THE HINDU

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Record harvest of 98.3 tonnes

S. Ramesh

The Hindu A MILESTONE: Perumalsamy at his field in Vaniputhur in Erode district. The farmer recorded a highest yield of 98.3 tonnes of sugarcane per acre. PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

"Optimal application of fertiliser and water, primary reason for higher yield"

A farmer in TN Palayam in Erode district has now become a role model for sugarcane growers by recording a massive yield of 98.3 tonnes per acre.

A. Perumalsamy of Vaniputhur village shot to limelight after he turned his two acres into a most productive farm by adopting some of the best cultivation practices and harvested a yield of 98.3 tonnes two months ago.

The average cane yield in the district is around 45 to 50 tonnes per acre. Only a few growers report yield above 80 tonnes. "I never expected that I would record a yield above 90 tonnes. I just expected a yield around 70 tonnes. Many farmers are now visiting my field to learn about the cultivation practices," says the farmer.

When Mr. Perumalsamy, a registered cane grower with Sakthi Sugars Limited at Aappakoodal, decided to cultivate sugarcane in 2010, he heard about the '100 tonne farmers club' initiative launched by the sugar mill and approached the cane office seeking the advice of experts.

He raised the nursery with the seeds provided by the mill and planted quality two budded sets with adequate spacing in December 2010. He chose to install drip irrigation due to shortage of water in the farm. "This decision has turned out to be very good and also helped me to adopt fertigation. The optimal application of fertiliser and water is the primary reason for the higher yield. Earlier, we used to water the crop excessively and adopt conventional method of applying fertilisers that led to a lower crop yield," he explains.

"We have listed a number of best practices under our '100 tonne farmers club' initiative. In fact, we tested these practices on a trial basis in 133 acres. Many farmers who participated in the trial run reported a yield of above 80 tonnes per acre. Mr. Perumalsamy is one of them," explains P. Ashok Kumar, Senior Manager (Cane), Sakthi Sugars Limited.

"With the cost of cultivation going up, we have no other option but to enhance the yield. That is the only way to make sugarcane cultivation more profitable," points out Mr. Perumalsamy.

The farmer has taken up sugarcane this year too. "I am confident that the yield will be higher this year as well," he says.

KOCHI, February 13, 2012

Pineapple farmers move to other States for profit

K.A. MARTIN

They choose Karnataka, Goa, andMaharashtra to cultivate the crop

Many farmers from Kerala are bringing large swathes of land in Karnataka, Goa, and Maharashtra under pineapple, effectively breaking the monopoly — retained for more than half-a-century — of farmers from the taluks of Muvattupuzha, Thodupuzha, and Kothamangalam.

The latter had helped make the Vazhakkulam pineapple famous all over Asia and brought it Geographical Indication Registration too in 2009. However, rising cost of production and the near non-availability of labour are forcing them to try their luck in other States, says K.P.

Kuriakose of Kerala Agricultural University's Pineapple Research Station at Vazhakkulam, near here.

Dr. Kuriakose says “unfriendly” conditions at home and lack of government support influence the farmers' decision. Governments in neighbouring States play proactive roles, the farmers say.

Cost and price

Though the migration of farmers started in 2009, it is likely continue with the latest slump in prices, says Baby John, president of the Pineapple Farmers' Association, which represents the nearly 1,000-strong farming community in the State. An increase in the area under pineapple cultivation, a trend which began in 2009, has resulted in resurgence in production this season. It coincides with a drop in the quality of the produce, says Mr. John, who adds that the average price over the last 12 months hovered around Rs.8.5 a kg. During the last two months, the price has been just Rs.7.5 a kg whereas the cost of production came to around Rs.15 a kg.

Reasons for increased production cost include the price of fertilizer, which has gone up three-fold during the period. Lack of skilled labour is a major problem too.

