

Now organic fishing, the Israeli way



Professor Yoram Avnimelech

It has been nearly 20 years that Yoram Avnimelech, Professor from Technion Israel Institute of Technology Civil and Environment Engineering, has been working on Bio Floc technology. The term refers to the use of the natural techniques to keep water clean and provide natural food to fish and other organisms in the water at a time when chemicals are used widely in aquaculture.

Professor Avnimelech, who was here recently to attend an international conference here, shared his experiences with *The Hindu*.

Q: You have been talking about growing fish in small pond and in a natural way. How can that be done?

A: The normal practice while growing fish and shrimp (prawn) is to go for regular change of water, which, in other way requires more water. We can grow fish in very little water. In fact in Israel we grow fish in barren land. We can grow fish in a profitable way by preserving the natural biological system in the water. This technique has been adopted with some changes by a farm in Tamil Nadu.

Q: What do you mean by preserving the natural biological system?

A: Take for example our body. As long as we consume balanced food and have the bacteria in our digestive system, we can be healthy. If we take antibiotics and kill bacteria, then we are attacked by many diseases. The same applies to ponds too. We have to keep the pond in a balanced way that enables all types of organisms live together. This provides natural feed to the fish and keeps it healthy. It also saves money on fish feed.

Q: Can this be done in a small pond?

A: Yes these natural settings can be provided in a small pond measuring 10' X 10'. To start with a farmer can bring in some fish feed and put it in the pond. The fish will eat it. It is on the excreta of the fish that bacteria grow. Fish and other organisms in the pond will feed on this bacteria that is rich in protein. This cycle will continue. Such a way of fish farming in small pond gives yield that can sustain a family of four for the whole year.

Q: How far has your research related to bio floc technology reached?

A: This research has to continue. We do not know everything. What we know is that the bacteria produces protein that can be eaten by fish. Bio flock provides natural feed for fish. The fish feed produced in the factory do not contain all important materials that the fish needs.

Curry leaves keep chips fresh



Simple recipe: Researchers at the Department of Processing Technology at the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, used oven-dried and ground curry leaves to increase the shelf life of banana chips.

The characteristic flavour and taste of banana chips fried in coconut oil have appealed to food lovers across the country and beyond. Rancidity however is a major problem in the storage of banana chips, affecting its shelf life and acceptability.

The Department of Processing Technology at the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, here has come up with a simple solution to overcome the problem. An investigation carried out by C. Mini and B.V. Adrika of the department revealed that curry leaf, a natural antioxidant, could be used to delay rancidity.

According to Dr. Mini, Associate Professor and Head of the Department, rancidity occurs due to oxidation of the oil used for frying. “The addition of antioxidants is effective in retarding the oxidation process. But synthetic antioxidants used in food have been reported to be having toxicological effects. This has sparked interest in research to identify safe antioxidants based on natural extracts from plants.”

The researchers at the department found that simple addition of dried curry leaf powder to the oil used for frying chips could delay rancidity. Oven-dried and ground curry leaves were added to unrefined coconut oil at smoke point of 165 degrees Celsius. Chips produced by this method had least oil uptake and highest integrity. The research established that curry leaf is better than sodium ascorbate and tocopherol acetate, the two commercially available antioxidants.

The investigation also found that rancidity could be delayed by replacing the commonly used thin plastic pouches with laminated pouches for packing. “By adding dried curry leaves to oil and packing in the treated chips in laminated pouches, the chips can remain fresh for up to three months without becoming rancid. The additional expense incurred for one kg of banana chips is just 88 paise,” says Dr. Mini.

A natural antioxidant, the leaves can delay rancidity.

Toddy tappers to organise protests

AP Toddy Tappers Association will organise demonstrations and other programmes in January in protest against the delay in release of funds allocated for old age pensions, dues of ex gratia and other welfare schemes, said Association president Bommagani Prabhakar .

Ryots keen to replace cotton with sugarcane



After the failure of cotton, they have been demanding revival of sugar factories in the region

Having concluded that cotton cultivation results more in misery than prosperity, a section of farmers in Adilabad have begun thinking in terms of an alternative commercial crop. Their quest has made them zero in on sugarcane, which despite the inherent handicaps, is known to be free of the risks involved in cotton farming.

