THE HINDU

Published: February 11, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: February 11, 2012 04:24 IST

Orissa farmers get a taste of local cultivation practices

Special Correspondent

Given an overview of the system of rice intensification

beyond borders:The farmers team from Orissa inspecting an oil palm farm near Lalgudi.

Picking up inputs on latest agricultural practices from the region, a group of 15 farmers from Orissa undertook an exposure visit to the district over the past four days.

Farmers from Ganjam, Koraput and Malkangiri districts in Orissa were part of the team that was on the visit organised under the Integrated Scheme of Oilseeds, Pulses, Oil Palm and Maize (ISOPOM) that concluded on Thursday. The team was accompanied by S.P.Samantaray, Agronomist, and Mahes Kumar Padhy, Agriculture Officer, from Orissa. Agriculture Department officials, led by J.Sekar, Joint Director of Agriculture, Tiruchi, briefed the team on agricultural practices adopted in the district, the different crops and the productivity trends. The farmers were also given an overview of the system of rice intensification technique in paddy cultivation.

First hand account

The team visited oil palm plantation of Naryanan, a farmer at L.Abisekapuram village near Lalgudi to get a first hand account of cultivation methods. They were also briefed on oil palm cultivation methods, taxonomy, yield prospects, the price and profitability to farmers by R.Chandrasekaran, Deputy Director of Agriculture (Central schemes), Tiruchi.

The team also visited an oil extraction unit at Varanavasi village and the oil palm plantation maintained by the Cauvery Oil Palm Ltd, where they were briefed on the oil extraction methods and by-products of oil palm.

At the Government Coconut Nursery and Coconut Crossing Centre, the team studied process of producing hybrid coconuts seeds and raising of coconut seedlings in the nursery. The team was also oriented to groundnut cultivation through visits to the fields at Valaiyur village near Manachanallur and the seed processing unit at Manachanallur.

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Published: February 11, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: February 11, 2012 04:21 IST

Cashew growers find it hard to adopt modern cultivation methods

Staff Correspondent

Cashew fruits on display at the ‘Cashew Mela' organised by the University of Horticulture in Mangalore on Friday.— Photo: R. Eswarraj

Cashew growers expressed diverse views at “Geru Mela” (Cashew Mela) organised at the University of Horticulture's Horticultural Research Station at Ullal near Mangalore on Friday.

Joseph Pinto planted cashew saplings on part of his 1.5 acres of land at Neermarga a few years ago. “There are 15 trees now. They just grow on their own and I do not use pesticides or fertilizers. The yield, of course, is negligible compared to that of a hybrid variety,” he said.

Marcel Braggesh and his wife, who have 100 cashew trees in their land at Merlapadau near Neermarga, take some care of the trees and have no problems with the yield. “I brought seeds from my relative 10 years ago and sowed them,” Mr. Braggesh says. “We prune the trees regularly and harvest the fruits.” Last year, the couple harvested around three quintals of cashew. For many growers, cashew has been a wild crop that required less maintenance. “We do not have the luxury of growing cashew the way it is done at the research station. I did try some techniques suggested by scientists. But I did not get good yield,” said Sanjay Bhat from Neermarga.

The main concern of growers is implementing the modern cultivation techniques that are largely labour intensive. “The responsibility of taking care of cashew and other crops is on our shoulders. We find it hard to get workers for pruning and spraying pesticides at regular intervals,” Mr. Braggesh said.

Scientists at the Horticultural Research Station said yield of cashew in the State was far below the potential. “An average of 900 kg of cashew is being harvested in one hectare of land. There is a potential to grow four tonnes of cashew in one hectare,” said M. Gangadhara Nayak, Principal Scientist (Hort-Fruit Science), Directorate of Cashew Research, Puttur.

Lack of plant protection measures, the scientists said, was the prime reason for decrease in the yield. “Spraying pesticides at regular intervals to control pest problem is very essential. There are pesticides other than endosulfan that can be sprayed,” said S.D. Sampath Samrajya from the Board of Management of Horticultural University.