Lease too goes up

Pineapple is mostly cultivated in leased land for periods ranging from three to four years at a stretch. The average land lease rate has jumped to Rs.25,000 an acre, up from Rs.10,000 two years ago, Mr. John says, pointing out that the high price during the 2009-10 season saw a massive rise in acreage under pineapple.

Between 2009 and now, area under pineapple cultivation rose 20 to 25 per cent and now stands around 13,500 hectares. Kerala produces a little more than a lakh tonnes of pineapple, of the Mauritius variety, best suited to be used a fresh fruit.

The same variety is being adopted by the newly cultivated areas, which now reach Assam, where about a lakh suckers were planted in recent years. Since less than one per cent of the pineapple produced in the State is processed for value addition, the sector could take a long while to get back to good health.

- *Lack of government support in Kerala blamed*
- *Price is Rs.7.5 a kg; cost of production is Rs.15*

GULBARGA, February 13, 2012

Red gram growers seek MSP of Rs. 4,500 a quintal

Various organisations will lay siege to the Karnataka Tur Development Board and the wholesale agricultural produce market in Gulbarga on February 14, demanding a Minimum Support Price of Rs. 4,500 a quintal of red gram.

State joint secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI) Shoukat Ali Alur told presspersons here on Sunday that the Government had not opened a single red gram procurement centre in the district, although farmers were reeling under low prices.

‘Indifference'

Mr. Alur said that this year, red gram stood on 3.73 lakh hectares in the district, with an estimated yield of 18.65 lakh quintals. Prices had fallen below Rs. 3,200 a quintal and farmers were suffering, but the Government had not taken it seriously. The Government had set aside only Rs. 2 crore for the procurement of red gram in the district, which showed its indifference to the problems of farmers, he said.

“The Government has remained content with announcing an MSP of Rs. 4,000 a quintal. It has not demonstrated its commitment to the interests of farmers by beginning procurement,” he said. Mr. Alur demanded that the Union Government ban import of red gram, to push up prices.

Funds for procurement

The former Deputy Mayor Nandakumar Malipatil demanded that the Government set aside Rs. 100 crore for the procurement of red gram. Demand for the grain had fallen as over 50 red gram processing factories closed down in the district this year. Middlemen and agriculture commission agents were forcing farmers to sell at low prices, he said.

State general secretary of the Dalit Sene Hanumant Yelasangi, Kannada Bhoomi Jagruta Samiti state president Lingaraj Sirgapur, Jaya Karnataka State general secretary Veeranna Koralli, CPI district secretary Moula Mulla and others would participate in the protest, Mr. Alur said.

- *'Government has not shown commitment'*
- *'Middlemen forcing farmers to sell at low prices'*

KARIMNAGAR, February 13, 2012

Release of SRSP water for standing crops sought

Telangana Jagruthi president Kavitha has urged the district administration to take necessary measures to protect the standing crops from withering in the villages located along the SRSP flood flow canal by releasing water through the canal.

In a press note here on Sunday, Ms. Kavitha said that the farmers of the villages in Boinpalli, Gangadhara and other mandals were worried due to withering of crops following depleting ground water table. She said that the paddy, maize, vegetables and other crops in several hundreds of acres in the region was withering due to non-availability of irrigation sources. Earlier, when the water flowed through the SRSP flood flow canal, the ground water table was recharged giving relief to the farming community.

She also urged the authorities to release at least 3,000 cusecs of water from the FFC.

MANGALORE, February 13, 2012

Relief for areca farmers

Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda said here on Sunday that the Government will announce relief for farmers whose areca plantations have been affected with fruit-rot disease in 2012-13 budget. It will include re-scheduling of loans and incentives, he said.

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Mettur level

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 83.27 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 773 cusecs and the discharge 2,000 cusecs.

