

FAO Tea summit agrees on scope of climate change discussions

R. K. Radhakrishnan



The Hindu The FAO session on Tea has agreed on what discussion on climate change can be taken up for discussions. Here workers pluck tea at a garden in Darjeeling. File photo

The FAO session on Tea has agreed on what discussion on climate change can be taken up for discussions here. The 20th session of the FAO has drawn up scope and the terms of reference of the climate change working group at its meeting on Sunday.

“This will be put forward to the Inter-Governmental Group on Tuesday,” said Kaison Chang, secretary, FAO-IGG, when asked about the progress of negotiations on climate change.

Discussions on climate change will now start formally with all the producing and exporting countries, and consumers. Climate change formally made its way into the summit agenda at Mombasa. All countries have so far agreed to share information and work together on the issue, FAO officials said.

The major producers - India, China, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Turkey – have to agree on the steps ahead for a meaningful strategy to emerge. Implementation and enforcement of climate change mitigation steps are easier said than done, as fragmented holdings, private players, and third-world countries that don’t desire to be burdened with costs to mitigate climate change constitute

the major members. In Sri Lanka, for instance, 76 per cent of the tea produced is done by small farmers.

While major climate change mitigation efforts entail a substantial cost, Sri Lankan officials were of the view that there were many steps that could be taken that did not need significant investment. The other option was to increase production, which is again being explored. Plantation Industries Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe, said that he had entrusted the Tea Research Institute to work on issues related to bringing down production costs.

Agreeing that climate mitigation efforts cost money, Sri Lanka Tea Board chairperson Janaki Kuruppu, said that in the long term this would benefit the industry. The players were aware of this and were making investments.

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Case filed against ban on Japanese quail farms

Bench restrains Centre from interfering with business of farm

: A writ petition has been filed in the Madras High Court Bench here challenging a communication sent by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests on September 22 requesting all States and Union Territories not to issue new licences for Japanese quail farms besides desisting from giving permission for expansion or augmentation of existing farming facilities.

Writ petition

Justice V. Dhanapalan on Thursday admitted the writ petition filed by Rural Employment and Educational Trust, a non-governmental organisation owning a Rs. 2.5 crore Japanese quail farm at Cheruvaloor in Kanyakumari district, and granted an interim injunction restraining the Centre from interfering with the petitioner's business of rearing and marketing the Japanese quails.

Affidavit filed

Filing an affidavit in support of the writ petition, the chairman of the NGO J. John stated that a Japanese quails (*Coturnix Japonica*) was different from a wild quail (*Rhasianidae*) which was a protected bird under the Wild Life (Protection) Act. The former was introduced in India by none other than the Central Avian Research Institute (CARI) functioning under the Union Ministry of Agriculture.

To eradicate protein deficiency

Farming of Japanese quail was promoted by government agencies such as National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and other poultry development organisations not only to provide employment and boost rural economy but also to eradicate protein deficiency and malnutrition in rural areas, the petitioner claimed.

The NGO also said that its own farm at Kanyakumari was established only as a public private partnership venture between it and CARI after obtaining a bank loan for over Rs. 1 crore.

A memorandum of understanding was signed in August 2009 to sell the produce under a brand name carrying the prefix CARI on payment of a royalty of 25 paise for every Japanese quail sold.

“It is an irony”

“It is an irony that the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests had announced a ban of on Japanese quail farming by misconstruing the statutory provisions when the Departments of Animal Husbandry, Central Poultry Development Organisation, NABARD and ICAR functioning under the Ministry of Agriculture were actually promoting such farming,” the petitioner said.

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- *“Japanese quails (Coturnix Japonica) was different from a wild quail (Rhasianidae)”*
 - *“Farming of Japanese quail is promoted by government agencies”*
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“Sustainable shrimp farming essential”

: Shrimp aquaculture is a major economic and livelihood avenue for millions of people in the coastal states of the country.

Apart from food production, shrimp farming plays a vital role in earning foreign exchange for the country.

20 per cent of trade

A recent estimate shows that shrimp accounts for nearly 20 per cent of the trade in fish and fishery products, said Devaraj, former director of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Cochin.

Inaugurating 'Shrimp aquaculture challenges and innovative solution' (SACIS-12), Indo-UK conference jointly organised by Joseph Selvin, Head of the Department of Bioinformatics, Bharathidasan University and Simon Michael Cutting of the United Kingdom, in Kanyakumari recently, he said that this was for the first time that such an event was taking place with the assistance of the Royal Society, London.

The Bharathidasan University was acting as a mediator to transfer the technology of sustainable shrimp farming from the scientist to the shrimp farmers in the country.

However, shrimp aquaculture suffered setbacks, owing to vital diseases caused by white spot syndrome (WSS virus) from the year 1993 onwards.

Several unauthorised antibiotics and other feed additives used in the farming systems with the intention of protecting the shrimp crop have resulted in serious economic problems such as consignment rejections by importing countries.

These issues including environmental degradations led to severe setbacks for shrimp aquaculture for the country.

The principal scientist, Vizhinjam (CMFRI), A.P. Lipton said that sustainable shrimp farming was thus essential in order to vitalise the aquaculture and to bring back the farming industry to glory.

A new lease of shrimp farming required methods to cope up with the present challenges.

Experts interacted with farmers and entrepreneurs. Fifteen Indian scientists representing several institutions, 30 shrimp farmers, several research scholars and students from various universities and institutions attended the workshop.

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Garlic price to remain stable

Staff Reporter

The Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has predicted that the price of garlic will be in the range of Rs. 75 to Rs. 80 during the harvest period

February-March. As there is little chance for the price to improve after that, farmers are asked to sell garlic upon harvest without going in for storage.

This was assessed based on survey conducted at the Mettupalayam Garlic Shanty. In Tamil Nadu, garlic is grown in two seasons, viz., October-November and June-July. The area under garlic cultivation in the State is about 351 hectares. The Nilgiris and Erode are major garlic producing districts in Tamil Nadu. Traders procure garlic from Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat. Garlic is sown from September to October and is harvested from February to March. A variety of garlic called 'Ooty 1', which was released by TNAU is popular among farmers of the Nilgiris district.