Mr. Samrajya said the government was giving subsidy of Rs. 20,000 per hectare for three years under the National Horticultural Mission. It was also giving 25 per cent subsidy for purchase of cashew processing equipment, he said. The scientists spoke about the yield from various varieties, including Ullal 3 and Vengula 4 hybrids, which are popular. Scientists explained about different food products such as halwa and juice that could be prepared using cashew fruit.

Published: February 11, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: February 11, 2012 04:20 IST

Dairy farmers' meet

Minister for Rural Development and Dairy Development K.C. Joseph will inaugurate the district dairy farmers' meet and Milma fest at the Holy Faith High School Auditorium at Makkiyad, near Mananthavadi, at 10 a.m. on Sunday.

The two-day programme is being organised by the Dairy Development Department in association with the Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Milma) and primary milk societies in the district.

Minister for Youth Affairs P.K. Jayalakshmi will preside over the function.

Published: February 11, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: February 11, 2012 04:24 IST

Fix tapioca price at Rs. 9,000 a tonne

Staff Reporter

Members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayegal Sangam staged a demonstration in Tiruchengode Town on Friday urging the government to fix the price of tapioca at Rs. 9,000 per tonne.

The farmers also made an appeal to the government to serve tapioca in the nutritious noon meal scheme.

They also wanted it to be included as an item in the Public Distribution System to ensure better price for their produce.

Published: February 11, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: February 11, 2012 04:17 IST

Speed up Kudankulam project: farmers association

Special Correspondent

Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham has urged the State Government to extend co-operation to the Central Government to speed up the commissioning of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project or to buy power from the other States to save Tamil Nadu from power crisis.

In a statement, President of the Association M.R. Sivasamy said that though the announcement was that there would be a power shut down for six hours during the day and two hours during night, there is an increased duration of power cut at night and during the early morning for the last one week.

Farmers were getting power supply for only two-and-a-half hours during the day. People were not able to sleep peacefully at night and students were not able to prepare for their examinations.

Considering the power generation, demand and the shortfall, Mr.Sivasamy said that extending support to the Centre for commissioning of Kudankulam to get that 9,000 MW is one option or else the State should go for purchase of power from neighbouring States to tide over the power supply crisis.

Demonstration to press for the same will be held on February 14 and on February 23 a meeting will be held at Ulundurpet.

During the next week, a similar meeting will be held to elicit opinion from the farmers. Farmers are also planning to convene a meeting to decide on the course of action to be taken in the event of the Electricity Regulatory Commission trying to abolish free power supply to farmers in a phased manner.

'Farmers are getting power supply for only two-and-a-half hours during the day'

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Commodities

11 FEB, 2012, 03.58AM IST, RITURAJ TIWARI & PK KRISHNAKUMAR,ET BUREAU

Cheaper rubber imports likely to last for a month

NEW DELHI | KOCHI: The government is planning to do away with a concessional duty on rubber imports under the Tariff Rate Quota scheme from the next financial year. The scheme, launched in 2010-11, was extended up to March 31, 2012, to enable rubber companies complete their imports.

"We are recommending to the finance ministry to discontinue this scheme from the next fiscal as imports have been recorded low. This scheme allows an annual import of 40,000 tonne at a 7.5% import duty. In 2010-11, the imports were around 3,500 tonne while in this fiscal, companies have completed only 20-25% of the stipulated quota," said an official of commerce ministry.

The rubber consumption body -- Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association -- however said there was a need to extend the scheme for the next year as well.

"Demand continues to outstrip production. We demand an enhancement in quantity to 1 lakh tonne and withdrawal of the import duty or further reduction to 5% from 7.5%," said ATMA director general Rajiv Budhraja.

He claimed that tyre companies have completed 75% of their quota under the Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) scheme despite delays and uncertainty on its continuation.

"Our members received Tariff Rate Quota licences for 33,700 tonne of which they have been able to ship close to 25,000 tonne. There was a little delay in processing import orders as the average international prices of rubber were higher than domestic prices.

