a press release issued here on Sunday, district leader of the sangha Bedareddyhalli Basavareddy alleged that Mr. Reddy had not taken any steps for the welfare of farmers. If he did not resign voluntarily, the State government should remove him from his post and order a probe into his alleged misuse of funds. They also demand an inquiry into alleged irregularities in the Horticulture Department.

### **Weather-based insurance scheme to cover 15 districts in State**

The State government has notified nine crops sown in the rabi season in 15 districts in 2012-13 under the weather-based crop insurance scheme.

It is aimed at providing insurance to farmers against adverse weather conditions, such as deficient and excessive rainfall, frost, drought and relative humidity

The scheme will cover jowar, ragi, Bengal gram (both rainfed and irrigated), potato (irrigated), grapes and mango and the districts to be covered are Bangalore Rural, Bagalkot, Belgaum, Bellary, Bidar, Bijapur, Chitradurga, Chickballapur, Davangere, Dharwad, Haveri, Kolar, Koppal, Raichur and Yadgir. It will be implemented in 202 selected blocks, officials in the Agriculture Department said.

Agricultural Insurance Company of India Ltd. (AIC), ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company, HDFC Ergo General Insurance Company, Cholamandalam MS General Insurance Company and Iffco Tokio General Insurance Company Ltd. will implement the scheme.

### **Last date**

The last date for submission of applications is December 31.

Farmers who have availed themselves of crop loans must compulsorily apply for the scheme and will have to pay the premium at the nearest bank.

The premium ranges from 2.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent of the sum insured for crops. Farmers can get details of the scheme from a network of 745 Raitha Samparka Kendras.

### **Revised scheme**

Meanwhile, the Centre has revised the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) to cover eight rabi crops in four districts.

It will be implemented on a pilot basis in Gulbarga, Shimoga, Tumkur and Uttara Kannada districts and will cover jowar, wheat, Bengal gram, sunflower (both irrigated and rainfed) and summer crops of paddy and groundnut at the panchayat level.

At the hobli level, it will cover rabi crops of paddy, maize, sunflower (both irrigated), horsegram, greengram, safflower, groundnut (all rainfed).

The last date for submission of application for the scheme is December 31. Agricultural Insurance Company of India (AICI) Ltd. will implement the scheme.

In the event of crop loss due to natural calamities, farmers will have to give details within 48 hours to the nearest bank or the office of the AICI, Bangalore.

### **Original scheme**

The original NAIS will cover rabi crops such as paddy (irrigated), maize (irrigated, rainfed), jowar (rainfed), ragi and wheat, Bengal gram (irrigated, rainfed), blackgram, horsegram, greengram, linseed (all rainfed), sunflower (irrigated and rainfed), groundnut (rainfed) and safflower (rainfed).

It will cover four summer crops paddy, ragi, sunflower and groundnut (all irrigated), officials said.

The scheme is mandatory for farmers, who have availed themselves of crop loans and is optional for others.

Farmers, who have not taken crop loans, will have to pay premium with all documents related on area of cultivation and type of crop to the bank. AICI is implementing the scheme.

The last day for submitting application is December 31. Farmers who have taken up summer crops, the last date for submitting applications is February 28, 2013.

### **'Krishi melas give hope to farmers'**

Krishi Mela (agricultural fair) is a new hope for farmers as they promote agricultural activities with a new zeal, said Uttara Kannada in-charge Minister Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri at Kansur in Siddapur taluk on Saturday.

He was inaugurating the Krishi Mela and Kreedotsava held at the SKB School ground under the joint auspices of Shri Keshtra Dharmastala Rurral Development Programme, Sirsi, Siddapur Pragatibandhu Swasahaya Sanghagala Okkuta, SKB Education Society, and Kansur gram panchayat.

Youths from rural areas were migrating to cities and hence farming activities were neglected, he said and lauded the efforts of the SKDRDP in promoting interest in agriculture among the youth.



R.R. Hanchinal, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Sciences, who presided over the programme, urged the farmers to take up dairy farming along with agriculture as it would help in conserving rain forests of the Western Ghats.

Chandrashekar, director of the programme, and taluk panchayat president Madevi Rama Gowda spoke.

### **PDS wheat, rice seized**

The Mananthavadi police seized a large quantity of wheat meant to be supplied through public distribution system (PDS) outlets from a private godown at Clubkunnu, near Mananthavadi, on Saturday.

The police seized 161 bags of wheat and 11 bags of rice, 50 kg each, during the raid.

The police had on Friday seized as much as 24 tonnes of rice from various private godowns at Sulthan Bathery and Mananthavadi.