“Sugarcane, now cultivated only by a handful of farmers, can replace cotton if jaggery manufacturing units are promoted in the proximity. The government needs to promote industrial manufacture of jaggery in small scale for consumption of local produce,” demands B.

Goverdhan Reddy, a senior farmer leader in Adilabad, who proposes to take up awareness programmes on cultivation of sugarcane.

Sugarcane was an important commercial crop in the western parts of Adilabad district until about three decades ago. The closure of Khandasari sugar factories following decontrol of sugar in the late 1970s had forced farmers divert to other commercial crops, particularly cotton.

Good returns

Farmer Abdul Rauf Khan of Dongergaon in Gudihatnoor mandal is one among those who favours alternative crops such as sugarcane for the economics involved. He says, the crop requires an investment of not more than Rs.1 lakh initially which diminishes drastically in the subsequent years.

“The cane yield will be in the region of 80 tonnes per acre, which will eventually yield about eight tonnes of jaggery. At the going rate of jaggery at Rs.3,000 per quintal, the returns will be handsome for the farmer,” Mr. Khan calculates.

“Though the black cotton soils in the district are conducive to sugarcane, it can be farmed only in fields that have irrigation facility as the crop requires huge amounts of water. Another impeding aspect is the availability of skilled labour,” points out farmer B. Govind Rao of Mannur who like Rauf Khan, has experience in sugarcane cultivation.

“The need for skilled labour can be surmounted in just one year by importing a few from neighbouring Maharashtra,” Mr. Govind Rao says. “There is however, a need to improve irrigation in the area is sugarcane farming is to be converted as a viable alternative to cotton,” he argues.

Karunanidhi, Vijayakant appeal to farmers not to resort to suicide

In separate appeals to farmers of the Cauvery delta, DMK president M. Karunanidhi and Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) president Vijayakant asked them to desist from resorting to the extreme step of suicide.

They also criticised the State government for remaining “indifferent” to the gravity of the situation emerging out of the failure of samba crop.

In a statement here, Mr Karunanidhi said that suicides in no way would solve the problem of farmers. On the contrary, families of the farmers would be pushed into deeper crisis.

“I request you to do not take the extreme step,” he said.

Mr Vijayakant alleged that instead of taking immediate steps to resolve Cauvery water dispute and get water for samba crop, the ruling party was organising functions in all the Lok Sabha constituencies though elections were still one year away.

“Agriculture is in dire straits and no remedial measure is taken,” he said, urging the government to release Rs five lakh each to the families of those farmers who committed suicide.

Pollution-hit farmers threaten to field candidates in LS polls

Farmers affected by industrial pollution in the district have called upon the State and the Central government to expedite disbursement of compensation to those distressed by pollution by dyeing units besides making efforts to protect the precious natural resources.

“Failure to protect our genuine interests will force us to put up our own candidates in the Lok Sabha elections,” the affected farmers have threatened.

A resolution passed at a consultative meeting of Groundwater Protection Forum and Association of Farmers Affected by Pollution recently stated that for over two decades the fertile fields in the Karur neighbourhood have been ravaged by industrial pollution caused by the dyeing and the bleaching units in Tirupur and Karur.

Even after the affected farmers went to court and successfully blocked functioning of polluting units, there have been widespread instances of many dyeing units functioning illegally in Karur to date and there has been precious little done on the official side to stop the flouting of the court order.

As regards the Old Amaravathy Aycut areas that lie at the tail end of the Amaravathy river basin in the district, a resolution pointed out that the irrigation right of the old aycut areas has been

consistently denied and legislative guarantees ensuring their irrigation right have been thrown to the wind affecting agricultural activities in over 20,000 acres. The State government must intervene and reach out to the lower riparian ayacut areas.

Showing scant regard to the court order and directives, illegal sand mining has been under way in the Cauvery and the Amaravathy beds.

The rampant sand mining has depleted ground water in the region adversely affecting agriculture and irrigation. The State and the Central government must ensure that precious natural resources were protected, another resolution said.

While compensation, albeit a meagre amount, for pollution-affected farmers even pertaining to the year 2004 has not been disbursed so far, a resolution wondered how the governmental agencies were allowing industrial units that pollute to function all the succeeding years. The State government must take expeditious steps to allay that genuine fear of not receiving any compensation at all by announcing the next steps ahead.