Imports even at lower duty were not viable in August and September. They became viable in the period from October to January when international prices dropped," he said.

All India Rubber Industries Association, another industry body, too advocated for a duty exemption on rubber imports. "There is a gap of around 64,000 tonne between demand supply.

The gap is likely to widen with demand expected to grow at 15% while there will hardly be any variation in production. Duty-free imports will balance the market," said its president Vinod Simon.

However, government's rubber body Rubber Board says there will not be any shortage of natural rubber in the domestic market in 2012-2013. "The projected opening stock of natural rubber in April 2012 is 230,000 mt and rubber consumers could import more than 100,000 mt, ruling out any shortage," said Sheela Thomas, the board's chairman.

India is expected to produce more than 9 lakh mt of rubber for 2011-12, up more than 4% from

8.6 lakh mt in the previous year. Consumption has been estimated at 9.6 lakh mt, imports at 170,000 mt and exports at 30,000 mt with a carry-over stock of 230,000 mt at the end of March 2012.

Business Standard

Feb 11, 2012

Food safety issues worry Indian spice industry

Hrishikesh Joshi / Mumbai/ Pune February 11, 2012, 0:48 IST

Indian spice traders and producers are facing challenges like food safety, sustainability and traceability. Food safety regulations are affecting spice exports especially to the countries like Germany, France, England, Japan and Australia. India is biggest producer and exporter of spices in the world. As the regulations varies from country-to-country, it is becoming hard to maintain all the required standards.

According to reports, the total export of spices from India during the current financial year, up to November 2011, is 351,900 tonnes valued at Rs 6,209.08 crore.

But considering the volumes, the export shows a decline of five per cent in the current year as compared to the previous year. The spices exports for the financial year 2011-12 is fixed at 500,000 tonnes valuing Rs 6,500 crore.

The countries that import the maximum of spice products from India are Malaysia for chilli and coriander, USA for pepper, celery, spice oils and oleo resins, China for mint products, Saudi Arabia for cardamom, UAE for turmeric, Bangladesh for ginger and garlic, Pakistan for cardamom large and fennel, UK for cumin, Japan for fenugreek, Nigeria for curry powders and Nepal for other seed spices.

Geemon Korah, CEO, Kancor Ingredients Ltd said, "These regulations are badly hitting our export markets. Therefore sustainability is a major issue.

The maximum containers are rejected from European countries, Japan and Australia. We are largest exporter of chilli and ginger to these countries."

"India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices in the world today, contributing about 48 per cent of the world's requirement of spices. As the global demand for spices is spurring up, it throws up several challenges, mainly for food sustainability, traceability and safety standards. These are not just issues, but threats that can affect the very existence of the spice industry in the country," said A Jayathilak, chairman, Spices Board of India,

He added, "Food safety problems could be managed through modern processing technology, but contaminants, pesticide residues and toxins remained important issues."

As an initiative, to ensure traceability the board has established quality evaluation labs in major centres like Cochin, Chennai, Mumbai, Guntur in Andhra Pradesh and Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu. These labs service testing of spices specifically chilli and turmeric to match international requirements. New labs are under construction in Kandla in Gujarat, Delhi and Kolkata.

P M Sureshkumar, secretary and director, marketing Spice Board said, "To cater to the fast developing international requirements, India is focusing on development of infrastructure facilities. The Board has set up spices parks which offers common facilities to cleaning, grading, value addition, storage and marketing in major spices growing states. Spices Parks are established in Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh and in Puttady in Kerala focusing on garlic in the former and on pepper and cardamom."

Among the major spices exported from India, chilli contributes 132,500 tonnes occupies the first place. Other major spices that are exported from India include turmeric (58,000 tonnes), Cumin (26,500 tonnes), Coriander (18,200 tonnes), Pepper (17,000) , Fenugreek (14,700 tonnes), Ginger (11, 250 tonnes) , Fennel (5,100 tonnes), Nutmeg & mace (2,550 tonnes), celery (2,450 tonnes) , Cardamom small (3,100 tonnes) and Cardamom Large (475 tonnes), Garlic (1075 tonnes).