Shanker Reddy, Additional Director General of Police, Northern Range, had ordered the raid.

The police registered cases against the owners of the godowns as per the Essential Commodities Act, A.V. George, Superintendent of Police, Wayanad, said.

### **CCI procures 5 lakh quintals of cotton**

District Collector Smita Sabharwal said that the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) had procured around 5,34,243 quintals of cotton from the farmers by providing minimum support price of Rs 3,900 per quintal by opening 12 CCI procurement centres in Karimnagar district.

### **Lokayukta to probe KMF cattle-feed scam**



Karnataka Milk Federation chairman

G. Somashekar Reddy is once again in the news for an alleged Rs. 40-crore scam in the procurement of cattle feed. The Lokayukta court has ordered the Lokayukta police to investigate the matter.

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- There are allegations that federation officials deliberately postponed procurement process*
  - 'Reddy is responsible for scrapping purchase committee before purchasing cattle feed'*



A one-point stop: The high production technology package for cardamom and black pepper, developed by the centre, has been adopted by many plantations.— Photo: Nanda Kumar

The Cardamom Research Centre (CRC) at Appangala, near Madikeri in Kodagu, functioning under the Indian Institute of Spices Research (IISR), will celebrate its golden jubilee from December 20 to 22.

The CRC is the only research centre for cardamom under the IISR. The IISR functions under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi.

### **Flagship programme**

Over the last 50 years, CRC has developed many technologies for cropping systems based on cardamom, coffee, black pepper and tree spices.

The high production technology package for cardamom and black pepper, developed by the centre, has been adopted by many plantations in the region and has now become a flagship programme of the CRC, a press release said here on Sunday.

These technologies were demonstrated and popularised in over 15,000 hectares of plantations in Kodagu and neighbouring districts. The CRC possesses one of the largest germplasm collections. It has released three high-yielding cardamom varieties — ‘Appangala-1’ (‘IISR Kodagu Suvasini’), ‘IISR Vijetha’ and ‘IISR Avinash’ — to farmers.

Since its inception, the centre has been involving planters in crop cultivation processes. It has carved out a name for itself among farmers, thanks to its presence as a one-point stop for all problems pertaining to cardamom, black pepper and other spice crops in the region.

The CRC, which was started in 1961 by the then government of Mysore, was handed over to the ICAR in 1972. For some time, it remained under the control of the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bangalore, and later transferred to the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod, Kerala. In 1986, the CRC came under the administrative control of the erstwhile National Research Centre for Spices, which was upgraded as the Indian Institute of Spices Research in 1995.

### **Inauguration**

S. Ayyappan, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and Director-General of ICAR, would inaugurate the celebrations on December 20 on the CRC campus, the press release said.

N.K. Krishna Kumar, Deputy Director-General, Horticulture, would preside over the function. Speaker of the Legislative Assembly K.G. Bopaiah and Minister for Youth Services and Sports M.P. Appachu Ranjan were expected to address farmers and participants on December 21, it said.

### **Felicitation**

The staff, both retired and present, would be felicitated on the occasion. A session on ‘Challenges and opportunities in cardamom – the way forward’, a seminar on ‘Prosperity through technologies’, and a farmer-scientist interaction would be held.

Representatives of nearly 15 agricultural institutions and organisations would showcase various agriculture-related technologies during the three-day event, the release said.

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*Three-day event planned at Cardamom Research Centre at Appangala*

*Since its inception, the centre has been involving planters in crop cultivation processes*

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## Weather

Chennai

### Chennai - INDIA

#### Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

**Monday, Dec 17**

**Max Min**

30.2° | 22.7°

**Rain:** 0

**Humidity:** 70

**Wind:** normal

**Sunrise:** 06:24

**Sunset:** 05:46

**Barometer:** 1015

#### Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

**Tuesday, Dec 18**

**Max Min**

30° | 23°

#### Extended Forecast for a week

**Wednesday**

**Dec 19**



30° | 23°

Cloudy

**Thursday**

**Dec 20**



26° | 25°

Overcast

**Friday**

**Dec 21**



26° | 24°

Cloudy

**Saturday**

**Dec 22**



26° | 24°

Overcast

**Sunday**

**Dec 23**



26° | 24°

Cloudy

#### Airport Weather

Delhi

**Delhi**

**Rain:** 0

**Humidity:** 82

**Wind:** normal

**Sunrise:** 07:07

**Sunset:** 05:27

**Barometer:** 1020



# THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

16.12.2012 P.M

17.12.2012 A.M

16<sup>th</sup>dec 2012 P.M

## Limited activity in pepper on liquidation



The pepper market witnessed continuous liquidation last week by the bull operators who have been holding huge stocks.