Those who participated in the deliberations included forum president K. Ramasamy, vice president V. Ammaiyappan, former MLA T.N. Sivasubramanian, and secretary M. Ramalingam.

Associations whose delegates attended the meeting included Amaravathy Ecology Protection Association, Thottakurichi Farmers Association, Makkal Vazhvirimai Iyakkam, and lift irrigation associations of several villages in the area.

Give lapsed subsidy to eligible farmers: TRS

The Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) on Sunday demanded disbursement of the Rs. 20 crore of lapsed compensation for crops that were damaged due to drought in Kharif 2011. The party said the money formed part of the Rs. 197 crore that was sanctioned towards compensation for crop damage in the district last year.

Addressing a press conference here, TRS senior leader B. Goverdhan Reddy said due to faulty disbursement, many eligible farmers did not get the compensation in the form of input subsidy.

The delay resulted in lapse of an amount of Rs. 20 crore, he explained.

Mr. Reddy urged all eligible farmers to reach the Collectorate conference hall on Monday to submit petitions regarding their claims at the grievance cell. He said the farmers should demand the administration not to return the lapsed money and instead disburse it among the eligible after a due survey.

The TRS leader demanded that the government take steps to rectify mistakes committed either by the Agriculture department, the banks or farmers in disbursal of subsidy.

He said in many instances, banks have returned money based on some technical faults.

Call to bring dairy farmers out of the red

Stakeholders in the dairy sector on Sunday called for immediate intervention of the Union and State governments to rescue dairy farmers from the present crisis.

Representatives of farmers, dairy cooperatives, and private dairies at a roundtable here organised by Acharya N.G. Ranga Kisan Samstha demanded that corrective steps be taken by the government to end the “artificial lack of demand for milk and its by-products in the State.”

The meeting was organised coinciding with the 110th birth anniversary of noted farmer leader and former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh at N.G. Ranga Bhavan here.

Referring to the National Dairy Development Board’s projection, putting the requirement of milk in 2021-22 at 180 million tonnes as against the current 112 million tonnes, the speakers stressed the need for developing the domestic market with focus on improving production and productivity, and ensuring remunerative price for farmers.

They pressed for strengthening the cooperative dairies, increasing subsidies on cattle feed, drugs, setting up of more veterinary hospitals, and furthering research on high-bred milch animal.

They suggested supply of subsidised milk to anganwadi and noon-meal centres, hospitals, lactating mothers, and children in rural areas as over 40 per cent of the State population went without milk.

State protection

Sangham Dairy former chairman Kilari Rajan Babu underscored the need for increasing the domestic milk consumption by providing subsidies to end the “artificial lack of demand for milk.”

Former MP Y. Sivaji said the dairy sector needed State protection as the country was ill-equipped to compete in the international market, which went up and down sharply.

It was an irony that liquor sale in the State was over Rs. 24,000 crore, but sale of milk and milk by-products was hardly half that, he lamented.

Imported butter

CPI-led All India Kisan Sabha State general secretary Ravula Venkaiah attributed the present crisis to India signing the WTO agreement as imported butter flooded the market.

Farmer organisations, cutting across party lines, should come together to exert pressure on the Union and State governments to bail out the dairy farmers.

“We will organise a series of meetings in the districts culminating in a State-level meet in Hyderabad for a protracted struggle,” he added.

CPI(M)-led Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham district secretary N. Ranga Rao said the government should strengthen the Andhra Pradesh Dairy Development Cooperative Federation and enter into long-term agreement with milk consumers, including the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, for purchase of dairy products.

Prakasam District Cooperative Milk Producers’ Union Chairman Ch. Srinivasa Rao promised farmers to implement the practical suggestions made by them during the meeting.

Heritage Dairy District Manager B. Ramasubba Reddy found fault with the Centre for belated lifting of ban on dairy products in November. Damage had already been done with importers from other countries already firming up for dairy import orders from other countries for rest of the fiscal, he lamented.

Animal Husbandry Joint Director N. Rajani Kumari said farmers should give importance to selection of high-bred cattle suitable to local conditions.

They should not neglect de-worming and seasonal vaccines for milch cattle at any cost, she added.

The department organised a powerpoint presentation to enlighten the farmers on best practices.