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Harvest machines replace farm hands

Special Correspondent

Cost and ease of use of these machines win over farmers



Quite handy:Paddy being harvested by a machine near Ramanathapuram.— Photo: L. Balachandar

The paddy harvesting and threshing machines have slowly and steadily replaced the manual farm work force in Ramanathapuram district.

Though the district is known for rainfed cultivation, it is among the prominent districts taking up paddy cultivation. Paddy has been raised in around 1.20 lakh hectares during the current season (September to February).

Unlike in the delta districts such as Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur and Tiruchi, where farm labourers are still a force to reckon with in opposing machine harvesting stating that it will deprive them of job opportunities, there is no such opposition to the harvest machines in Ramanathapuram district.

Harvest and threshing machine is being seen as the best option to manage the acute shortage of farm labourers, a major issue prevalent in the district due to people's interest in taking up overseas employment and also the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee scheme.

The current trend of employing machines for paddy harvest has clearly indicated the growing support among the farmers for mechanised harvest. According to a rough estimate, harvest has been completed on as many as 10,000 hectares out of 1.20 lakh hectares.

Of them machines were used for harvesting paddy on about 9,500 hectares. Manual labourers were hardly seen in the paddy fields for harvest. Most of the threshing centres have not been used in the district during the current season as there is no need for the manual harvest.

Farmers said that the acute shortage of farm labourers and abnormal hike in wages were the major reasons for switching their interest towards machines for harvest than farm labourers. Moreover the entire of process of cutting the well-grown paddy straws and threshing could be completed within an hour in a hectare if a machine was used.

The farmers could go home with the end product within a few hours.

“Almost all farmers of Ramanathapuram district wish to harvest the paddy only through machines as it is very cheap when compared to the wages paid for manual labourers. We hand over the product within an hour for Rs.1200 to the farmers,” says S. Nandakumar, a harvest and threshing machine operator from Athoor in Salem.

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From food security to food justice

If the malnourished in India formed a country, it would be the world's fifth largest — almost the size of Indonesia. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 237.7 million Indians are currently undernourished (up from 224.6 million in 2008). And it is far worse if we use the minimal calorie intake norms accepted officially in India. By those counts (2200 rural/2100

urban), the number of Indians who cannot afford the daily minimum could equal the entire population of Europe.

Yet, the Indian elite shrieks at the prospect of formalising a universal right to food.

Notwithstanding the collective moral deficit this reveals, it also shows that the millions of Indians whose food rights are so flagrantly violated are completely voiceless in the policy space. India's problem is not only to secure food, but to secure food justice.

What can food justice practically mean? First, to prevent situations where grains rot while people die — a very basic principle of distributive justice. But it has to mean a lot more: people must have the right to produce food with dignity, have control over the parameters of production, get just value for their labour and their produce. Mainstream notions of food security ignore this dimension.

Food justice must entail both production and distribution. Its fundamental premise must be that governments have a non-negotiable obligation to address food insecurity. They must also address the structural factors that engender that insecurity. Most governments, however, appear neither willing nor able to deliver food justice. It needs therefore the devolution of power and resources to the local level, where millions of protagonists, with their knowledge of local needs and situations, can create a just food economy.

Collective struggle

This is not quite as utopian as it may sound. Something on these lines has been unfolding in Kerala — a collective struggle of close to a quarter million women who are farming nearly 10 million acres of land. The experiment, “Sangha Krishi,” or group farming, is part of Kerala's anti-poverty programme “Kudumbashree.” Initiated in 2007, it was seen as a means to enhance local food production. Kerala's women embraced this vision enthusiastically. As many as 44, 225 collectives of women farmers have sprung up across the State. These collectives lease fallow land, rejuvenate it, farm it and then either sell the produce or use it for consumption, depending on the needs of members. On an average, Kudumbashree farmers earn Rs.15,000-25,000 per year (sometimes higher, depending on the crops and the number of yields annually).

Kudumbashree is a network of 4 million women, mostly below the poverty line. It is not a mere ‘project’ or a ‘programme’ but a social space where marginalised women can collectively pursue their needs and aspirations. The primary unit of Kudumbashree is the neighbourhood group (NHG). Each NHG consists of 10-20 women; for an overwhelming majority, the NHG is their first

ever space outside the home. NHGs are federated into an Area Development Society (ADS) and these are in turn federated into Community Development Societies (CDSs) at the panchayat level. Today, there are 213,000 NHGs all over Kerala. Kudumbashree office-bearers are elected, a crucial process for its members. “We are poor. We don't have money or connections to get elected — only our service,” is a common refrain. These elections bring women into politics. And they bring with them a different set of values that can change politics.

The NHG is very different from a self-help group (SHG) in that it is structurally linked to the State (through the institutions of local self-government). This ensures that local development reflects the needs and aspirations of communities, who are not reduced to mere “executors” of government programmes. What is sought is a synergy between democratisation and poverty reduction; with Kudumbashree, this occurs through the mobilisation of poor women's leadership and solidarity. “Sangha Krishi” or group farming is just one example of how this works. It is transforming the socio-political space that women inhabit — who in turn transform that space in vital ways.

This experiment is having three major consequences. First, there is a palpable shift in the role of women in Kerala's agriculture. This was earlier limited to daily wage work in plantations — at wages much lower than those earned by men. Thousands of Kudumbashree women — hitherto underpaid agricultural labourers — have abandoned wage work to become independent producers. Many others combine wage work with farming. With independent production comes control over one's time and labour, over crops and production methods and, most significantly, over the produce. Since the farmers are primarily poor women, they often decide to use a part of their produce to meet their own needs, rather than selling it. Every group takes this decision democratically, depending on levels of food insecurity of their members. In Idukki, where the terrain prevents easy market access and food insecurity is higher, farmers take more of their produce home — as opposed to Thiruvananthapuram where market access is better and returns are higher.

Sangha Krishi

Second, “Sangha Krishi” has enabled women to salvage their dignity and livelihoods amidst immense adversity. Take the story of Subaida in Malappuram. Once widowed and once deserted, with three young children, she found no means of survival other than cleaning dead bodies. Hardly adequate as a livelihood, it also brought her unbearable social ostracism. Now Subaida is a proud member of a farming collective and wants to enter politics. In the nine

districts this writer visited, there was a visible, passionate commitment to social inclusion amongst Kudumbashree farmers.