Mango arrival likely to get delayed

Vimukt Dave / Mumbai/ Rajkot February 11, 2012, 0:43 IST

With unfavourable weather prevailing during the flowering period, mango arrival in Gujarat is likely to be late by month this year. Farmers and traders fear that if the condition continues for some more time, mango crop may not come before mid May.

"In terms of weather, this year is not going good for mango plantations. Generally mango flowering begins during November and December, but due to hot weather it started late in mid January," said Harsukh Jarsaniya, secretary Talala Agriculture Produce Market Committee.

Currently, Gujarat is also facing cold wave, with temperatures dipping to record low in several parts in the state, thanks to snowfall in northern parts of the country.

"The way cold wave in Gujarat is not good for mango crop. Flowering has not begun yet in some places of Gujarat which may delay mango arrivals by month this year. Also we fear the extreme cold weather may further damage the flowers," said Jarsaniya.

Under normal conditions, Kesar mango arrive in markets by mid or end of the April every year but this time it may come to market after mid May.

Ravajibhai Chovatiya, head of horticulture department, Junagadh Agriculture University said, "This year mango season will start late by a month as flowering season started late due to erratic weather. Cold is good for the crop but such a prolonged weather may be cause of concern for mango crop."

Apparently, last year was also not good for mango as it rained unexpectedly in February 2011. Production of Kesar mango stood at 3.33 million boxes (each box containing 10 kg) in 2011, which had declined by 959,000 boxes from 4.29 million boxes of 2010.

However farmers or traders declined to offer any production estimate for this year as it is too early to predict the same.

During the season, about 33 percent mango crop comes to Talala APMC for auction. Most of the farmers trade their products in APMCs at Rajkot, Junagadh, and Ahmedabad, among other places.

Oil falls on Greece deal doubts

Reuters / New York February 11, 2012, 0:34 IST

Oil prices fell on Friday, after an eight-day rally for Brent crude, as the latest hitches in negotiations on a Greece bailout package pressured the euro and equities.

A reduced oil demand growth forecast from the International Energy Agency (IEA), the sixth consecutive monthly report with diminished growth expectations, also helped pressure oil.

The euro fell and the dollar index strengthened after the leader of the far-right party in Greece's coalition declined to back a bailout agreement, raising concerns once again about the risk of a default.

The euro had been pressured earlier after euro zone finance ministers sought further measures from Greece before signing off on a 130 billion euro ($171.46 billion) bailout package.

Both Brent and US crude remained on track to post a weekly gain.

Brent March crude futures fell $1.27 to $117.32 a barrel by 1:03 pm EST, having fallen as low as $116.29. The pullback follows Brent's close at $118.59 on Thursday, its highest settlement since late July.

US March crude, after three consecutive higher settlements, was down $1.44 at $98.40 a barrel, having fallen as low as $97.32. US crude needs to close above $97.84 to end higher on the week.

Brent's premium to US crude strengthened slightly, hovering near $19 a barrel.

A retreat ahead of the weekend, after the sharp rise in Brent prices over the past eight sessions, was not unexpected after its Relative Strength Index pushed above 70 this week, signalling an overbought condition for investors watching technical indicators.

"The market has paused for breath after its sustained rally," Mark Thomas, head of European energy at brokerage Marex Spectron in London, said.

IEA trims demand growth view

Global oil demand will grow by less than 1 per cent in 2012, the IEA said in its monthly oil report, saying a weak global economy may limit demand growth this year.

The agency, which provides energy advice to the world's most industrialised nations, cut its 2012 global oil demand growth forecast by 250,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 800,000 bpd.

IEA's view followed monthly reports from Opec and the US Energy Information Administration, with Opec lowering its demand growth forecast because of economic weakness in Europe and the US, while EIA raised its expectations, if by only 50,000 bpd, the first boost since October.

Fragile China

China betrayed signs of slowing domestic demand as data showed imports slipping to their lowest in more than two years and weaker-than-forecast bank lending.

