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Watermelon fetches a good profit for farmers

Staff Reporter

25 farmers selected for six field-level training sessions



Expert touch: Syed Ahamed Meeranjee (left), Deputy Director, Department of Horticulture, Tuticorin, inspecting watermelon field at Alwarthirunagari block in Tuticorin district.— Photo: N. Rajesh

Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) that quenches the consumers' thirst during summer with its juice enriched with medicinal qualities also fetches attractive profit for the farmers cultivating this crop.

Watermelon can be grown in irrigated condition between December and March after the harvest of paddy. In Southern Tamil Nadu, this crop cultivation has become popular now-a-days because of its short duration seeking less labour and high profit.

In Tuticorin district, this crop has been grown in 10 out of the 12 blocks on an area of 70 hectare during this season.

According to Syed Ahamed Meeranjee, Deputy Director, Department of Horticulture, his department had given hybrid watermelon seeds at subsidised cost to farmers to be sown on 30 hectares under the Integrated Horticulture Development Scheme and Hi-Tech Productivity

scheme. To increase the productivity of this crop, farmers were advised to go in for drip irrigation system with fertigation and better post-harvest management.

According to Palani Velayutham, Assistant Director of Horticulture, Alwarthirunagari block, 25 farmers were selected from various villages in this block for six field-level training sessions that made the difference from the previous years' bitter experiences.

“Farmers, who scrupulously followed the instructions given during the training sessions, have earned up to Rs. 1 lakh per hectare within a short period of just 60 to 70 days. No other crop can yield this much profit,” he said.

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Dairy farmers being motivated to cultivate azolla

Ravi.P.Benjamin



Farmers display azolla in their fields in Visakhapatnam district.

The Department of Animal Husbandry is popularising the cultivation of azolla for supplementing the fodder requirements of the cattle farmers in the district. Most of the cattle farmers depend on the traditional and seasonal fodder for feeding their animals. The cattle farmers have inhibitions on growing it due to a little bit of manual work involved initially in growing the plant. In the context of more than 700 mini dairies being set up in the district by the year 2015, large amount of cattle feed is required to feed another 7000 cows and buffaloes which will be added to the cattle population. Animal Husbandry department's Joint Director Y. Simhachalam told *The Hindu* that special focus is being given by the department to popularise azolla plantation among

the dairy farmers. Every dairy farmer including the self-help groups which are going to launch the mini dairies will be asked to take up the fodder cultivation as the plant has multiple nutrients which will be a boon to the cattle.

Azolla is a floating fern mostly utilized as bio-fertilizer for wetland paddy and as cheap organic feed substitute for dairy cattle, poultry, pig, fish etc. It is rich in protein, almost 25-30 per cent on dry weight basis, it is also found to contain essential minerals like iron, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, copper, manganese etc apart from appreciable quantities of vitamin A and vitamin B12. It is also found to contain almost all the essential amino acids, biopolymers and carotene. The above mention bio-chemical constitution along with the rapid multiplication rate makes azolla ideal organic feed substitutes for livestock. Livestock can easily digest it due to high protein content and low lignin content. The trail carried with azolla as feed substitute shows that there is an overall increase in milk production by 15-20 per cent by supplementing feed with the same quantity of the plant on dry weight basis without affecting milk production. It is also found that azolla feeding improves the quality of milk and health. It also improves the weight of broiler chicken and increases egg production if used as poultry feed. The same can be used as feed for sheep, goat, pig and rabbit.

Requirement

For growing the plant, a pit size of two metre length, one metre width and 20 centimetre depth should be dug. The pit is then covered with plastic gunnies to prevent the growth of roots of near by trees, protect the soil temperature and seepage water. Sieved soil is uniformly spread over the plastic sheet. Five kg of cow dung and 40 gm of azophos and 20 gm of azofert made into slurry in 10 litres of water is poured in the pit, and then more water is poured to bring the water level to eight cm.