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hindustantimes

Mon,13 Feb 2012

weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Monday, Feb 13

Sunny

Max	Min
32º	21.5º

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs
Humidity: 79%
Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:35
Sunset: 18:03
Barometer: 1014

Tomorrow's Forecast

Tuesday, Feb 14

Cloudy

Max	Min
28º	21º

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Feb 15	Feb 16	Feb 17	Feb 18	Feb 19
27º | 21º	28º | 20º	28º | 20º	28º | 19º	27º | 17º
Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy

the pioneer

Farmers to get SMS alerts on dates

SUNDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2012 23:09

STAFF REPORTER | BHOPAL

Before the start of wheat procurement in the State from March 15, each farmer will be alerted through SMS as to on which date he has to take wheat for selling at the procurement centre and how much quantify of wheat they are eligible to sell.

The SMS alert will be given once again before the date of procurement. A computer-printed receipt will be given to each farmer after procurement of his wheat at the centre mentioning the amount of payment made to the farmer. Payment of wheat's support price along with bonus will be deposited directly in the bank account of the farmer within seven days after the procurement on support price.

Preparation for first e-procurement of wheat enters last phase

SUNDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2012 23:10

STAFF REPORTER | BHOPAL

Preparations for first e-procurement of wheat on support price in Madhya Pradesh have entered its last phase.

So far, 10 lakh farmers have been registered for the procurement of wheat. February 15 is the last date for farmers to get the registrations done.

The information collected from farmers in this connection so far will soon be displayed on the notice boards of the concerning procurement centres. Thanks to it, farmers can preview important information like their names and addresses at the concerning centers. They can have it correct in case they notice any errors in their data.

The e-procurement system being launched in view of special initiative of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will ensure transparency in the entire process of wheat procurement in the State. Every bit of information about a wheat-selling farmer will already be there in the records.

This will eliminate apprehension of any irregularity and error. Besides, it will also ensure the benefit of the scheme is percolated to genuine farmers of Madhya Pradesh only.

All the works are being done within a prescribed time-limit for making the maiden experiment of e-procurement. Computers have reached 2,300 procurement centers in the State. Specially developed software of procurement process has also been made available to all the centers. Similarly, the work of appointments of data entry operators has also entered its last phase.

Besides online, offline arrangements have also been made for collecting data of wheat procurement in computers and sending the same to various levels. The centres in the areas where internet facilities are available will post online information daily. This work will be through offline system in the areas devoid of internet facilities. For this purpose, one runner is being appointed between four to five centers, which will collect this data in pen drive and will upload the same at some nearby internet kiosk. From there, the information will be sent to different levels.

Codes have been provided to all the registered farmers. The procurement process will be undertaken on the basis of the codes assigned to farmers. This procedure is quite simple and less time-consuming. When a farmer will produce his code number and registration number at a procurement centre, all the information about him will be displayed on a computer screen. Wheat will be procured from a farmer on the basis of land under his possession as per tehsil productivity figures.

‘Climate Change Action Plan sensitive for small farmers’

SUNDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2012 22:44

PNS | BHUBANESWAR

The ActionAid India in partnership with Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) on Thursday conducted here a State-level consultation on ‘Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture - Adaptation and Mitigation by the Small and Marginal Farmers’. The programme was supported by Heinrich Boll Foundation’s India chapter.

CSA Executive Director Dr Ramanjaneyulu presented at the consultation a study conducted by his team on ‘Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture’. The main focus of the study was to understand how climate change is impacting agricultural productivity in the country and vice-versa. The study was carried out in three States -- Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.

A significant gap between Odisha State climate change action plan (OSCCAP) and the ongoing Government programme on agriculture and irrigation was discussed. The OSCCAP talks about adapting to the changing climate by promoting climate-resilient agriculture while the ongoing thrust is on promoting Bt cotton in areas like Balangir and contract farming along with genetically modified crops, which is very sensitive for the farmers, said the members of civil bodies.

“We plan to organise similar State-level consultations in Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh by mid-February and a national consultation in Delhi in the last week of the month,” said Regional Manager of ActionAid Amar Jyoti Nayak.

A total of 40 participants, including scientists from different research organisations like OUAT, CIFA and representatives from different civil society organisations, deliberated various issues at the consultation.