As the December contract is maturing on Dec 20 and the validity of the material is expiring on January 5, they were trying to liquidate the maximum because of the heavy financial loss involved, according to market sources.

There appeared to be no buyers probably because of the cost involved in re-processing. At the same time Jan is not listed on the exchange considering it as a lean month. The prices of nearby contracts moved up last week while the running contract Dec increased marginally.

Meanwhile, the domestic demand has started picking up and becoming strong day by day. The arrivals of new crop also started showing improvement of late.

On the spot, good demand was there from the upcountry markets. Some 15 tonnes of fresh pepper were traded to different directions on Friday at Rs 369-375 a kg depending upon the bulk density, moisture content, etc and area of production, they said.

Good buying interest was visible from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Mumbai, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, etc as demand has picked up for the winter/festival/wedding season in the upcountry regions, market sources told *Business Line*. However, availability of the material continued to remain tight so far.

Dec, Feb and Mar contracts on the NCDEX increased by Rs 100, Rs 520 and Rs 625 a quintal respectively during the week to close at Rs 39,100, Rs 34,585 and Rs 34,410 on Saturday.

Total turn over decreased sharply by 8,647 tonnes to close at 8,004 tonnes last week. Total open interest dropped by 1,257 tonnes to 4,176 tonnes.

Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs 37,200 (ungarbled) and Rs 38,700 (garbled) a quintal on limited activities.

### **Global front**

Indian parity in the international market today was at \$7,450 a tonne (c&f) for the Europe and \$7,750 a tonne (c&f) for the US and remained out priced. Malabar Garbled is appears to have lost its buyers overseas as it remained not competitive in the international market with its high parity.

The buyers, even those have preference for the Malabar at a premium, seem to have shifted to other origins, mainly Lampung Asta grade pepper.

The difference between the prices of Malabar and other origins remained above \$1,000 for much of the time.

### **Nearly 95% Coonoor tea sold**

Following repeated heavy snowfall blocking transportation through roads and waterways, exporters to Russia remained subdued at Sale No: 50 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions.

“Since a fortnight now, business conditions are not conducive in Russia due to hurdles in transportation arising from repeated snowfall. Temperature rules around minus 10 degrees Celsius during nights and close to zero degree Celsius during days even when there is no

snowfall. Our importers contend that there is adequate stock of tea to cover short term. So, we are not investing in purchases for Russia now,” an exporter told *Business Line*.

Some selective purchases were made for the CIS at Rs 82-96 a kg. Pakistan was strong in the wide range Rs 83-125. There was some purchase for European ports at Rs 87-108.

Upcountry buyers were active on brighter liquoring teas. In all, about 95 per cent of the 14.21 lakh kg on offer was sold

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped CTC market at Rs 163 a kg. Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 150, Hittakkal Estate 147, Cross Hill Estate and Shanthy Supreme Rs 146 each. In all, 151 marks got Rs 100 and more.

### **orthodox teas**

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 226, Highfield Estate Rs 210, Havukal Rs 187, Kairbetta Rs 186, and Prammas Rs 180. In all, 48 marks got Rs 100 and more.

“Orthodox leaf market was dearer by Rs 2-3 a kg. High-priced CTC leaf fetched Rs 2-4 more, better mediums Rs 2-3 and plainers up to Rs 3. Primary orthodox dusts were dearer by Rs 5-10, high-priced CTC dusts and mediums Rs 1-2 and plainers Rs 2-4”, an auctioneer said.

### **prices**

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 81-84 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 105-145 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 85-88 for plain dusts and Rs 105-145 for brighter liquoring dusts.

## **Heavy rain, snow forecast for Jammu and Kashmir**

Heavy rain and snow has been forecast at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir on Monday as a prevailing western disturbance dictated weather.

Wintertime western disturbances bring moisture mopped up right from the Mediterranean and along the way on its eastward journey.



## **RAIN, SNOW**

It is dropped as rain and snow over the hills and adjoining plains in north India.

The western disturbance had dropped anchor over Jammu and Kashmir and neighbourhood and was ready to move out of the country to further east.

But India Meteorological Department (IMD) said a fresh western disturbance may affect the western Himalayan region from Tuesday.

This would bring back snow and rain to the hills and adjoining plans as also fog over the next few days.

An IMD outlook valid until Wednesday said that rain or snow would occur at many places over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

## **FOG FORECAST**

Fog to dense fog has been forecast for east Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and sub-Himalayan West Bengal.

Fog to shallow fog may envelop parts of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and west Uttar Pradesh on Monday.

No significant change in minimum temperatures is expected over Northwest India but they may fall over east and adjoining Central India during next three days.