But Customs data on Friday showed China's crude oil imports in January reached the third-highest level on record, as state refiners increased processing after several new refining facilities began operations.

Chinese demand could see a boost from strategic reserve purchases after an expected completion of two new strategic crude oil storage sites this quarter, IEA said in its report on Friday.

Iran tensions simmer

The tensions between the West and Iran over its disputed nuclear programme remained supportive for oil prices, analysts and brokers said.

Sanctions are already affecting Iran's oil production and a fall in its output and exports is likely to accelerate, industry analysts say.

China on Friday said it would send a senior official to Teheran to discuss Iran's nuclear standoff with the West, and India indicated it would also weigh in, as two of Iran's key crude oil customers try to head off new sanctions already playing havoc with trade.

UP sugar millers' petition against state price rejected

The high court also imposed a fine of Rs 50 lakh on the petitioners

Virendra Singh Rawat / Lucknow February 11, 2012, 0:07 IST

In a major setback to the Uttar Pradesh private sugar millers, the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court today dismissed their petition challenging the fixing of State Advised Price (SAP) for sugarcane, by the state government.

The division bench comprising Justices D P Singh and S C Chaurasia also imposed a fine of Rs 50 lakh on the petitioners, of which Rs 25 lakh would go to the sugarcane research institute in Shahjahanpur. About three dozen private millers had moved the high court contending that SAP was arrived at without logic, was too high and would put severe financial pressure on them.

The millers had submitted before the court that the power of the state government to fix SAP stood overridden by amendments made by the Centre in the Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966. They said the Centre was empowered to determine a Fair & Remunerative Price (FAR), after considering the cost of cane production, return to mills from sugar/by-products and a suitable margin for risks and profit for farmers. However, the court observed that the fixation of SAP was neither wrong nor was it too high.

Stung by the HC ruling, the millers are looking at various options, including challenging the order in the Supreme Court. However, they will chart their future course of action after studying the judgment. “We welcome the high court order,” UP cane commissioner Kamran Rizvi told Business Standard. There are about 125 mills in the state, of which 100 are privately owned.

The share prices of Uttar Pradesh-based sugar mills declined over four per cent on the high court ruling. Bajaj Hindusthan’s stock plunged by four per cent to close today at Rs 34.4 while Dwarikesh Sugar and Balrampur China and fell by 3.6 per cent to Rs 40.5 and 1.3 per cent to Rs 49 on the Bombay Stock Exchange.

During 2011 elections, the Uttar Pradesh government had hiked SAP by almost 20 per cent. The price of the early variety of cane was increased by Rs 40/quintal to Rs 250/quintal. SAP of common variety, which accounts for over 60 per cent of total cane production, was increased by Rs 35/quintal to Rs 240/quintal. The early and rejected varieties of cane account for about 20 per cent of production, each. The price of the rejected variety was fixed at Rs 235 per quintal. The government had said the rise would result in payments of over Rs 15,000 crore to cane farmers during the 2011-12 crushing season.

Meanwhile, about 4.2 million tonnes of sugar had been produced in UP with the recovery rate standing at 8.70 per cent, which is likely to improve further. The state is targetting production of almost 6.5 million tonnes of the sweetener.

THE HINDU Business Line

Sugar ends flat in thin trade

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 11:

Steady conditions prevailed at the wholesale sugar market today, as the prices moved in a tight range on alternate small bouts of trading and settled at the previous levels.

Marketmen said adequate stocks position against sporadic demand mainly kept sugar prices steady.

Following are the quotations in Rs per quintal:

Sugar ready: M-30 3,075-3,200, S-30 3,050-3,175. Mill delivery: M-30 2,890-3,065; S-30 2,865-3,040.

Sugar mill gate prices (excluding duty): Kinnoni 3,070, Asmoli 3,050, Mawana 3,010, Titabi 3,010, Thanabhavan 2,970, Budhana 2,960, Dorala 3,010, Khatauli 3,000, Morna 2,860 and Ramala 2,890.