Business Standard

Monday, Feb 13, 2012

Government seeks India Inc help to push agriculture schemes

Anindita Dey / Mumbai February 12, 2012, 0:48 IST

The government proposes to rope in the industrial sector in a big way to promote agri schemes through a coordinated farmer-industry-centric policy.

The proposed model envisages formation of a producer company with the direct involvement of a company consisting of farmers or farmer bodies that could look into the implementation, monitoring and growth of government schemes, especially in rain-fed areas. Rain-fed agriculture is used to describe farming practices that rely mostly on rainfall for water.

To push forward this plan, the President of India has constituted a working group of different state governors to chalk out strategies to enhance productivity, profitability, sustainability and competitiveness of agriculture in rain-fed zones. Based on these recommendations, the government will formulate the policy.

Terming it a farmer-industry partnership across the agri value chain, official sources said these companies will be designed with direct involvement of the industrial sector and the government taking on the role of a policy formulator besides being an overall authority for the implementation of various government policies.

These companies will be profit-oriented so that there is a greater incentive, both for the farmers as walk as the industrial sector for fruitful involvement. This could also help address the infrastructure bottlenecks in the farming sector to a larger extent. Currently, companies are only involved in a very limited manner in the value chain of agriculture, such as for extension activities and seed development. Even if these companies are involved in areas like drip irrigation, it is only on a standalone basis.

Officials said that a producer company would be registered under Part XI of the Companies Act and would cover the entire agri value chain. This legislation provides for the same legal and regulatory framework enjoyed by companies but protects the basic principles of co-operatives, such as, voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, members' economic participation, autonomy and independence. These companies will be registered with the ministry of company affairs (MCA) and would not function like co-operatives, which have a mix of state and central government control. This is to ensure direct control of the government over its own schemes.

Some of the areas where these companies see a bigger role are technology, agri-mechanisation marketing, distribution, research and development, procurement, building awareness of farmers and development of agri- infrastructure, sources said. Under the proposed model, a farmers' body, whether co-operative or any other type of entity, would be part of the company as an active shareholder. The model could follow joint financing pattern with funds pooled in from the company/co-operative, members of the oraganisation and seed money from the government.

Currently, producer companies have been formed in India in various sectors, including agriculture. Madhya Pradesh alone has 17 producer companies, of which 15 are crop-based while one is engaged in milk production. In most producer-owned companies, 10 farmers, usually active members of the community, are appointed as chief promoters. The company floats shares that are picked up by other farmers. These shares can be transferred but not listed on the stock exchanges.

THE HINDU Business Line

Pepper market sees mixed trend

G. K. Nair

Kochi, Feb. 12:

Pepper market witnessed confusing trend with prices fluctuating and operators pushing and pulling prices. Arrivals were thin so far despite the current season witnessing harvesting in full swing. Overall, the supply has been reportedly tight at present and hence prices in the international market has been steady to firm last week.

Overseas buyers

However, overseas buyers were on a wait anticipating the arrival of the Vietnamese new crop early next month and a consequent price fall.

Meanwhile, the domestic buyers here having exhausted their stocks in recent weeks after liquidating them at higher prices are also in the market covering to replenish their inventories.

Meanwhile, growers who had also sold out their stocks when the prices were ruling at around Rs 350 a kg are now holding back their produce. primary market dealers are also doing the same.

Primary market dealers were reportedly buying from investors farm grade material lying at exchange approved warehouses at Rs 300 a kg.

“Graded pepper duly approved by Assayer and duly packed was available at below spot prices on the exchange,” market sources told *Business Line*.

As the material was not available from the farmers, the primary market dealers were covering from the investors, they said. As the financial year end is nearing, long position holders were preferring liquidation last week while short position holders were opting for delivery because of taxation problems which discouraged investors from carrying forward as the tax refund is allegedly unduly delayed.