Our survey of 100 collectives across 14 districts found that 15 per cent of the farmers were Dalits and Adivasis and 32 per cent came from the minority communities.

Third, “Sangha Krishi” is producing important consequences for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Kerala. Because of Kerala's high wages for men, the MGNREGS in Kerala has become predominantly a space for women (93 per cent of the employment generated has gone to women where the national average is 50). From the beginning, synergies were sought between the MGNREGS, the People's Plan and Kudumbashree. Kudumbashree farmers strongly feel this has transformed MGNREGS work.

“We have created life ... and food, which gives life, not just 100 days of manual labour,” said a Perambra farmer. In Perambra, Kudumbashree women, working with the panchayat, have rejuvenated 140 acres that lay fallow for 26 years. It now grows rice, vegetables and tapioca. Farmers also receive two special incentives — an ‘area incentive’ for developing land and a ‘production incentive’ for achieving certain levels of productivity. These amounted to over Rs.200 million in 2009-10. They were combined with subsidised loans from banks and the State, and seeds, input and equipment from Krishi Bhavan and the panchayats.

Challenges

However, serious challenges remain. Kudumbashree farmers are predominantly landless women working on leased land; there is no certainty of tenure. Lack of ownership also restricts access to credit, since they cannot offer formal guarantees on the land they farm. Whenever possible, Kudumbashree collectives have started buying land to overcome this uncertainty. But an alternative institutional solution is clearly needed. It is also difficult for women to access resources and technical know-how — the relevant institutions (such as crop committees) are oriented towards male farmers. There is also no mechanism of risk insurance.

Is this a sustainable, replicable model of food security? It is certainly one worth serious analysis. First, this concerted effort to encourage agriculture is occurring when farmers elsewhere are forced to exit farming — in large numbers. It re-connects food security to livelihoods, as any serious food policy must. But more importantly, the value of Sangha Krishi lies in that it has become the manifestation of a deep-rooted consciousness about food justice amongst Kerala's women. Kannyama, the president of Idamalakudy, Kerala's first tribal panchayat, says she

wants to make her community entirely self-sufficient in food. She wants Sangha Krishi produce to feed every school and anganwadi in her panchayat — to ensure that children get local, chemical-free food. Elsewhere, Kudumbashree farmers plan to protest the commercialisation of land. Even in the tough terrain of Idukki's Vathikudy panchayat, women were taking a census of fallow land in the area that they could cultivate. Some 100,000 women practise organic farming and more wish to. Kudumbashree farmers speak passionately about preventing ecological devastation through alternative farming methods.

In the world of Sangha Krishi, food is a reflection of social relations. And only new social relations of food, not political manoeuvres, can combat the twin violence of hunger and injustice.

(Ananya Mukherjee is Professor and Chair of Political Science at York University, Toronto. Her latest work is a co-edited volume in collaboration with UNRISD, Geneva (Business Regulation and Non-state actors: Whose Standards? Whose Development? Routledge Studies in Development Economics, 2012.))

A quarter of a million women in Kerala are showing us how to earn livelihoods with dignity.

SANGAREDDY, February 1, 2012

Irate cotton farmers damage weighing machine

Farmers show the weighing equipment after damaging it at the Gajwel market yard in Medak district on Tuesday. —PHOTO: MOHD ARIF

Alleging that they were being cheated with wrong weighment for a long time, cotton farmers at Gajwel attacked the market yard and destroyed the weighing machine. According to sources, a large number of farmers arrived at the market yard to sell the cotton to traders. However, some farmers smelt a rat as the cotton bags weighed less than what they actually weighed outside. The bags weighed 10 kg less than when weighed on electronic weighing machines.

Traders attacked

Angry over this, some of the 300 farmers who gathered at the market yard attacked the traders who ran away from there. On coming to know of this, police rushed to the market yard and pacified the farmers. The traders promised to put in place proper weighing machines.



Sugar spurts on renewed demand

Agencies Posted online: Tue Jan 31 2012, 17:33 hrs

Mumbai : Sugar prices spurted at the Vashi wholesale market here today on renewed buying from stockists and bulk consumers following a hike in levy prices. The government hiked levy sugar prices by Rs 50 to Rs 1,904.82 per quintal for the current season. Medium Sugar (M-30) rose by Rs 16 per quintal to Rs 2,968/3,072 from overnight closing level of Rs 2,952/3,072. Small Sugar (S-30) also went up by Rs 10 per quintal to Rs 2,892/2,952 as against Rs 2,882/2,942 yesterday. The following are today's closing rates for sugar (per quintal), with the previous rates given in brackets: Medium sugar (M-30) quality: Rs 2,968/3,072 (Rs 2,952/3,072).

Small sugar (S-30) quality: Rs 2,892/2,952 (Rs 2,882/2,942).



Punjab, Haryana eye higher wheat output amid favourable weather

TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2012 23:01

PTI | CHANDIGARH

The cold weather conditions this month have raised the hopes of a bumper wheat crop in Punjab and Haryana this season, with both major wheat growing States looking to exceed their combined targeted wheat output of 274.61 lakh tonnes this season.

The expectations of achieving higher output are also supported by the absence of any severe attack of major diseases like yellow rust on the winter crop so far, wheat experts say. "Certainly, the prospects of getting higher wheat output are looking better this time, primarily in the wake of conducive and beneficial weather conditions in the month of January, and moreover, fields have

not been attacked by any major disease like yellow rust," a senior official of the Punjab Agriculture Department told PTI here.

Intense cold is beneficial for wheat as it helps in development of tillering or multiplication of crop shoots, resulting in more production, wheat experts say.

Punjab and Haryana have been observing a minimum temperature 5-6 degrees below normal. Echoing similar views, Haryana is also anticipating a record wheat yield this time due to the favourable winter conditions. "We have projected a wheat yield of 47.35 quintals per hectare for the current season. But looking at prevailing weather, the yield may reach 47.50 quintals, which will be the highest ever yield of the State," a senior official of the Haryana Agriculture Department said.