About one to two kg of fresh, pest and disease free azolla seed culture is inoculated in the pit. The lush green crop will fill the pit within seven-10 days and about one to one-and-a-half kg of crop can be harvested daily thereafter. About two kg of dung, 25 gm of azophos and about 20 gm of azofert made into a slurry in two litres of water should be given once in seven days to keep the crop in rapid multiplication phase and to maintain the daily yield of one to two kg. The Central Government is also extending an incentive of Rs. 5,000 for growing azolla and the beneficiary is expected to invest another Rs. 5000 to grow the crop.

- *Tests show that azolla feeding improves quality, production of milk*
 - *When used as poultry feed, the weight of broiler chicken increases*
-

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Sewing machines distributed

B. Maheswari, Collector, distributed sewing machines sanctioned by Backward Classes Welfare and Social Welfare department to six women here on Monday. Earlier, the Collector received 269 petitions at the weekly grievances day meeting. A majority of the petitions pertained to patta transfer, old age pension, and free house site pattas. K. Nagarajan, District Revenue Officer, A. Azhagirisamy, Assistant Commissioner of Excise, and R. Ponnulakshmi, District Backward Classes Welfare Officer, were present.

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Turmeric auction to continue at four centres

Staff Reporter

Farmers wanted it done at a single place



A meeting in progress in Erode on Monday to discuss allocation of space for farmers at the private market. –PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

The district administration on Monday ordered that status quo be maintained in a matter related to the conduct of turmeric auction.

The administration issued the order after conducting a tripartite meeting with the farming community, traders and officials of the regulated marketing committee.

The meeting was convened after farmers boycotted the auction at the private market demanding the allocation of adequate space to place their sample lots.

The farming community wanted the authorities to conduct the auction under a single roof. Currently the auction is taking place in four places belonging to Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, Regulated Marketing Committee, Erode and Gobichettipalayam Cooperative Marketing Societies.

Traders wanted to move the conduct of auction to a new facility built by them at Semmandampalayam.

But the regulated marketing committee was constructing an Integrated Turmeric Complex at Karumandichellipalayam and it was insisting that all the turmeric auction should be moved to the complex once the construction was over.

During the discussions at tripartite meeting, a majority of the turmeric growers wanted the auction to take place under a single-roof and they preferred to use the integrated complex at Karumandichellipalayam.

“We want the government to complete works at the complex quickly and facilitate the conduct of the auction under single-roof,” Turmeric Farmers Associations of India president P.K. Deivasigamani said.

A section of the farmers suggested that the government could also consider taking over the facility constructed by the private parties in Semmandampalayam and conduct the auctions.

This suggestion, however, was met with stiff opposition from the traders.

“We only want the government to regulate the turmeric auction. Traders are of the view that they cannot allow the government to take over a private market premises,” association president RKV Ravishankar said. Later, Revenue Divisional Officer R. Sukumar, who presided over the meeting, asked the traders and farmers to maintain the status quo.

He also asked the traders and committee authorities to provide adequate space for the farmers to place their sample lots and participate in the auction process.

The auction in three markets remained suspended on Monday. The regulated marketing committee, however, conducted the auction.

Steady increase in egg price continues

M.K. Ananth

The poultry hub has witnessed a steady increase in wholesale egg price as it has increased from Rs. 2.35 on February 5 to Rs. 2.80 on Monday (up by 23 per cent). The Rate Fixation Committee of the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), Namakkal Zone, increased its price by nine paise from Rs. 2.71, on Saturday.

This is much higher than the commodity's price during the same season in 2011, when its price dropped drastically from Rs. 2.35 in the second week of January to Rs. 2.10 in the third and fourth weeks. Average price in February during the yesteryears has been much lower at Rs. 2.25 (2011), Rs. 2.40 (2010) and Rs. 1.97 (2009), but this month the average so far is around Rs. 2.52.

According to an NECC source, the driving force behind this hike was the unexpected extension of winter in the northern states. "Usually the winter in those states came to an end by the end of January but this time it is likely to prolong till the end of this month," he said and added that this has led to increase in egg consumption and triggered good price for egg.

"Though eggs from Namakkal is not going to the North, there is a slight increase in the consumption in the domestic markets – Tamil Nadu (110 lakh eggs a day) and Kerala (90 lakh eggs a day) – as the weather is cold during the morning hours," the official said. This according to him has helped poultry farmers maintain the price of egg in this zone. Of the daily production of 310 lakh eggs in this zone, export is also good with nearly 30 lakh eggs exported everyday against the average 10 lakh eggs exported everyday, last year. He said that the existing rate in Namakkal is, however, lesser than other zones and continuance of the same depends on the winter in the North and prices announced by other zones.