All the contracts last week dropped. February, March and April fell by Rs 705, Rs 510 and Rs 370 to close at Rs 29485, Rs 29,780 and Rs 30,050 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover dropped by 7,054 tonnes to close at 17,250 tonnes indicating decline in activities.

Open interest also declined by 60 tonnes to 8,309 tonnes.

Spot prices last week dropped by Rs 400 a quintal despite no selling pressure to close at Rs 29,600 (ungarbled) and Rs 31,100 (MG 1) a quintal.

Activities are expected to be limited in the coming days as the current financial year is coming to a close. Besides, the running contract is maturing and the days left for it is limited.

The fate of the pepper market will depend on the actual availability of the material from all the sources, especially the actual position of the Vietnamese new crop and the stock available in Brazil.

Indonesia continues to be silent. Indian crop as it appears from the arrivals is likely to be less that what was projected, market sources said.

Soya complex to witness pressure

Rajalakshmi Sivam
BL Research Bureau
February 12, 2012:

The soya complex has been witnessing selling pressure of late. The price has corrected around 4-8 per cent from the January peak. Will traders see more correction or will prices hold?

The correction was purported to be due to China, the world's largest soyabean buyer reporting drop in its imports. Imports in January were 4.61 million tonnes, down from 5.42 million tonnes in December.

Also, the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) estimates on soyabean exports of the US that were released last week were not encouraging.

Given that domestic soyabean prices are linked to price movements in the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT), we see some pressure on soyabean and refined soya oil prices in the near term.

What drove the rally?

Soyabean and refined soya oil futures on NCDEX were moving sideways for most part of 2011. The rally in the futures price happened in the last three months of the year when Greece's bailout plan was chalked and market was hopeful of the European Union's demand reviving.

Around this same time, the estimate on soyabean production for Kharif 2011 was revised downwards and it gave some added impetus to prices.

Between October and December 2011, the most active contract on soy bean in NCDEX rallied 23 per cent. Refined soya oil futures contract delivered a 22 per cent return.

Refined soya oil futures contract in NCDEX take cues from soya oil prices in CBOT.

And in CBOT soya oil follows the direction of crude oil that guides the energy complex. If you had observed between October and December 2011 crude oil prices rallied 25 per cent to $98.8/barrel.

What is in store?

The demand-supply scenario in soyabean is not favourable for traders who look to take long positions now on the commodity in the futures market.

The USDA has projected soyabean output in Brazil and Argentina – the two biggest producers of soyabean in the world after the US, to fall to a three year low of 120 millions this year on dry weather conditions.

The current estimate is 4.5 million tonnes below the earlier estimate.

This should provide support to prices but a runaway rally is unlikely since there are no encouraging signs on the demand front.

China is witnessing a drop in demand. Following the trend of the last two months, the USDA has revised downwards China's soyabean import in the current year to 55.5 million tonnes (from 56.5 million estimated earlier). The European Union's imports are projected to be lower.

With the demand from importing nations seen lower, there is fear if the US will meet its export targets for soyabean this year. Price of soyabean futures on CBOT will closely follow the US export data and provides cues to prices here in the domestic market. The USDA kept its estimates on US soyabean exports unchanged in February.

In the domestic market, soyabean arrivals in Madhya Pradesh and Indore slowed last week compared with the previous week. The softening in prices could be impacting new arrivals.

Upcountry buyers active at Kochi tea auction

Kochi, Feb 12:

Arrivals continued to be low at the Kochi Tea Auction with 10,35,000 kg on offer at the dust auction and 2,24,000 kg at the leaf auction. The market opened on a steady note and prices of several grades appreciated at the CTC dust auction. However, prices of lower grade teas declined. AVT was active on good liquoring grades along with Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation and Tata Global. Hindustan Unilever and Kerala loose tea traders lent fair amount of support. Exporters confined themselves to medium and plain grades. Primary grades were dearer at the orthodox dust auction. Other grades quoted lower and there were several withdrawals. Exporters and upcountry buyers were active.