Farmer leader Chundururu Ranga Rao lamented that a dairy farmer's income assessed at just Rs. 1,500 per month per cattle was less than the commission got by milk procurement agent.

Acharya N.G. Kisan Samstha general secretary Ch. Seshaiyah moderated the discussion in which Creamline Dairy Manager V.Ch. Subba Rao, and Area Livestock Development Association chairman N. Avanendra Prasad took part.

Ryots keen to replace cotton with sugarcane

After the failure of cotton, they have been demanding revival of sugar factories in the region



Workers toiling in a sugarcane field near Indervelli in Adilabad district. -PHOTO: S. HARPAL SINGH

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Spurious fertilizer seized



A group of farmers seized more than 25 bags of spurious fertilizer near Gobichettipalayam and handed it to the officials of the Department of Agriculture on Sunday.

Sources said that two unidentified persons approached Devaraj (53), a farmer in Shaibanputhur village near Gobichettipalayam, a few days ago claiming that they were traders of fertilizers.

The duo allegedly claimed that they could supply potash made by Indian Potash Limited, which was sold at Rs. 840-a-bag in the market, for Rs. 740-a-bag.

Devaraj ordered 17 bags, which were delivered to him within two hours after he placed the order.

When the farmer opened the bags, he found a coloured substance and realised that the fertilizer was spurious. When he told the incident to other farmers in the area, he learnt that the duo had approached many in the area.

Hence, Devaraj and a group of farmers decided to catch the duo and laid a trap. They ordered another 25 bags and asked the duo to supply the fertilizer.

The duo came to the village in a van carrying the fertilizer on Saturday. When farmers questioned about the quality of the fertilizer, the duo and the driver of the vehicle fled the spot.

Later, farmers alerted the agriculture officials. A team led by Assistant Director (Quality Control) Chinnasamy rushed to the spot and inspected the fertilizer. They collected samples and sent them for examination.

Officials said stern action would be initiated against those who were selling spurious fertilizers. "Farmers should purchase fertilizers only from the traders who have a valid licence from the government. Stringent action will be initiated against the traders if they are found violating the rules," a senior official said.

Meanwhile, farmers in the district urged the officials to tighten the vigil and conduct frequent checks to prevent the sale of spurious fertilizers.

weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, Dec 24

Max Min

28.7° | 21.0°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 83

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:27

Sunset: 05:49

Barometer: 1014

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Dec 25

Max Min

30° | 21°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Dec 26	Thursday Dec 27	Friday Dec 28	Saturday Dec 29	Sunday Dec 30
29° 21° Partly Cloudy	26° 24° Overcast	26° 24° Overcast	25° 24° Overcast	25° 23° Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 100

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 07:11

Sunset: 05:30

Barometer: 1018



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

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Tyre industry against import curbs on rubber

The tyre industry has opposed imposing import curbs on rubber, saying that it will be counter productive.

The import curbs will have far reaching adverse consequences for the industry already facing the onslaught of unprecedented slowdown in the automobile sector.

The Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) said in a statement that the demand raised by rubber growers also does not corroborate with the facts.

High domestic prices

An analysis of domestic (RSS 4) and international (RSS 3) prices shows that domestic prices have ruled higher than international prices over the last six months except in December.

Even when compared with Malaysian SMR – 20, which is a competing grade of rubber with RSS 4, domestic rubber prices are still ruling higher.

The consumers have been at the receiving end of comparatively higher domestic prices for a major part of the year.

Any knee jerk reaction could have disastrous consequences for the tyre industry which is already facing the prospects of low tyre demand in view of de-growth in automobile production, Rajiv Budhreja, Director-General, ATMA, said.

According to him, the domestic prices have ruled higher due to domestic demand outstripping availability making imports imperative.

Volatile futures

ATMA has put the blame on volatility in rubber prices on futures trading. The futures in December have dropped from Rs 167 to Rs 158 a kg within a week, while international prices have risen from Rs 170 to Rs 173.

The Association also suggested market intervention, through Rubber Board or any other designated agency such as STC, till prices are perceived to be in the vicinity of international prices.

Tea encyclopaedia for 2012 released

The 'Global Tea Digest 2012' (GTD), a storehouse of the latest statistical data and tea encyclopaedia, has been dedicated to the tea industry by Dr S. Balaji, Managing Director of Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Corporation Ltd (Tantea).