Punjab has projected wheat output of 156 lakh tonnes in an area of 35.15 lakh hectares in the current season. It achieved record production of 164.72 lakh tonne last season. Meanwhile, Haryana is aiming for production of 118.61 lakh tonnes over an area of 25.05 lakh hectares. Farm scientists said production could be higher this year provided there is no sudden rise in mercury and rains along with hailstorms in the next few months.

"Wheat output in the country can be higher this year if we do not have an abrupt rise in temperature and hailstorms in March and April," Karnal-based Directorate of wheat research project director Indu Sharma said.

Business Standard

Wednesday, Feb 01, 2012

Additional export duty likely on deoiled rice bran

Anindita Dey / Mumbai February 01, 2012, 0:43 IST

The ministry of agriculture has proposed imposition of additional export duty on deoiled rice bran, to ease the supply of animal feed and bakery ingredient, in the domestic market. Production of deoiled rice bran in 2011-12 was estimated at 8-8.5 million tonnes of which around 170,000 tonnes or two per cent would be exported.

“The export currently carries a duty of 10 per cent but the domestic price of animal feed is increasing, a significant input in composition of prices of milk and poultry. On the other hand, domestic prices of milk and poultry are consistently increasing. Therefore, there is no reason why India should export deoiled rice bran when the demand in the domestic market is high, going by the prices of animal feed,” explained an official source.

This is based on the recommendation of the department of animal husbandry under the ministry of agriculture. Besides rice milling, animal feed is also extracted from oil cakes after oil extraction. India imports crude oil and the refining edible oil. Thus, when this is domestically marketed, it will be at a premium compared to in-house supply of animal feed. So, exports should be discouraged.

De-fatted or deoiled rice bran is obtained after extraction of oil from either raw or parboiled bran and contains a higher percentage of protein (17-20 per cent), vitamins (A and E) and minerals than full-fatted bran obtained from raw and parboiled paddy.

Meanwhile, to increase milk production and strengthen dairy co-operatives, the National Dairy Plan (NDP) proposes to set up producer firms under the Companies Act. The objective is to facilitate co-operatives to retain their 50 per cent share in milk production, amidst stiff competition from the private sector. Officials explained that a producer company would be registered under part XI of the Companies Act and set up to cover the entire value chain in the milk production process.

High-yield pepper seed in a year

Talks on to get output-multiplier seeds, which give up to 20 times more yield, from Madagascar

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai February 01, 2012, 0:41 IST

India may get output-multiplier pepper seed from Madagascar in about a year, hopes the Spices Board.

The high-yielding seed from Madagascar has the potential to increase output by 20 times.

“The Board, along with the International Pepper Community (IPC, the inter-governmental body of producer-countries), is currently in talks with the government of Madagascar to bring high-yielding seed available in that country to India. We hope the local authorities allow us to carry their seed to

India,” said A Jayathilak, chairman of the Spices Board, at a day’s conference here.

The meet was organised by the Indian Spice & Foodstuff Exporters’ Association and attended by 150 global experts.

Earlier, the government of Madagascar had supplied the seed to Vietnam and the result has been witnessed tremendous growth in the latter’s output, leaving other major producing countries behind. This year, too, Vietnam will lead global supply of the spice, with production of 140,000 tonnes against 130,000 tonnes last year.

By contrast, output in India has declined severely in recent years. India’s output is pegged at 43,000 tonnes this year, the lowest in two decades, as against 48,000 tonnes last year. During 2009-10, output was 55,557 tonnes.

“The only solution to arrest this fall is to bring high-yielding seed to India ,” said Jayathilak.

With home consumption at 42,000 tonnes in a year, Indian traders will have hardly anything left for exports this year. The only hope for them is to increase the quantity of value-added products through imported raw materials, which they have been doing for many years.

Against a per unit yield of 300-400 kg from Indian pepper seed, the seed originating from Madagascar has the potential to produce 7,000 kg in favourable conditions. “It is doing wonders elsewhere and, hence, can be replicated in India,” said S Kannan, executive director of the Jakarta-based IPC.

The latest estimates of world production indicate a four per cent increase in the 2012 season (November 2011-December 2012). According to the estimates of a leading export house, total production would be 270,000 tonnes, 31,674 tonnes higher than last year’s output. Global pepper supply in 2012 is estimated at 320,000 tonnes, including the carryover stock, less than the 330,000 tonnes in 2011.

Jayathilak says Indian farmers may not get the same level of output from good seeds due to the lack of adequate farm practices and land availability. In Vietnam, if a field is spoilt due to contaminants or pesticide residues, farmers plant in alternative fields, he said. However, Indian farmers use the same field, despite any distortion in soil quality.

India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices in the world. The estimated world trade in spices is 1.1 million tonnes, valued at \$3,475 million, of which India has a share of 48 per cent in quantity and 43 per cent in value terms. In his inaugural speech, Marcel Bruggeman, director of Holland – based Nofa Lab, said, “Aflatoxin and pesticide residues are the main concerns for the Indian spice industry.” The Spices Board is planning to hold discussions with the European Commission on the issue of contaminants in Indian exports and to standardise testing practices across the industry.

Basmati export price may be cut by \$200

Bloomberg / New Delhi February 01, 2012, 0:30 IST

India, the world's second-biggest rice grower, may cut the minimum export price (MEP) of the basmati variety by \$200 a tonne to boost shipments, according to a government official with direct knowledge of the matter. A ministerial panel on February 7 will consider a proposal to reduce the minimum price from \$900 a tonne, or may scrap the floor, the official said, asking not to be identified, citing government policy. Basmati shipments may increase 14 per cent to 2.5 million tonnes in the year ending March 31, should the government abolish the minimum export price, Vijay Setia, president of the All India Rice Exporters' Association, said in a phone interview on Tuesday. If the price stays unchanged, exports may drop to 1.9-2 million tonnes in the year ending March, he said. The panel may consider cutting the benchmark export price or dismantling it, food minister K V Thomas told reporters on Tuesday. Indian traders have contracted to ship 3.5 million tonnes of basmati rice as of yesterday since the financial year began on April 1, 2011, according to the rice association.