Cloud imagery on Sunday showed convective (rain/snow-driving) clouds over parts of western Himalayan region.

## **RAIN FOR SOUTH**

Slightly less dense clouds were seen over Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh and rest of western Himalayan region.

Meanwhile in the south, convective clouds rose above south interior Karnataka, south Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, south Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.

This was result of accentuation of an easterly wave that is concurrently affecting mostly Sri Lanka.

Rain or thundershowers are likely at a few places over south Tamil Nadu and Kerala and at one or two places over Lakshadweep and north Tamil Nadu.

Extended outlook until the weekend said thundershowers may continue to lash a few places over peninsular India.

### **Gubba Cold Storage to set up units in Maharashtra, Gujarat**



Gubba Cold Storage, which has a storage capacity of 83 lakh cubic feet in facilities in Andhra Pradesh, will set up two facilities in Jalna (Maharashtra) and Ahmedabad (Gujarat) with an investment of Rs 16-20 crore.

“We are going to start construction next month and we hope to operationalise the facilities in 2013-14. At a later phase, we will open storage facilities in Bangalore and Agra,” Gubba Kiran, Chief Executive Officer of Gubba Cold Storage Limited, said.

The company, which registered a turnover of Rs 25 crore last year, targets to cross the Rs 35-crore mark this financial year. It has no immediate plans to raise funds for its expansion plans.

“We will fund it through part equity and part debt,” he said.

To mark completion of 25 years of the company, it held a day-long conference on ‘Preserving the life called seed’ at its facility here.

The firm has about 200 seed companies as customers, storing their parental seed and germplasm.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines, Kiran said the country lagged in storage facilities for agri produce and ready-to-eat food products.

“Over 80 per cent of the Rs 12,000-crore seed industry will move towards mechanisation in storage in the next few years,” he said.

P. Vidyasagar, Chairman and Managing Director of Vibha Seeds, said the total storage capacity of the country stands at 2.5 billion tonnes across.

About 60 per cent of this belonged to food and agri produce.

### **Seed bank**

The company will set up a seed bank, the first in the private sector, with an investment of Rs 4 crore. “It is fire, water and earthquake-proof facility that can keep seeds safe for 50 years. We have signed a memorandum of agreement with Icrisat for technical support,” Kiran said.

The International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (Icrisat) runs a huge seed bank at its campus at Patancheru near here.

### **Assam tea industry to focus on export to ASEAN nations**

Assam’s tea industry will focus on increasing exports to ASEAN countries in view of the untapped markets there, an official of North Eastern Tea Association has said.

“All the ASEAN countries are tea-drinking nations, but barring a few, the others do not produce the beverage and as such there is immense potential of exporting Assam tea to these countries,” North Eastern Tea Association Chairman Biydananda Barkakoty told PTI.

“The ASEAN market is an untapped market for us and the ASEAN-India Trade Conclave here tomorrow will be a stepping stone for exploring new markets,” he said.

The Joint Forum of Assam Tea Planters' Association, North Eastern Tea Association and Bharatiya Cha Parishad will be showcasing different varieties of Assam tea at the stall set up by the Assam Directorate of Tea at the conclave.

In 2011, India's total production was 988 million kg out of which Assam produced 508 million kg, he said.

Vietnam and Indonesia are leading tea producers among the ASEAN countries with Malaysia and Myanmar also contributing in a small way.

It has been, however, noticed that their contribution has decreased from 8.43 per cent to 7.43 per cent in the global tea production between 2009 and 2011, he said.

In the consumption side, Malaysia was the leading consumer followed by Philippines.

Vietnam and Indonesia are the only exporting countries of ASEAN group, but their export share too have decreased from 13.23 per cent to 12.49 per cent during 2009—2011.

### **Area under rabi crops up by 3%**

Farmers had sown rabi crops like wheat and pulses in 48.21 million hectare till last week, about three per cent higher than the year-ago period, according to the Agriculture Ministry.

They had sown rabi (winter) crops in over 46.97 million hectare during the same period of last year. Sowing of rabi crops begins in October, while the harvesting is done in April.

Barring rice, the coverage of other rabi crops has been better than the year-ago period, the latest data released by the Agriculture Ministry showed.

Area under wheat, the main rabi crop, had increased to 22.74 million hectare till last week of the rabi season, as compared to 22.08 million hectare in the year-ago period.

Experts said the sowing of wheat got delayed due to late harvest of paddy crop. However, better weather conditions have boosted crop prospect.

The worrying factor for farmers, however, is that the government has not yet announced the minimum support price of wheat, they added.