Leaf auction

All varieties of Nilgiri orthodox leaf teas were fully firm to dearer. Select high-grown smaller broken grades also moved up. Medium tippy grades and bolder broken grades were fully firm to dearer. Whole leaf grades generally quoted lower. There were some withdrawals of medium secondary grade teas. Fannings were barely steady.

HUL was active along with traditional exporters. Exporters to Tunisia remained subdued. Fannings were absorbed by tea bag exporters and upcountry buyers. There was good demand at the CTC leaf auction where HUL was active along with upcountry buyers. Exporters confined themselves to medium and plain grades.

Top Prices

Pasuparai SFD quoted the top price at the dust auction at Rs 131 followed by Injipara SFD and RD at Rs 128 while Injipara SRD fetched Rs 127. At the leaf auction, Chamraj OP fetched the top price at Rs 300 followed by Pascoe's green tea at Rs 263, Parkside OP at Rs 236 and Chamraj FOP at Rs 231.

‘Revise pricing formula for oil palm fruit bunches'

Guntur, Feb. 12:

The Union Government is taking all steps to promote oil palm cultivation in the country to meet edible oil scarcity and for import substitution, but unless farmers get a remunerative price for the fresh fruit bunches (FFB), the situation will not improve, said Dr Y. Sivaji, honorary president of the AP Tobacco Growers' Association and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. Dr Sivaji, who participated in pre-budget consultations with the Union Finance Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, pleaded in a written note that the present price fixing formula for oil palm FFBs is “unscientific and wholly in favour of the oil palm processor rather than the farmer. Unless farmers get remunerative price for FFB, the objective of area expansion cannot be achieved.”

He said that unlike in Indonesia and Malaysia where oil palm was a rain-fed crop it was being cultivated in India in irrigated conditions.

Andhra Pradesh stood first in oil palm cultivation, especially West Godavari district, and several processing units had been set up in the district by private companies.

There was also one by the AP Oil Federation.

However, due to the flawed policies of the Government, enterprising oil palm farmers in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere were being forced to give up the crop.

He said the present price-fixing formula for oil palm FFBs was based on the statistics of oil extraction rates and value realisation provided by the processing units and not on the research of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) or some other independent agency. It was being done on a monthly basis, he added.

He said that at present the processing units were realising Rs 11,400/tonne of FFB. The farmer was spending Rs 8,145 per tonne of FFB, according to a 2010 survey, exclusive of cultivation subsidies given by the Government.

Processing cost

The processing cost as recorded in the AP Oil Fed processing unit in West Godavari district was Rs 1,853/tonne of FFB.

Therefore, proportionately, the farmer should get Rs 8,900/tonne and the processor Rs 2,500/tonne.

But in fact now the farmer was getting Rs 6,000/tonne and the processor Rs 5,400/tonne.

It clearly showed how flawed the price fixing formula was, he added.

He urged the Union Finance Minister to address the issue in the coming budget and also to announce some incentives to oil palm farmers.

Iraq, a new market for India's basmati exports

Vishwanath Kulkarni

Rising Exports

	Iraq		Total	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
2010-11	31,239	140.06	21,83,501	10,578.67
2009-10	6,960	35.90	20,16,775	10,889.13
2008-09	6,076	34.47	15,56,411	9447.02

Source: DGCIS; Qty in tonnes, Value in Rs crore

New Delhi, Feb. 12:

Iraq is emerging as a new market for Indian basmati as exports of the aromatic rice have picked up in the post-Saddam era. Exporters are bullish on the prospects and hope to double shipments to about 2.5 lakh tonnes in the current financial year.

"People are shifting to quality products due to the openness in the system in the post-dictatorial era. This is resulting in increased demand for the quality Indian rice," said Mr Vijay Sethia, President of the All-India Rice Exporters Association.

Basmati exports to Iraq in 2010-11 were around 1.25 lakh tonnes, estimates Mr Sethia. Of this, direct exports were about 31,239 tonnes, while the rest was shipped indirectly through Dubai. "Now the direct exports have picked up and we hope to do a total of around 2.5 lakh tonnes this year," he said.