Average egg rate in other major NECC zones across the country (on Monday) is as follows:
Kolkata – Rs. 3.50, Varanasi – Rs. 3.19, Luknow – Rs. 3.07, Kanpur – Rs. 3.05, Allahabad – Rs. 2.90, Delhi – Rs. 2.87, Ahmedabad – Rs. 2.85, Pune – Rs. 2.82, Mumbai and Miraj – Rs. 2.80.

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Farmers stage demonstration

Special Correspondent

Members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, the farmers wing of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), staged a demonstration in front of the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) office here on Monday, urging the State government to initiate immediate action for assured supply of power to domestic, industrial and agricultural consumers.

M. Sebastian, district president of the sangam, said the farmers were worst-hit due to unscheduled power trips.

He said agricultural productivity would be affected, if the trend continued for another one or two seasons. He said three-phase supply should be stabilised, facilitating the farmers to irrigate their fields during the forthcoming summer.

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Seeding a farm policy without the dirt on climate change

Gargi Parsai



Genetics mode: Researchers working with transgenic groundnut plants engineered for drought resistance at the glasshouse facility of the Genetic Transformation Lab at ICRISAT in Hyderabad.— Photo: K. Gajendran

A recent international conference on climate change and sustainable agriculture in New Delhi brought forth the shocking realisation that there are no conclusive studies in India on the prospective impact of climate change on the agriculture sector including livestock and fisheries.

Much of the country's understanding comes from global data provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Meteorological Organisation and other world bodies.

The conference theme paper contained the following admission: “The climate system is extremely complex and poorly understood in terms of extent, timing and impact. Thus, the knowledge and understanding of implications of climate change at the national level is inadequate and fragmentary.”

The statement is telling, coming as it does from the organisers — the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) and non-government institute, National Council for Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Public Leadership; the government has entrusted the ICAR with the task of coming up with “mitigation” and “adaptation” technologies.

Food security

So it is fair to ask how in the absence of comprehensive “knowledge and understanding about the implications of climate change” as the ICAR put it, the government is moving towards the 12th Plan with a strategy that has potential to affect the country's food security and make it dependent on imports in the long term.

In what it describes as an effort to mitigate the impact of climate change on agriculture — which by the admission of its own research arm it has not understood yet — the government appears to be tailoring its policies to encourage a gradual shift from traditional agriculture to bio-fuels, afforestation, genetically modified organisms, hybrid seeds and cross-breeds.

The Finance Minister is losing sleep over subsidies he has to provide for the food and fertiliser sector, but farmers are sleepless over the disappearance of friendly pests and honey bees from their fields.

They rue the decline in production of nutritious millets, pulses, oilseeds and fail to understand the government's comfort level with importing these commodities years on.

Aware of the move to cut power and water subsidies for irrigation, the 60 per cent farmers dependant on rain-fed agriculture question the government's generosity in providing

incentives/subsidies/tax holidays to the food processing industry, floriculture, and horticulture sectors to attract foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail.

For decades, Indian farmers, with their deep traditional knowledge that respects the ecosystem, have practiced “climate-smart and climate-resilient” agriculture catapulting cereal production from 50 million tonnes in the 50's to an all-time high of 250 million tonnes this year with a record output in wheat and rice.

For years, the 80 per cent small and marginal farmers with a landholding of less than an acre have delivered in the face of natural calamities and adapted to poor irrigation, unaffordable credit, lack of proper crop and self insurance and un-remunerative price for the crop.

They have responded to the shift from natural to chemical-based farming and lack of crucial extension services that lie in the hands of often exploitative *artiyas* , or intermediaries, who double up as moneylenders, and seed and pesticide suppliers.

Indeed, it is on the strength of the inherent resilience of Indian farmers that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance is bringing forth a food security legislation to provide wheat and rice to 46 per cent of the rural poor and 28 per cent urban poor.