FMC may ban 2 more traders over guar price manipulation

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai February 01, 2012, 0:49 IST

The Forward Markets Commission (FMC) is likely to impose a trading ban for at least six months on two more Rajasthan-based traders, in addition to similar action taken some days earlier against two others. This follows a probe into irregularities in the trading of guar seed and guar gum, largely on the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX).

Around three dozen traders and the entities they represented were probed in this regard. Around 30 were let off with a warning and one, it has been decided, should be exonerated. Of the remaining four, two have already been punished, as reported earlier this month. These are Shresth Commodities & Financial Services Pvt Ltd and Vinod Commodities Ltd. The former is a member of the SCFS, MCX, NCDEX and ICEX; it has been suspended for six months from any trade, including its director, Subhash Jain. The latter is a member of MCX, NCDEX and ACEL; it has been banned from any trading for a year, as has its director, Vinod Singhvi. As for the other two, mentioned at the outset here, they made their defence in the second week of January. "We were not convinced with their responses and, hence, decided to suspend them from active participation in commodity trading. The period is being worked out and will be announced soon," said a senior FMC official. Besides manipulation of guar seed and guar gum prices, an FMC official said those being proceeded against were also involved in frequent client code modifications. FMC fears the possibility of margin funding in cases where some industrialists and large traders transfer money into the account of a small person or entity and trade in commodities on the latter's behalf. The manipulators manage to corner huge quantities of guar gum and seed through different accounts for price rigging, while the person who allows use of his account gets a small sum.

THE HINDU Business Line

Chana gains on improved buying



Indore, Jan. 31:

Chana gained Rs 25-50 to Rs 3,200-3,225 a quintal on Tuesday on rise in futures and improved buying support.

Chana kanta (new) quoted at Rs 2,800-3,000 a quintal (Rs 2,850-2,975). Chana (desi) rose to Rs 3,125 a quintal on higher demand. Chana (mausmi) quoted at Rs 3,100-3,400, chana (annagiri) at Rs 3,100-3,200, chana (Russian) at Rs 4,800-5,000, chana (Turki) at Rs 5,300-5,500, chana (American) at Rs 7,200-7,600 and *kabli bitki* at Rs 3,500-3,700 a quintal.

In local *mandis*, 400-500 bags of new chana arrived. Demand for new chana is sluggish because of high moisture content. Some traders expect chana prices to rise as yields fall due to a decline in acreage to 89.31 lakh hectares this year (93.32 lakh hectares) and depletion of carryover stock. Moreover, the minimum support price of chana has been raised to Rs 2,800 a quintal in the current season.

But the actual picture, according to wholesale trader Mr Rahul Vora, will emerge only after 15-20 days when the harvest of chana crop is over. Currently, there is an apprehension that unfavourable weather in growing areas of Madhya Pradesh will hurt yields of *kanta* chana crop. Dollar chana was unchanged at Rs 7,200-7,600 a quintal even as 2,000 bags arrived in local *mandis*. Demand for it is sluggish, trader Mr Deepak Agrawal said, because of high moisture content in the new crop. Higher arrivals and sluggish demand may bring its prices below Rs 6,000.

Spot turmeric falls on limited stocks



Erode, Jan 31:

Spot turmeric prices increased by Rs 200 a quintal on Tuesday as farmers brought limited stocks, hoping for intervention by the Centre to announce a higher support price.

“Though farmers are having huge stock of old turmeric with them, brought very limited stocks to the market for sales as they still expect that the price may improve to Rs 8,000-10,000 a quintal and the Government may announce minimum support price of Rs 10,000 for the turmeric,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said only 7,000 and odd bags of turmeric arrived for sale, of which 4,500 bags are new crop from Mysore and Chennampatty areas. The sales recorded about 75 per cent of the total arrival of 7000 and odd bags.

Exporters purchased new crop, which has increased by Rs 400 a quintal on Tuesday. The old crop was sold to a minimum fetched Rs 200 a quintal more than previous price. Because of the very low arrival, traders have quoted high price to fulfil their committed orders to Masala firms.

Turmeric farmers said that they are having more than 10 lakh bags of turmeric with them (each bag contains 75 kg) and this year they said they are expecting the harvest of 45-50 lakh bags. So there will be about 65 lakh bags by February middle. So some farmers have decided to bring minimum 10,000 bags from next week to the market for sale.

Traders said that virtually they have not yet received fresh orders from North India and said that they are expecting fresh orders from middle of February or the end of February.

Mr Ravishankar said that usually till February first week, the prices will go down and also the arrival will decrease. He said they are expecting that prices may increase by another Rs 200 by the end of this week.

Meanwhile, the price of hybrid Salem crop has increased by Rs 200 a quintal due to quality.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, Finger variety (old crop) was sold at Rs 2,809-4,589 a quintal, root variety Rs 2,589-4,101.

Finger (new crop) variety was sold at Rs 3,603-4,067 a quintal. Root variety fetched Rs 3,311-3,699. Of 1,935 bags (new 1155 bags, old crop 780 bags) 1,359 bags were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, Finger variety (Old crop) was sold at Rs 3,839-4,659 a quintal, root variety Rs 3,739-4,219.

Finger variety (New Crop-Number 8 variety) was sold at Rs 2,900-3,930 a quintal, root variety Rs 2,700-3,160. All the 108 bags of new crop and 746 bags of old crop, totalling 854 bags were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, finger variety was sold at Rs 4,119-4,617 a quintal, root variety Rs 3,500-4,100. All the 88 bags kept for sales were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, root variety was at Rs 3,455-4,203 a quintal. All the 261 bags kept for sales were sold.

Mixed trend in pepper market



Kochi, Jan. 31:

The pepper market witnessed high volatility on Tuesday consequent to the usual tug-of-war between operators who were engaged in 'circular trading.'

The market opened on firm trend and the prices of February and March hit the highest levels of Rs 30,500 and Rs 30,555 a quintal, respectively, and then continued to fluctuate through out the trading falling sharply. It then recovered and again fell and recovered again. In the closing hours, February fell substantially, March declined marginally, while April made moderate gains and ended in a mixed trend.

Today bulls were said to be spreading bullish propaganda aimed at pushing the market up in early hours of trading but it did not sustain.