Besides wheat, area under pulses has increased slightly to 12.12 million hectare from 12.06 million hectare, while area planted to oilseeds has improved to 7.9 million hectare from 7.4 million hectare in the review period.

Area under coarse cereals has increased marginally to 5.30 million hectare till last week of the ongoing rabi season, against 5.23 million hectare in the year-ago.

However, area under rice has been only 1,42,000 hectare, as against 1,95,000 hectare in the review period.

The government is focusing on recovering the losses made in kharif season of the current 2012-13 crop year (July-June) on account of poor rains. It aims to harvest 120.50 million tonnes of foodgrains during rabi season.

### **Indian wheat exports may touch 6 m tonnes: USDA**

India's wheat export is expected to touch 6 million tonnes in the 2012-13 marketing year (MY) on the back of firm global prices, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said in a report.

"With the current tight open market supplies of wheat, private wheat exports are likely to come down significantly in the coming months. Consequently, we continue to estimate marketing year 2012-13 exports at 6 million tonnes, which includes 3 million tonnes each of government and open-market wheat," USDA said. Wheat marketing year in India commences in April and ends in March.

"With export prospects looking favourable on expected firm international wheat prices through the first quarter of calendar year 2013, the government most likely will further augment the government-held wheat export quota," it added.

The government wheat is currently fetching good export rates compared to the PDS wheat price of Rs 2,000-6,100 (\$36-110) per tonne, MSP for MY 2012-13 of Rs 12,850 (\$234) per tonne and open market sale price for bulk consumers in most states, it said.

The government's decision to export 2 million tonnes of wheat from central stocks fetched a rate in the range of \$296.70-319.50 per tonne.

In July this year, the government had allowed export of 2 million tonnes of the grain from central pool stocks of Food Corporation of India (FCI) through central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) like STC, MMTTC and PEC.

Last week, Commerce Secretary S R Rao had said the Food Ministry will move a proposal for allowing export of an additional 2.5 million tonnes of wheat from the central stocks in order to ease the storage crunch being faced by the country due to an all time high production.

India harvested an all time high wheat crop of 93.90 million tonnes of wheat in the 2011-12 crop year (July-June).

The government has a wheat stock of 37.65 million tonnes as of December 1, 2012, which is more than double the stipulated buffer and strategic stock requirement of 11.2 million tonnes as of January 1, 2013.

United Nation's body, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has pegged India's wheat exports to touch 5 million tonnes in the 2012-13 marketing year.

# Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

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## Wheat sowing crosses last year's pace

Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have led a surge in wheat sowing during the week ended Friday, putting overall production on track for a record harvest in 2012-13, provided the weather remains benign during the next few months.



Sowing was on 22.74 million hectares till Friday, the highest in the corresponding period of the past five years, shows data from the department of agriculture. Year-on-year, the sowing was three per cent higher. Sowing of pulses, lacklustre till the previous few weeks, has also sharply picked up because of mild winter rain in some parts.

Wheat had been sown on 4.33 million hectares till Friday in Madhya Pradesh, 31.3 per cent more than the same period last year. The state's five-year average has been 4.2 million hectares. This year, MP aims to have wheat sown on 4.95 million hectares.

In Rajasthan, wheat had been sown on 2.28 million hectares till last week, 6.9 per cent more than in the same period of last year. In Uttar Pradesh, wheat was planted on 7.1 million hectares till last week, one per cent more than last year.

MP witnessed a record wheat harvest in 2011-12, mainly due to a Rs 100-a-quintal bonus announced by the state government and favourable weather.



Sowing in Punjab and Haryana, the two biggest wheat producing states, lagged. The data showed wheat had been planted on 3.31 million hectares in Punjab, down from 3.38 million hectares of last year. In Haryana, it was sown in 2.27 million hectares, lower than last year's 2.3 million hectares.

“There is still time for wheat sowing in Punjab and Haryana and the acreage should be more than last year, as water reservoirs are in good shape. The trend, however, shows both Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are gradually consolidating as premier wheat-producing states,” a senior official said.

Data from the Central Water Commission shows storage in the 84 major reservoirs in the country were 96.9 billion cubic metres till Thursday, 91 per cent of last year’s level and 106 per cent of the 10-year average.

Pulses’ sowing also gathered pace during the week ended Friday, after a slow start during the start of the rabi season. The area sown was 12.12 mn ha till Friday, almost 0.5 per cent more than last year.



### Power crisis hits farmers' crop plans

NIZAMABAD: With the state government making it clear that it was not possible to provide seven hour power supply to the agriculture sector in the Rabi season, paddy farmers are in a dilemma. In this regard, district [agriculture department](#) officials also received oral instructions from the state government and have prepared an action plan for Rabi 2012-13, a source said.