"This is a comprehensive publication of statistics, tea glossary, tasting terminology, different grades, harmonised system of coding and chronology of important developments since 2737 BC. It has all necessary data to help effective decision-making at corporate and Government levels. This enriches experienced professionals, new entrants, academicians and researchers," Balaji told *Business Line*

"This is our second edition with several improved features over the first edition brought out last year. We are offering this 200-paged publication containing 45 tables free-of-cost as our dedication to tea industry," Rajesh Gupta, Director, Global Tea Brokers (GTB), who has compiled, edited, printed and published the book, said.

"As we are a member of International Tea Committee, London, we have packed global data on area, production, exports, imports, prices and consumption," GTB General Manager Georgie John said. "This provides global data for the last 10 years and up to October for the current calendar," GTB Senior Executive Senthil Kumar said.

Cotton production for 2012-13 season to be around 355 lakh bales: CAI



Cotton production in the season 2012-13 is expected to be around 355 lakh bales, while the consumption is likely to be around 265 lakh bales, according to Cotton Association of India (CAI).

“The cotton production this year is expected to be not less than 355 lakh bales while the consumption is likely to be around 265 lakh bales, leaving a sizable surplus,” CAI President Dhiren Sheth said at its 90th annual general meeting here.

There was an apprehension at the start of the season 2012-13 that the area under cotton may be lower than in 2011-12, consequent to the late onset of monsoon and unfavourable distribution of subsequent rains in some cotton growing areas.

But though the acreage witnessed a three percent decrease, the crop looks promising due to good rains in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra in the later part of the monsoon, Sheth said.

At a time when performance of agriculture sector was not so impressive, cotton has been one of the major success stories of the country.

Cotton production in the country, which was 158 lakh bales in 2001-02, has more than doubled during the last decade. Productivity level has also seen a marked improvement from 308 kgs/ha in 2001-02 to close to 500 kgs/ha in 2011-12.

The total acreage has also registered remarkable increase from 87.3 lakh ha in 2001-02 to 121.78 lakh in 2011-12.

This has not only enabled the country to cater to its domestic requirement but also transformed the country from a chronic importer of cotton to a regular exporter. India's total export earning from cotton, which was a meagre 44 crore in 2001-02, stood at a whopping 14,000 crore in the year 2011-12.

The country has the distinction of having the largest acreage under cotton and being the second-largest producer, consumer and exporter of cotton in the whole world.

The growth in production of cotton in India during the last ten years was on account of increase in both acreage and yield, according to CAI.

Given the limitations on expansion of acreage, the main source of long-term growth is improvement in yield. The yield level has plateaued during the last couple of years and our yield is still way below the world average, Sheth said.

In order to sustain the onward momentum in yield, the country needs more revolutions like GM cotton, he added.

Dindigul district to get 5 cold storage units

Five cold storage facilities will be coming up in Dindigul district to enable farmers to store vegetables and fruits and sell them at a better price later.

According to S.A. Syed Ibrahim, Secretary, Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee, works to establish two cold storage facilities with a total capacity of 25 tonnes at Oddanchatram and another one with five-tonne capacity in Batlagundu are at the completion stage.

Sites have been identified and funds sanctioned for constructing three more cold storage facilities with 25 tonne capacity each in Palani, Dindigul and Gopalpatti and construction works are to be initiated shortly.

TICKER BOARD

The marketing committee, with expertise from the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, has erected a ticker board at its office at the Collectorate to enable farmers to know the prevailing market prices of agriculture products to help farmers decide the right time of sale of their produce.

The regulated market in Palani also has such a facility.

Tentative future market price of major crops are also being displayed, thanks to network with Bombay Commodities Exchange, he added.

ONE FOR JASMINE

He was addressing an agriculturists' grievances day meeting held at the Collectorate on Friday.

The Collector N. Venkatachalam presided over the meeting.

Floriculturists from Nilakottai wanted a cold storage facility for jasmine flowers and a processing unit for value-addition in their area.

Expressing grave concern over poor rainfall this year in the district, many farmers asked the Collector to declare the district as drought-hit and provide relief, said the sources.

AP mulls exclusive Budget for Agriculture



HYDERABAD, DEC. 23:

After Karnataka, it is Andhra Pradesh's turn to have an exclusive Budget for Agriculture.