Iraq accounts for a fraction of the country's total basmati consignments. Neighbouring Iran is the largest buyer of Indian aromatic rice and shipments stood at close a million tonnes last year. However, the recent instances of payment defaults from Iran could possibly hamper the volumes this year even though exporters have welcomed the Government's recent move to allow opening of letter of credits in rupee terms.

Mr Sethia said the recent reduction of minimum export price (MEP) on basmati to $700 from $900 per tonne should aid the shipments. In the current fiscal, the Indian basmati exports could touch 2.5 million tonnes, up from 2.18 mt in the previous year, he said.

The reduction in MEP will also aid the shipments of par-boiled and unpolished basmati rice, which are relatively less priced, Mr Sethia said. Europe mainly prefers the unpolished rice, while the par-boiled or semi-processed rice is exported to Saudi Arabia.

'Accord infrastructure industry status to seed cos'

Chennai, Feb 12:

The Union Finance Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, should accord the status of infrastructure industry to seed companies to promote research and development in the sector.

"The income of seed companies should be treated as agricultural income. The seed industry should be treated as a priority sector for lending by banks," said Mr Sushil Karwa, Managing Director of Krishidhan Seeds Pvt Ltd, in a pre-Budget memorandum.

Such a move will help farmers get quality seeds besides encouraging companies in research and development of seeds.

Mr Karwa said subsidies should be extended private firms producing seeds.

Arabica coffee exports down 26% in Jan

PTI

Coffee berries on an estate in Idukki district, Kerala. (file photo)

New Delhi, Feb 12:

India’s exports of arabica coffee fell 26 per cent to 5,482 tonnes in January this year on account of unseasonal rains, which led to a delayed harvest.

The country had exported 7,392 tonnes of the premium variety also called mountain coffee in the year-ago period, Coffee Board data said.

“Arabica exports declined in January 2012 due to unseasonal rains in end-November and early December last year, which resulted in the harvest being delayed by 3-4 weeks,” Coffee Exporters’ Association President, Mr Ramesh Rajah, told PTI.

The supply of arabica is now normal as harvesting of the beans has picked up and supply disruption is not expected this month, he added.

Contrary to this, overseas shipments of robusta rose 12 per cent to 8,319 tonnes last month from 7,450 tonnes in the same period previous year.

Total coffee exports in January 2012 rose marginally to 20,969 tonnes from 20,193 tonnes in the year-ago period.

India mostly exports coffee to Italy, Germany, the Russian Federation, Belgium and Spain.

Rice procurement to touch 35 mt this year

PTI

Rice procurement, which started from July 2011, has so far reached 20 mt, according to FCI data.

New Delhi, Feb 12:

The Government is expected to buy a record 35 million tonne rice from farmers in the 2011-12 marketing year ending September for supply through ration shops and other exigencies.

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) is the nodal agency that undertakes procurement and distribution of foodgrains in the country.

“Rice procurement will touch a record 35 mt in the ongoing marketing year. Last year, we had procured 34.19 mt,” FCI Chairman and Managing Director, Mr Siraj Hussain, said.

Rice procurement, which started from July 2011, has so far reached 20 mt, he said.

Of this, maximum procurement has been undertaken in Punjab at 77,31,325 tonne, followed by Chhattisgarh at 30,55,224 tonne and Andhra Pradesh at 25,40,245 tonne, the FCI data showed.

FCI is procuring rice that was grown in the 2010-11 crop year (July-June). The country’s rice output was a record 95.98 mt last year.

The state-run agency is buying common variety rice at Rs 10 per kg and ‘A’ grade variety grain at Rs 10.30 per kg.

However through ration shops, the Government is selling the same grain at Rs 5.65 per kg to families that are below poverty line (BPL), and at Rs 8.30 per kg to families of above poverty line (APL) category.