During a video conference on December 12, chief secretary [Minnie Mathews](#) also informed the collectors that the government was unable to supply power to farming sector for more than four hours in the wake of the water shortfall for irrigation projects and powers shortage in the state. Based on the CS's directions, collector [Christina Chongthu](#) asked the agriculture and electricity department officials to create awareness among ryots to shift to Irrigated Dry (ID) crops from paddy.

Though public representatives and farmers requested that water to be provided for at least three wettings for paddy under the Nizamsagar project, during the District Irrigation Advisory Board meeting held on December 13 the collector said they would provide 2.5 tmc of water, which would be sufficient for only two wettings from Nizamsagar. Major share of paddy crop in the district is cultivated under Nizamsagar project, irrigation department sources said.

Speaking to TOI, H Gangadhar of Mosra village of Varni mandal blamed the government for not protecting the interest of farmers. Majority of the ryots have left half of the paddy crop in the fields as the government failed to provide seven hours power to agriculture sector in the last Kharif season, he said. Another farmer Banothu Kishan of Mallaram village of Nizamabad mandal said it was not proper on the part of the government to escape from its responsibilities.

It should purchase power from other stand or private companies and supply to farming sector if it was sincere in protecting the interests of farmers, he said.

The agriculture department itself has reduced the proposed paddy cultivation area to 50,000 hectares this season from 1.2 lakh hectares in the 2011-12 Rabi season. In the recent Kharif season 2012, paddy was cultivated in 1.37 lakh hectares. According to statistics, out of 1.84 lakh proposed area, maize was proposed in 45,000 hectares, Bengal gram in 28,000, Jowar in 24,000 and sunflower in 15,000 to mention a few.

In the wake of instruction from the government, the department has reduced the proposed paddy cultivation areas and is encouraging farmers to opt for ID crops, said an agriculture officer. He also said they along with electricity and revenue officials were touring villages with the slogan "Paddy vaddu, ID muddu" and motivating farmers to choose ID crops.

On the other hand, water levels in major irrigation projects have become low. There is only 4.586 tmc of water in Nizamsagar project as against its storage capacity of 17.80 tmc. Sri Ram Sagar Project has 49.70 tmc as against 90.31 tmc capacity. As against its full capacity of 29.90 tmc, the Singur project in Medak has only 11.058 tmc. Joint director, agriculture, J Dharma Naik said they were conducting camps in villages and motivating ryots towards ID crops. Majority of the farmers are responding positively, he said and hoped that paddy cultivation in 50,000 hectares would be reduced this season.

### **Tirur betel farmers scramble for GI tag to secure Pakistan market**

KOZHIKODE: Melethil Beeran Kutty, a betel farmer in Ananthavur near Tirur, is a worried man. He is facing a stiff challenge from his Sri Lankan counterparts in his only overseas market.

Beeran Kutty and other farmers in and around Tirur have been exporting betel leaves to Pakistan, especially [Karachi](#) and Lahore, via the Middle East for over half a century. The leaves have been popular in these markets as Tirur-Lanka pan.

And the name is what played in Lankan farmers' favour. Capitalizing on the popularity of Tirur betel leaves, they too are selling the produce to [Pakistan](#) under the same name, Tirur-Lanka pan, for a lesser price.

Beeran Kutty is now pinning his hope on the Kerala Agricultural University's (KAU) plan to secure geographical indications tag for the Tirur betel leaves, an attempt by the varsity's Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Cell to help farmers protect their rights over the unique produce.

"It is our soil, climate and farming practices that give the leaves its unique flavour and spiciness, which is lacking in leaves produced elsewhere in the world. We can continue the vocation only if the product is exported to Pakistan," Beeran Kutty said. The farmer said it was important to their market in Pakistan as it was unviable to grow the crops for the local markets due to high labour charges.

"Sadly, the Sri Lankan leaves are gaining an upper hand in Pakistan at our cost. We hope that the GI tag would help us protect the heritage and legacy of Tirur betel leaves in Pakistan," he said. Even the weather in Pakistan would affect Tirur's small community of betel farmers. "We were selling 100 betel leaves for Rs 75, but the cold wave there has brought the price down to Rs 60 today," Beeran Kutty said adding that in the local market he could make only Rs 35 per 100 leaves.

[Abdul Latheef](#), owner of [Alukkal Trading](#), which has been exporting leaves to Pakistan since 1969, said the Tirur leaves had lost its edge in the Pakistani market.