There was 'badla' from February to March until recently. It has gathered momentum now with 'badla' available from February to March and March to April, market sources said. "As the financial year closing is around the corner many of those who got goods with them and sales position may opt for delivery because they alleged that "getting refund from the Kerala Sales

Tax department is a Herculean task.” Therefore, they might not carry forward their sales in to next month after March delivery,” trade sources told *Business Line*.

Some 5 to 6 tonnes of 500 GL bulk density new pepper arrived at the terminal market from Pathanamthitta and some parts of Kollam . As it was had moisture content, buyers were quoting Rs 280-285 a kg, but the sellers were not interested to sell at that rate, they said.

February contract on the NCDEX fell by Rs 360 to close at Rs 29,600 a quintal. March declined by Rs 30 a quintal to close at Rs 29,905, while April increased by Rs 220 to close at Rs 30,225 a quintal. Total turnover soared by 4,546 tonnes to 7,686 tonnes. February, March and April open interest declined by 153 tonnes, 20 tonnes and 50 tonnes, respectively, to close at 6,206 tonnes, 2,402 tonnes and 585 tonnes.

Ample supply, poor offtake pound wheat

Karnal, Jan. 31:

Dara wheat and flour prices continued to tumble on account of easy availability and low off-take on Tuesday.

The Food Corporation of India sells stocks to flour mills under the Open Market Sale Scheme at Rs 1,170 a quintal excluding VAT, said Mr Sewa Ram, a wheat trader. Based on the FCI's call, every flour miller can procure 90 quintals of wheat a day, he added.

In the physical market, Dara prices decreased further by Rs 10 a quintal and was quoted between Rs 1,200-1,205 a quintal. Only around 20 tonnes of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh, while a stock of about 10 tonnes of dara was offloaded by local stockists and were directly delivered at the mills.

Mill delivery of dara was at Rs 1,200 a quintal, while delivery at chakki was at Rs 1,205 a quintal.

On the other hand, low stocks kept desi wheat varieties firm; Tohfa was quoted at Rs 2,300 a quintal, while Red Rose was trading at Rs2,200 a quintal.

On Tuesday, the February wheat contract on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange went up by Rs 3 to Rs 1,252 quintal. While wheat for March delivery decreased by Rs 2 to Rs 1,239 a quintal.

Flour Prices

With a fall in both wheat prices and flour demand, the prices eased further by Rs 20 and was quoted at Rs 1,180 for a 90-kg bag. On the other hand, Chokar ruled flat and was sold at Rs 650 for a 49 kg bag.

Wheat futures

Wheat futures are likely to fall this week on higher stocks and increase in area under wheat cultivation. Wheat sowing has been completed in 29.53 million hectares, up from 29.16 million hectares the previous year, says reports.

Groundnut oil seen firm on shortage of nuts

Rajkot, Jan. 31:

Despite sluggish demand at higher prices, groundnut and cotton oils were unchanged on Tuesday. Higher prices have brought down retail demand for groundnut oil. Millers said given that they were facing a shortage of nuts for crushing, even as traders stock them up, prices may not come down soon.

Loose groundnut oil sold at Rs 1,035-1,040 for 10 kg, a new 15-kg tin at Rs 1,755-1,760 and a 15-litre tin at Rs 1,635-1,640. Bold groundnut was quoted at Rs 725-852 for 20 kg at the agricultural produce marketing committee here, while small groundnut was at Rs 721-823. About 20,000-25,000 bags of groundnuts arrived in Saurashtra and 70-80 tonnes of groundnut oil were traded here.

Wash cotton oil was traded at Rs 680-683 for 10 kg. A 15-kg new tin of cotton oil was offered at Rs 1,035-1,040. About 350-400 tonnes of cotton oil were traded.

Coffee exports down 7.5% in Oct-Jan

Anil Urs



Coffee exports were down 7.52 per cent in the first four months of this crop year at 79,021 tonnes.

Bangalore, Feb 1:

Coffee exports were down 7.52 per cent in the first four months of this crop year (October 1, 2011 to January 31, 2012) at 79,021 tonnes compared with 85,455 tonnes in the previous year.

However, in terms of rupee, the exports were up 20.12 per cent at Rs 1,200.92 crore against Rs 999.72 crore. In US dollar terms, the exports were up 11.02 per cent at \$243.05 million (\$218.91 million). In terms of unit value realisation, Indian coffee fetched Rs 1,51,974 per tonne against Rs 1,16,987 per tonne.

Exports were down in January due to strengthening of rupee against the dollar. In December, exporters took advantage of weak rupee and exported a substantial portion of their commitment.

As new crop is trickling into the market, exporters are cautious and are waiting for some stability in the currency market to resume their procurement.

According to Coffee Board statistics as of January 31, arabica parchment constituted 4,121 tonnes (last year's exports stood at 5,723 tonnes), arabica cherry 1,361 tonnes (1,469 tonnes), robusta parchment 670 tonnes (2,104 tonnes) and robusta cherry 7,649 tonnes (5,346 tonnes).

Instant coffee exports stood at 2,173 (3,691 tonnes) and instant coffee re-exports stood at 4,985 tonnes (1,851 tonnes).

Sri Lanka's tea not diluted by drop in output

R. K. Radhakrishnan

Colombo, Jan. 31:

Even as Sri Lanka grossed more revenue over 2010, tea production dipped marginally in 2011, according to statistics released by brokers.

In 2011, the production totalled 328.3 million kg against 331.4 mkg in 2010, said Forbers and Walker Tea Brokers. While high grows remained more or less static, mediums declined by 2.9 mkg and whole low grows gained a little. In 2011, Sri Lanka netted about \$1.5 billion.

Volatility in export markets, too, has posed a huge challenge to Sri Lankan tea. Right now, Sri Lanka's largest markets are Russia and West Asia. "We cannot put all our eggs in one basket and we will be spreading our markets not to depend too much on one particular market or region," said Sri Lanka Tea Board Chairperson Ms Janaki Kuruppu on the sidelines of the 20th session of the Food and Agricultural Organisation's Inter-Governmental Group on Tea held here.

"We are first going to the region where we think we have the immediate potential. [In] some markets we have to develop new products because the consumers are asking for something else. Right now we are putting our long-term marketing plan in place," she said when asked if Sri Lanka was considering the US and China for higher exports. China is one market that Sri Lanka is concentrating on now.