Policy shift

Despite the pressure this places on the farmer to grow more cereals, there are clear indications of the policy shift to crop diversification, and towards irreversible changes in land-use patterns, agriculture to bio-fuels and agro-forestry.

With the push being given to transgenics and genetically modified seeds, ostensibly for raising productivity, there is a disconcerting move to open up the seed sector to multi-national company monopolies.

In addition, productive agriculture land has come under tremendous pressure recently from urban and industrial needs. Suggestions for use of huge tracts of wastelands for these purposes have not found favour with the government.

As for the changes in weather patterns due to climate change, in the Indian context the trends observed in the last 100 years show that there is no significant change in monsoon rainfall at the all-India level, although some regional variations have been noticed. For instance, the frequency of cyclones during post monsoon seasons will be higher in six decades from now.

Going by the “limited studies” put forward by the ICAR, the drought in 2002 affected food production by 10 per cent; the cold wave in January 2003 hit cultivation of mustard, mango, guava, papaya, brinjal, tomato and potato. High rainfall in 1998 and 2005 affected kharif and late kharif onion crop, resulting in price hike. But the issue is: can these single-year events be quoted as examples of long-term climate change?

In general terms, the ICAR says that continuous higher temperatures during critical growth stages of rabi crops reduces yields “considerably”. This is not borne by the increase in wheat production that has gone up — over a decade — from 69.68 million tonnes in 2000-2001 to a record 88.31 million tonnes in 2011-12.

Accurate information

The simple requirement of farmers on the ground in States like Punjab and Haryana is advanced and accurate information on weather. They want quick movement of kharif stock so that they can bring forward the sowing of rabi-wheat. But the government has done precious little towards this.

Coastal States situated along the 7,500-km coastline seek policies to sustain productive and protective habitats such as mangroves, coral reefs wetlands and fisheries. Hilly States want development of traditional forest land from which they draw green feeds and grasses to indigenously manage natural resources. High-altitude States, which face droughts, frosts, torrential rains and landslides, prefer integrated soil and watershed management in a farming system mode to sustain them through the year.

Clearly rather than the top-down policy shifts that could jeopardise food security, there is pressing need for honest location-specific research in partnership with small and marginal farmers to assess over a period of time the impact of climate change. Instead of being driven by international funding, such research should be driven by the needs of

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Seed production centre soon: Minister

Special Correspondent

Distribution of induction stoves, mixers, grinders launched



Agriculture Minister S. Damodharan (third right) distributing induction stoves in Udthagamandalam on Monday. –Photo: M. Sathyamoorthy

The establishment of a seed production centre here is under the active consideration of the government, said the Agriculture Minister S. Damodharan while distributing induction stoves, mixers and grinders to beneficiaries under the Chief Minister's Special Scheme.

Dependency

Stating that it would make available quality base materials to farmers ,he said that potato growers have for long been dependent on places like Simla for good quality seeds.

He added that there was also a move to bring into being a marketing facility here.

Pointing out that high priority is being accorded for the development of agriculture in the state, he said that funds were not a constraint. Efforts would be made to make the Nilgiris a model in the development of the sector.

Though in a few places floriculturists are not doing very well by and large floriculture is flourishing.

Schemes

Listing the subsidised schemes being implemented here under the National Horticulture Mission, the Integrated Horticulture Development Programme, the Hill Area Development Programme etc,he urged the farming community to make use of them. Stating that education was also a thrust area,he said that the government was extending various facilities to the students.

Claiming that the people had facilitated the formation of the AIADMK Government because they were confident that Chief Minister Jayalithaa would deliver the goods, Mr. Damodharan said that in extending a helping hand to the poor and needy she was following the footsteps of former Chief Minister late M.G. Ramachandran.

Poll promises are being systematically fulfilled.

The Nilgiris Collector Archana Patnaik who presided said that the government had decided to replace fans with induction stoves taking into consideration the climatic conditions here.

A total of 29,000 family card holders would benefit this year.

Quality

Stating that only good quality items are being distributed, she said that as a back up facility service centres are also being opened.



M. Buddhichandran, MLA, said that the schemes being implemented are in tune with the requirements of the people. O.P. Chinnaraj, MLA, and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Senate member K.R. Arjunan, spoke.