"Our leaves have been historically called Tirur Lanka pan and the name might have also helped [Sri Lanka](#) capture the Pakistani market," he said, adding that the export had dipped three-four tonnes a week from 25 tonnes, when it was ferried via trains before the [Babri Masjid](#) demolition in 1992. While betel exports from India tumbled following the masjid demolition and the Kargil war, Sri Lanka filled the vacuum, with the island country's customs department figures showing that the export of beedi and betel leaves from the country to Pakistan have grown from US\$ 7.9 million to US\$ 44 million in 2010.

Getting Tirur betel leaves into the GI registry would enable farmers enforce their rights over the geographical product worldwide, said Prof C R Elsy, coordinator of the IPR cell of the KAU.

She said that KAU would conduct a series of tests to establish the unique qualities of the product. "We will be doing chemical characterization to identify the chemical components that provides the unique quality to the leaves. Also organoleptic studies would be done to establish the pungency, taste and texture of the leaves," she said.

Kozhikode: Melethil Beeran Kutty and family of Ananthavur near Tirur have been praying for good relations between sub-continental rivals India and Pakistan all through their lives. For, peace at the historically tumultuous borders have a direct bearing on the Melethil family which have been cultivating betel leaves exclusively to cater to the Karachi and [Lahore](#) markets for over half a century.

The small community of betel farmers around Tirur who have weathered many wars, decades of hostility and fragile peace between the two nations now find themselves pitted in new war front to save their livelihood and a century-old legacy.

The market for 'Tirur Lanka Pan' as the betel leaves from Tirur are known in Pakistan is under threat mainly from cheaper exports from Sri Lanka, which have eaten into the exclusive market for Tirur betel leaves. The Tirur pan commands a premium in Pakistan because of its spicy flavour and aroma. The farmers say that leaves from Sri Lanka are also being marketed as Tirur betel leaves in Pakistan.

In a last ditch effort to protect their only overseas market, the farmers are in the process of securing Geographical Indications (GI) tag for the 'Tirur Betel Leaves'. The Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Cell of Kerala Agricultural University is helping the farmers protect the community rights over their unique agricultural product.

"It is our soil, climate, cultivation practices that give the leaves its unique flavour and spiciness which is not found anywhere else in the world. We can continue the vocation only if the product is exported to Pakistan. It is important that we protect our markets in Karachi and Lahore as it is just not viable to grow the crops for the local markets due to the high labour charges. Sadly, the

Sri Lankan leaves are gaining upper hand in Pakistan at our cost. We hope that the GI tag would help us protect the heritage and legacy of Tirur Betel leaves in the Pakistan," Beeran Kutty said.

"Our livelihood is affected by even the weather in Pakistan. The betel leaves were selling at Rs 75 per 100 leaves last week, but the ongoing cold wave in Pakistan has brought down the market to Rs 60 today. If we sell the leaves in the local market in the state we will get only Rs 35 which is just not viable," he added.

Abdul Latheef, owner of Alukkal Trading, which has been exporting leaves to Pakistan from 1969 onwards said that Tirur leaves have lost their pride of place in the Pakistan market.

"The biggest threat is the advent of leaves from Sri Lanka. Tirur leaves have been historically called Tirur Lanka Pan and that name might have also helped Sri Lanka capture the Pakistani market," he said adding that betel leaves, currently exported through Karipur via Middle East has fallen to just 3-4 tonnes a week from 25 tonnes when it was exported via trains before the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992.

Prof C R Elsy, coordinator of the IPR cell of KAU said that getting the Tirur betel leaves registered in the GI registry would enable the farmers enforce their right over the geographical product across the globe.

She said that KAU will be doing an array of tests to establish that the qualities and reputation of the product, including its taste, colour and other features, are unique to the place. "We will be doing chemical characterisation to identify the chemical components that provides the unique quality to the leaves. Also organoleptic studies would be done to establish the pungency, taste and texture of the leaves," she said.

P K Ashraf Haji of Ashraf Traders said that the strengthening of the Indian currency and the Indian and Sri Lankan rupee exchange rates have tilted the trade in favour of the latter.

"While the dollar-rupee exchange rate is at Rs 54, one dollar would fetch 130 Sri Lankan rupees. It has resulted in a price difference of at least Rs 20 per kg. Also Sri Lanka has worked

out lower duty regime for its leaves with Pakistan," he said.

While betel exports from India have slumped following geopolitical conflicts including Babri Masjid demolition and the Kargil war, Sri Lanka has silently filled the vacuum with the island country's customs department figures showing that the export of beedi and betel leaves from the country to Pakistan have grown from US\$ 7.9 in million to US\$ 44 million in 2010.