The eighth session of the producer/consumer member meeting of the international tea committee and a half-day session on climate change preceded the global forum. The inter-governmental sessions focuses on areas related to production, marketing, pricing and consumption of tea faced by the global industry players with a way forward for the next 10 years.

Sri Lanka is also pushing for an international tea producers' forum to discuss issues of producer nations. This was formally proposed by the Sri Lankan Plantation Industries Minister, Mr Mahinda Samarasinghe, at the inaugural session. While producers meet behind closed doors, as part of the inter-governmental deliberations, Mr Samarasinghe wants the producer nations to have closer interactions.

Monsanto to set up breeding station in Punjab or Haryana

Anil Urs

Bangalore, Jan. 31:

Monsanto India is planning to open its third breeding station in North India. The company currently has a seed research station in Abohar (Punjab). Breeding station in north India is expected to take up work on wheat, corn and vegetables.

“The company has narrowed down the location between Punjab and Haryana and a final call will be taken shortly. If we plan to expand Abohar facility, it will be located in Punjab or we may create a new centre in Haryana,” said Mr Amitabh Jaipuria, Managing Director, Monsanto India.

“The final decision on the location will be taken shortly. We plan to invest close to Rs 25 crore to set up breeding station. The final cost of the project depends on the land value,” he added.

Monsanto India on Monday opened its second centre in Chikkaballapur near Bangalore.

The Chikkaballapur facility is spread across 117 acres (including owned 17 acres and leased land of around 100 acres). The breeding station has been established with an investment of Rs 25 crore from Monsanto.

“Initially the Chikkaballapur facility will focus on developing high-yielding hybrid seeds for corn, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber and watermelon cultivation mainly for farmers in southern India,” Mr Jaipuria said.

The company's breeding centre in Aurangabad, Maharashtra is currently handling hybrid corn and hybrid cotton.

Mr D Narain, Regional Head, Monsanto India said, “Bangalore is ideal in terms of logistics and climatic conditions for research into various hybrid varieties. This non-biotech plant breeding station is yet another indication of Monsanto's commitment to helping our farmers through the

use of technical innovation to grow more with less land, water and other resources to meet the needs of a growing population, and to make India globally competitive in agriculture.”

According to Dr. Robert de la Pena, Asia Vegetable Research and Development Lead, Monsanto Singapore, “This breeding station has been equipped with all aspects of R&D infrastructure in the same location - labs, open fields for trials, greenhouses, etc.”

“The integration of these facilities both in the laboratory and in the field will enable an environment of seamless research that will make discovery faster and reduce the lead time for launch of new and better seeds into the market,” he added. anil.u@thehindu.co.in

‘Employee buyouts in plantation sector yet to evolve’

Vinson Kurian

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan. 31:

Sustainability of employee buyouts of companies in the plantation sector cannot be taken for granted, according to an expert .

This is despite buyouts having emerged as a solution to long-standing crisis in the tea industry, says Ms M. G. Deepika, Faculty at the School of Business at Amrita Vishwavidyapeetham, Bengaluru.

NATIONAL SEMINAR

She said this while presenting a paper on ‘Enhancing efficiency and competitiveness in tea plantations through participatory management: The case of Kannan Devan Hills Plantations Company Ltd (KDHPCL).’

The occasion was the national seminar on ‘Building competitiveness in a globalised world: Experience of India's plantation sector’ at the Centre for Development Studies here.

The two-day seminar was held as part of the National Research Programme on Plantation Sector sponsored by the Union Ministry of Commerce.

Ms Deepika observed that the timing of the formation of the KDHPCL itself was quite favourable with a recovery happening in the global tea market.

FAVOURABLE TIMING

Better price for tea in the auction market benefited the company in terms of profits returned during the first year of operations.

This in turn helped raise the expectations of the employees and boost their confidence in the system. It eventually helped the newly formed company to grow to the next level of trajectory.

Though the company has stabilised to a large extent in terms of organisational structure, there are internal and external factors which can pose a threat to its continued stability, Ms Deepika said.

For instance, a round of prolonged depression in the global tea market. Crop diversification could be the best option to fight this, which the company is venturing into only now.

The next potential destabilising factor is the age of the standing crop. The average age of the tea plantations is around 80 years, which puts a cap on the quality of the tea produced.

The best quality tea is extracted when the bushes are 30 to 40 years old.

Though the new company is seeking to undertake replanting, the efforts on this front have been minimal.

On a different plane, the export performance of the company has been reasonably good until now. But it still leaves much to be desired, since major markets where the export share from India is yet to be tapped.

Since the domestic consumption of tea is also high, there is a vast potential existing in the rural markets. It would be wise to promote marketing and distribution in rural India.

But the branding efforts of the company through tie-ups with Gujarat Samachar and Elite Breads have not proved successful, Ms Deepika said.

The company should ideally develop own brands, since buying a well-established brand, 'Kanan Devan,' from the Tatas is not affordable at this point of time, she added. vinson@thehindu.co.in

Meet on biotech crops for food security

Hyderabad, Jan. 31:

Foundation for Biotechnology Awareness and Education (FBAE) and the Association of Biotechnology-Led Enterprises (ABLE) will hold a conference on 'Biotechnology crops for food security in India' in February 27 in Bangalore.

“Population of the country is projected to be about 160 crore by 2050 and increasing incomes and increasing per capita food consumption is widening the yield-demand gap,” FBAE said here in a statement. The country needs to adopt newer technologies in agriculture such as crop genetic engineering to cope up with the growing challenge of food security. Globally, biotech crops (soya, corn and cotton) are being grown in 19 countries. “India could adopt biotechnology in cotton, leaving huge scope for other crops. The moratorium on Bt brinjal and delay in functionalising Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India are results of opposition by anti-technology activists. This is keeping us away from benefiting from biotech,” FBAE said.

The February 27 conference would discuss ways to overcome food security threats, new trends in agri-biotechnology, biotech crops for India and biotech regulation – legal provisions and conflict resolution.