“The State Government is keen to submit a separate Budget. It is currently under the consideration of the Finance Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy,” a senior official of the Ministry of Agriculture told *Business Line*.

Agriculture Minister Kanna Lakshminarayana had visited Bangalore recently along with top officials of agriculture and allied ministries to study the Karnataka model. Karnataka had become the first State in the country to come out with an exclusive Budget for Agriculture.

“After studying the model, the Agriculture Minister had submitted a report to the Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, and explained to him the importance of having a separate budget in order to focus more on the primary sector of economy,” the official said.

The Chief Minister too liked the idea and referred it to the Finance Minister for his consideration. “The Government is likely to take a call on the issue soon,” he said.

It, however, is not clear whether it would be implemented in the financial year 2013-14, considering the time constraint. “Generally, the Budget preparations begin six months ahead of the actual presentation of the budget. It will be too difficult to go for a separate Budget at a short notice,” he said.

Farmers’ associations, agricultural economists and scientists and non-governmental organisations have been demanding the State Government follow the Karnataka example. Early this month, they held a State-level meeting here to discuss the issue in detail.

Rythu Swarajya Vedika, Chetana Society and Centre for Sustainable Agriculture alleged that what the Government allocated for agriculture last year was peanuts considering the number of people depended on agriculture. “In a Budget of Rs 1.40 lakh crore, agriculture got just Rs 2,946 crore,” their representatives said.

They argued that a dedicated budget would improve accountability and a sense of responsibility for the administration.

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Any knee jerk reaction could have disastrous consequences for the tyre industry which is already facing the prospects of low tyre demand in view of de-growth in automobile production, Rajiv Budhraj, Director-General, ATMA, said.

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Plagued by pepper cartel, traders demand commodity-specific regional bourses

Kochi, Dec. 23:

The entry of big operators with huge funds in the commodity markets and the consequent tug of war resulting in high volatility appears to have eventually made many genuine operators to lose confidence in the market.

What is happening, of late, on the National Commodity exchange trading in pepper futures is allegedly against the principles of futures trading, trade sources told *Business Line*. According to them, there should be "0" delivery at the time of maturity of each contract and at the same time the prices of futures and the spot should also converge.

“And this is not happening on the exchange and the prices are artificially either pushed up or pulled down and that is why delivery is being opted for,” they said.

Citing unhealthy trade practices some of the traders demanded that the regional commodity specific exchange should be revived and pepper should be traded on that platform only. They alleged that the big operators after creating problems in Guar Gum, Chilli, Turmeric, Cumin trade has now entered the pepper market.

The big operators who reported to have cornered an estimated 7,800 tonnes of pepper are allegedly trying to play different tactics to make good the losses they are likely to incur following the sharp fall in the pepper prices in recent weeks.

In fact, the cartel had taken a wrong decision by cornering such huge quantity of pepper, market sources pointed out.

Making things worse for them many investors who had taken delivery of pepper prior to June, i.e., before the entry of the cartel and beginning of its squeezing and cornering activities, deposited back the material from June onwards, they said. The bear operators got back into the driving seat on Friday by making the propaganda that around 7,800 tonnes of pepper cornered by the bull operators' cartel would come to the market soon. The validity of the material would expire on Jan 5.

Meanwhile, the Kerala farmers and dealers had already liquidated their stocks when the prices were ruling high above Rs 400 a kg, they said.

arrivals

Fresh pepper started trickling in albeit in small quantity. Dealers from Tamil Nadu were covering directly from the primary markets and the farmers. Besides, good quantity of pepper is being bought by pilgrims on their return from Sabarimala when they pass by Kerala's main pepper growing districts of Idukki, Pathanamthitta and Kollam. Thus, daily an estimated 5-7 tonnes of pepper is moved out directly. Some of the upcountry demand is met by supplies from Erode in Tamil Nadu also, they said.

If good quantity of pepper validity of which is expiring on Jan 5, is reprocessed that might result in a squeeze in availability before the picking up of the new crop arrival, they said.

The futures market has been fluctuating and the prices at the weekend showed a marginal rise in the active contracts.

Feb, Mar and Apr contracts increased by Rs 380, Rs 85 and Rs 50 respectively a quintal to close at Rs 34,970, Rs 34,510 and Rs 34,570 a quintal.