### Wild boars target sugarcane crop

MARGAO: Sugarcane cultivators from Xeldem, Quepem, are an exasperated lot. Tons of sugarcane that they had cultivated and due for crushing has been devoured by wild boars and other animals that have found their way into their farms, thereby causing enormous financial loss.

Besides petitioning the [department of agriculture](#), over 20 affected farmers have written to local MLA Nilesh Cabral, and to chief minister [Manohar Parrikar](#) seeking help to end their woes.

The farmers, speaking to TOI, pointed out that they have been cultivating sugarcane for the last several years, but not once in the past it had attracted wild animals. "This year, we have had to watch our crops being destroyed by the flock of wild boars that entered our farms," one farmer said.

The loss has been more painful for those who had availed of loans from banks to [finance](#) their farming activities, the farmers pointed out. As sugarcane cultivation is the sole source of livelihood for many of them, the farmers are finding it tough to repay their dues.

Following a complaint by farmers earlier, a team of officials from the forest and agriculture departments and Sanjivani sugar factory had conducted a joint inspection of the fields which had suffered damage to the crops. The farmers pointed out that following the inspection only five farmers had been provided monetary compensation leaving the others in the lurch.

The farmers have urged the Goa sugarcane cultivators association to take up the matter with the authorities concerned.

## Bengal's paddy cash transfer falters



*Launched a year ago, farmers not availing it as they don't have bank accounts*

While the UPA government is banking heavily on implementation of the cash transfer policy for centrally- sponsored schemes so the beneficiaries could benefit, the Trinamool Congress government's "cash transfer" scheme for paddy procurement has met with several hurdles despite claims of success.

The Trinamool government abandoned the previous Left Front government's model of paddy procurement by paying farmers in cash. It introduced a system of paying the crop value through cheques — a method almost similar to the UPA government's policy of cash transfer directly to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.

A year has passed since the new procurement policy was put into effect in West Bengal but it has come to light that the system has not changed the fortune of a majority of small and marginal farmers. The Reason: Most of the farmers want to be paid in cash instead of cheques because of complication involved in banking operation and their ignorance about it. Though the state government claimed that almost 98 per cent of the farmers have opened bank accounts, farmers' organisations and rice millers have a different story to tell.

"Bank branches are not available always in all villages. Therefore farmers, who spend most of their time in fields, do not want to travel a long distance go to banks. They know little about banking operation. Farmers need cash for quick harvest. If given bank cheques, they have to

wait for money as cheques need time to be encashed. What we have seen is that because of these reasons, farmers have negative impression about the new government's paddy procurement policy," says Nripen Chowdhury, the state secretary of CPM- affiliated Sara Bharat Krishak Sabha.

During Left Front rule, farmers used to come to rice mills and sell their produce against cash payments. "Now, for getting cash, they are selling paddy to middlemen at price lower than the minimum support price (MSP), which is currently Rs 1,250 per tonne," Chowdhury says.

According to him, not even 50 per cent farmers have opened accounts. "Only big farmers have bank accounts. They are selling paddy to the government while small farmers are still deprived of the MSP," he adds.

The experience tells that most of the farmers take loan from private landlord for farming. The condition is that they will sell paddy to the lenders and not to the government. It is the lenders and not the farmers who sell paddy to the millers. The small farmers get only a portion of their produce.

DN Mondal, president of Bengal Rice Mill Association said: "Farmers in certain districts often encounter with difficulties because of lack of adequate number of rice mills. There are about 10 rice mills in Howrah, South 24-Parganas, North 24-Parganas and Nadia. Farmers do not want to travel long to come to the rice mill along with paddy sacks because of soaring transport costs. Therefore they prefer to sell their produce to their neighboring people."

The farmers, who want to open zero balance accounts, also complain that they do not get proper advises from the government and the banks. Even there are reports that farmers had to return from bank after being told that zero balance accounts are not opened.

Flooded with complaints that middlemen, posing as farmers, were selling paddy to rice millers, the state government has this time decided to engage Block Development Officers (BDOs) in identification of actual farmers through land deeds, commonly known as parcha. But reports suggests that middlemen are opening bank accounts to claim MSP for paddy and they are collecting forged parchas. "We have asked BDOs to be more careful in identifying the farmers," says state Food and Supply Minister Jyotipriya Mullick.



He claimed that 98 per cent of the farmers have opened zero balance account and the government is assisting the remaining 2 per cent farmers to open bank accounts. Till 2011, 74 percent farmers had bank accounts. “Yes, we must admit that still there are some pockets where farmers have not opened bank accounts. Also there are complaints of distress sell. We are requesting the farmers to give us two photographs and one identity proof so that we can help them open bank account.” Mullick said.