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Copra falls below support price level



Kochi, Jan. 31:

With hardly any demand, coconut oil prices eased further to Rs 7,000 a quintal in the Kerala market and quoted at Rs 6,700 a quintal in Tamil Nadu. Despite reassuring statements from government agencies, copra prices fell below Rs 5,000, to Rs 4,700 a quintal, in Tamil Nadu. Copra quoted at Rs 5,000 a quintal in the Kerala market.

Rupee impact

While the recent firm trend in the rupee has lowered the prices of imported edible oil in the domestic markets, trade sources pointed out that if the trend persists, it could put further pressure on the price of edible oils such as coconut oil. While traders are not holding significant

stocks and are not likely to enter the market in a big way, speculators could undertake short sales and bring the markets further down, the sources said.

Palm oil was quoting at Rs 5,400 a quintal and palm kernel oil, at Rs 6,200. Coconut oil and copra were trading at Rs 7,600 and Rs 5,200 a quintal, respectively, at the beginning of the year, Mr N. Ananthan, former Secretary, Cochin Oil Merchants Association, said.

Copra prices are now ruling below the support price of Rs 5,100 a quintal and if support measures are not undertaken immediately, they could decline further, he warned.

To contain fluctuations in coconut oil prices, up-gradation of technology was essential to increase coconut oil use in value-added product derivatives such as glycerine, lauric acid, industrial alcohol, and so on. Unfortunately, technology remains obsolete in this segment, Mr Ananthan said.

Area, production

The area under coconut and its production in Kerala have been coming down. While the area has declined from 8.97 lakh hectares in 2005-06 to 7.78 lakh hectares in 2009-10, the production has declined from 6,326 million to 5,667 million nuts during the same period.

The increase in productivity from 7,046 nuts to 7,278 nuts per hectare in Kerala has not been able to stem the fall in total coconut production.

In contrast, in Tamil Nadu, the area under coconut has grown from 3.7 lakh to 4 lakh hectares, while production grew from 4,867 million to 5,547 million nuts during the same period.

On the productivity front, Tamil Nadu has made gains, and is moving closer to double that of Kerala. Productivity in Tamil Nadu rose from 13,136 to 13,852 nuts per hectare during the same period.

Upper Ganges Sugar posts Rs 20-cr loss in Q3

Kolkata, Jan. 31:

Weighed down by a 24 per cent rise in one-time provisioning towards the differential cane price liability, the K. K. Birla Group-owned, Upper Ganges Sugar and Industries Ltd (UGSIL) posted a

net loss of Rs 20 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2011, against a profit of Rs 4 crore during the corresponding period last year.

Net sales dropped by about 20 per cent to Rs 135 crore. Shares of UGSIL fell by 0.33 per cent to close at Rs 45.85 on the BSE on Monday.

The company has three sugar manufacturing units with an aggregate crushing capacity of about 18,000 tonnes of sugarcane per day.

ICAR orders probe on indigenous Bt cotton variety



New Delhi, Jan 31:

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has set up a high-level committee to probe claims by scientists of several government institutions that they have developed an indigenous variety of Bt Cotton called “Bikaneri Narma” (BN-Bt).

They have been asked to ascertain whether scientists from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, National Research Centre on Plant Biotechnology (NRCPB) and Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur, did develop an indigenous Bt type or whether BN—Bt got mixed or “contaminated” with seeds that contained MON-531.

The probe team set up around a fortnight back is headed by S.K. Sopory, Vice-Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), the ICAR Deputy Director General, Mr Swapan Kumar Datta, told PTI.

It has been asked to submit its report in three months, he said.

As per the allegations, this cotton seed is an unoriginal version of Bt cotton developed by US-based Monsanto in the early 1990s, named MON 531.

Commercial sale of BN-Bt was prohibited by the Government in 2009, Mr Datta said, adding that the ban continues.

Mr Datta said the UAS Dharwad has also been asked to investigate the matter.

When contacted, Mr K.R. Kranti, Director of the Central Institute for Cotton Research, said his institution would extend all cooperation to the investigation team.

Bt Cotton accounts for 90 per cent of the total acreage under this important commercial crop in the country. Maharashtra and Gujarat are the main growing regions of Bt cotton.

Milk consumption to rise to 150 mt by 2017: IDA

New Delhi, Jan 31:

Demand for milk in India will rise 29 per cent to 150 million tonnes in the next five years on account of the rising population, an industry body said today.

The country is estimated to have produced 116 million tonnes of milk in 2011, Indian Dairy Association (IDA) President, Dr N.R. Bhasin, told reporters here.

“Keeping in view the rising population, India would need around 150 million tonnes of milk by the end of the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012-17),” he said.

Speaking at a curtain-raiser for the annual dairy industry conference, Dr Bhasin added that the requirement of milk in the next 10 years would be about 200-210 million tonnes.

IDA is organising the annual conference to focus on the development of a national strategy for dairy development in the near future.

“The conference this year is being organised in the national capital from February 2-5 and the focus this year is ‘Indian Dairying: Perspective 2020’,” Dr Bhasin said.

Around 1,800 delegates are expected to participate in the conference, including participants from the European Union and the US, he added.

Meet on tech to revitalise agriculture

Mumbai, Jan. 31:

With output growth continuing to trail demand growth and newer challenges such as land constraints, water shortage and global warming looming large, Indian agriculture needs to be revitalised. Technology can play a crucial role in transforming agriculture from subsistence to sustainable. Infusion of technology at every stage of crop life — from input management till consumption of food — has the potential to transform this moribund sector that employs over half the country's workforce into a vibrant growth-oriented business opportunity.

Towards this end, the Expert Committee on Agribusiness and Food Processing at Indian Merchant's Chamber (IMC) is organising a national seminar on 'Technologies to Revitalise Indian Agriculture' on February 3 at the chamber premises.

Expert speakers from different technology platform including information technology, biotechnology, satellite technology and nuclear agriculture are set to share their perspectives on how best to deploy these technologies for crop management both pre-harvest and post-harvest. Scientists from government supported research organisation including DRDO, ISRO, BARC and SAMEER as well as private sector participants from infotech and biotech sectors are set to make presentations. As farming as an economic activity would increasingly become knowledge-intensive as well as more productive and sustainable in the coming years, the national seminar will focus on technologies for the future.

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