Total turn over increased by 3,699 tonnes to 11,703 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 1,173 tonnes.

Spot prices last week fell by Rs 400 to close at Rs 36,800 (ungarbled) and Rs 38,300 (Garbled) a quintal despite good domestic demand amid tight supply.

Bihar: East Champaran becoming hub of flower trade

MOTIHARI (BIHAR), DEC 23:

With farmers shifting to flower cultivation in a big way, East Champaran, from where Mahatama Gandhi tested the potential of satyagraha against British rule, is fast emerging as a hub of the flower trade.

According to an estimate the flower trade in the district, about 100 km from the state capital, is valued at Rs five crore annually at present.

More than 500 farmers, big and small, have left cultivation of paddy and sugarcane and shifted to cultivation of flowers.

Vast tracts of land in Motihari, Madhuban, Pakridayal and Chakia blocks could be seen blossoming with flowers. Rajnigandha, Lilly and Chandramauli are the popular varieties of flowers grown here.

Lalbabu Chaurasia, owner of Ravi flowers centre and who is in the trade for last 32 years, told PTI that over 500 farmers of the district have shifted to flower cultivation and are reaping rich commercial gain.

Since the district is on border with Nepal, sending the flowers to international markets through Nepal earns a handsome profit. Besides, flowers in bulk are sent to West Bengal, he said.

With flower trade gaining popularity, more than 25 shops selling flowers have come up in the heart of Motihari town which is popularly known as “Phool gaon” (flowers village).

Chaurasia said earlier the flower trade was marginal with some in neighbouring districts of Muzaffarpur, Sheohar and Gorakhpur.

“But, the trade has picked up in last 3-4 years making it a profitable business for hundreds of farmers,” another farmer Sanjay Pandey said.

Shivendra Kumar, another farmer, said with the trade becoming profitable workers from neighbouring West Bengal were also flocking here to ean Rs 10,000-12,000 per month.

District Horticulture Officer Dharamvir Panday said the government was promoting cultivation of flowers by giving almost 90 per cent subsidy on cultivation of gladius.

The government has set up poly houses at four places in the district to train farmers in floriculture, he added.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

24.12.2012 A.M

Rabi sowing gradually ending

The speedy pace of sowing in major rabi crops over recent weeks seems to have tapered a bit during this week, signalling a gradual end to the planting season. According to the Union agriculture ministry, wheat, the foodgrain most widely planted during this season, has been sown on 25.3 million hectares, almost 1.54 per cent less than last year.

The drop has been primarily because of lower sowing in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana. The last two states account for almost 80 per cent of the country's wheat output.

"The best time to sow wheat is from November middle to mid-December. With December nearing its end, the pace has slackened," said Ramesh Chand, director of the National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research. He said wheat sowing might finally be about the same as last year.

SOWING SCORESHEET

(in million hectares)

Crop	2011-12	2012-13	% change
Wheat	25.71	25.31	-1.54
Rabi rice	2.78	1.71	-38.48
Coarse cereals	5.37	5.48	1.97
Pulses	12.93	12.86	-0.87
Oilseeds	7.58	7.95	4.97
Total rabi crops	51.88	51.75	-0.26

Source: Department of Agriculture

Oilseed sowing would be more; these had been planted on 7.95 million hectares till Thursday, almost 4.9 per cent more than last year at this time.

The biggest rise has been in mustard seed, sown on 6.44 million hectares, almost 2.8 per cent more than last year. "The late resurgence in the southwest monsoon might have encouraged mustard farmers to compensate for the loss suffered during the kharif season," said Chand.

The sowing of rabi rice has also been low because of deficient rain in the southern parts and low reservoir levels there. Also slightly down is the sowing of pulses.

Ginners look outside state as cotton output dips locally

With the current year cotton crop estimated to lower than projected, Gujarat-based ginning mills have been forced to rely on other state for their raw material. Currently, out of total cotton arrivals for ginning, almost 50 per cent cotton has come from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and other cotton producing state.

"Every year only 20-25 per cent of cotton comes from other state to Gujarat for ginning as we have large number of processing units. But this year situation is different as our crop size has been reduced and most of the ginning mills are forced to source more than 50 per cent of from other states," said Anand Popat, secretary of Saurashtra Ginners Association (SGA).

According to Popat, farmers mainly from Saurashtra area have also restrained from selling cotton as they continue to seek higher prices. On the other hand, prices in other states have been low due to higher crop.

On an average, about 40,000 bales cotton arrives every day in Gujarat. Out of this, around 20,000-22,000 bales of cotton have been arriving this year from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan as against around 8,000 bales last year. Price of cotton is ruling at Rs 850-900 per 20 kg here.

Arunbhai Dalal, an Ahmedabad-based trader and exporter, said, "Right now Gujarat farmers are not selling their cotton enough as they had seen Rs 951-1000 per 20 kg last year. Once prices will reach to this level, farmers will increase their cotton selling. But for now it is fact that we are very much depending on Maharashtra and Andhra."

According to Dalal, so far around 1.8-1.9 million bales of cotton has arrived in Gujarat, of which 700,000-800,000 bales of cotton came from other states. During this week, cotton price has increased on some good demand from mills. According to market sources demand will increase further as export demand in yarn is higher.

Cotton production in Gujarat is likely to be around 7 to 7.5 million bales in 2012-13 as against 12 million bales last year. Out of this, Saurashtra's cotton production may not cross 3-3.5 million bales this year which is almost 50 percent less as compared to last year.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

24.12.2012 A.M

Cotton traders seek right prices

The [cotton traders](#) in the state are worried over the price they are getting on their produce. Despite producing better quality cotton, their yield was getting lesser price, when compared to the price of cotton the farmers living in the neighbouring states were getting at mandis.

The issue was discussed at length during the fourth annual summit of MP Association of Cotton Processors & Traders, which was held here on Sunday. President of the Association, Kailash Agrawal, said, "Our quality of cotton is better. Still, we are getting a price, almost less by Rs 1000 per candy, when compared to our counterparts living in the neighbouring states. The reason being that unlike Gujarat, we don't have any brand of our own."

Gopal Tayal, secretary of the Association, said, "We are satisfied with the announcement of new textile policy. Now we are waiting for a notification to be issued in this connection."

An eminent cotton trader from Mumbai, [Suresh Kotak](#), said, "There lies a tremendous potential of growth for cotton traders in Madhya Pradesh, which enjoyed a huge quantity of virgin black soil, suitable for the crop."

The secretary of textile committee, P Nayak, advised the cotton brokers in the state to go for star rating in case they were vying to get an opportunity for upgradation of their produce.

The state's industry minister, Kailash Vijayvargiya, said, "We have addressed the issue in the State Textile Policy, which has been declared by the state government. However, I would like our ginners to extend their business to spinning too so as to go for value addition."

The state's education minister, Archana Chitnis, said, "Khadi had played an important role while liberating the country from the Britishers. So, textile has a major role to play for making the cotton industry self-sufficient."

The state's Textile Policy, which was unveiled on Friday, talks of providing benefits to cotton traders in forms like tax waiver and interest subvention to all those forthcoming ventures that will be investing a minimum of Rs 25 crore within the state.

The cotton brokers have launched a brand of their own in their bid to get better price of their produce called 'MP Narmada'.

'Treat fisheries on a par with farm sector'

VISAKHAPATNAM: Expressing anger at the step-motherly treatment meted out to [fishefolk](#) by successive governments both at the [Centre](#) and the state, members of the [Federation of Indian Fishery Industries](#) (FIFI) on Sunday demanded that the fishing industry be dealt on a par with agriculture. They also demanded that a separate fisheries ministry be immediately formed at the Centre.

Addressing the media here, FIFI president Y G K Murthy said, "It's almost three years since promises were made by Union ministers that a separate ministry would be formed, but we are yet to hear any further word on it." Explaining the reason for demanding a separate fisheries ministry, he said, "We have to deal with several ministries instead of one. They include agriculture, shipping, commerce, defence, food processing industry as well as the state fisheries department."

FIFI general secretary Dilip N Pagdhare said introducing the Marine Fisheries (Regulation and Management) Bill will curb the activities of traditional fishermen and local fishing industry. He

said that ever since the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, fishermen were being harassed by Coast Guard, Indian Navy and Marine Police officials. Though the fishermen have identity cards, they are constantly harassed by the authorities."