The District Revenue Officer L.Nirmalraj welcomed the gathering.

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Delhi - INDIA

Today's Weather		Tomorrow's Forecast	
	Tuesday, Feb 21		Wednesday, Feb 22
Sunny	Max 25.5° Min 11.4°	Cloudy	Max 26° Min 12°
Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs	Sunrise: 7:14		
Humidity: 88%	Sunset: 17:48		

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 1009

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday Feb 23	Friday Feb 24	Saturday Feb 25	Sunday Feb 26	Monday Feb 27
				
27° 13° Partly Cloudy	26° 13° Sunny	28° 13° Sunny	28° 14° Sunny	27° 13° Sunny



Consumer inflation in rural areas slips to 4.92% in Jan

Agencies Posted online: Mon Feb 20 2012, 18:16 hrs



New Delhi : Reflecting sharp drop in prices of essential food items, inflation based on Consumer Price Index for Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) fell to 4.92 per cent in January from 6.37 per cent in December.

The rate of price rise based on the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) also fell to 5.27 per cent in January from 6.72 per cent in December 2011, an official release said.

On a point-by-point basis, the CPI (RL) index stood at 619 points in January, the same level as in the previous month. The CPI (AL) also remained stable month-on-month at 618 points.

Food index for rural labourers was down marginally by 0.33 per cent on a monthly basis in January.

However, prices of other goods continued to rise. Pan and supari was expensive by 1.45 per cent in January, while fuel and lighting was expensive by 1.15 per cent. Clothing, bedding and footwear was up also by 0.32 per cent. Miscellaneous items became dearer by 0.68 per cent month-on-month for rural labourers. In the case of agricultural labourers, food prices went down by 0.50 per cent on a monthly basis in the last month. But other items became expensive in January as compared to December. Pan and supari became expensive by 1.22 per cent. Fuel and lighting became expensive by 1.14 per cent and clothing, bedding and footwear by 0.33 per cent.

In January, miscellaneous items also went up by 0.85 per cent for agricultural labourers month-on-month.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

21 FEB, 2012, 02.47AM IST, PK KRISHNAKUMAR, ET BUREAU

Dull demand keeps rubber prices low

KOCHI: The gap between Indian and international rubber prices is widening due to a subdued local demand. Indian prices are flat as poor tyre and car sales dampen demand for rubber. Global prices are rising because the Thailand government has decided to build up reserves.

Tyre makers had stepped up imports in the last few months to take advantage of low international prices. However, the situation changed after the Thailand government initiated a move in the last week of January to buy 2 lakh tonne to arrest the slide.

Though the market intervention price scheme is yet to come into effect, global rubber prices have been looking up since then.

Global prices have been hovering around Rs 200 per kg. The Indian rubber prices are at around Rs 185 per kg since there has been no pickup in demand.

"Whatever had come into market was the stock held by dealers. Growers are reluctant to release the stock at the current price and only some of it has hit the market," said a prominent rubber dealer.

"Tyre demand was not to our expectations in January and we have build adequate inventory through imports to last over a month," said Vijay Gambhire, senior vice president, (materials), Ceat. Apart from import against export, the company is not pushing for more imports now as the price situation has become unfavourable.

Tapping is expected to slow down further as summer advances. It has already come down, squeezing production. But the absence of demand will keep prices flat, according to traders.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Feb 21, 2012

India's castor seed output pegged at record 1.61 mn tonnes

BS Reporter / Mumbai/ Ahmedabad February 20, 2012, 0:21 IST

Better price prospects pushed up acreage by 34%, says SEA Castor Crop Survey: 2011-12

The Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) has estimated a record castor seed production of 1.61 million tonnes in India for 2011-12 season (October-September), showing a growth of about 30 per cent over 1.25 million tonnes recorded last year.

In its Castor Crop Survey: 2011-12, conducted by Nielson India, SEA maintained that total

area under castor crop for 2011-12 has increased by 34 per cent over last year to 1.15 million hectares.

The sharp increase in castor acreage was attributed to farmers' preference over other crops like cotton, wheat and groundnut mainly due to better returns. However, national average yield is likely to dip by three per cent to 1417 kg per hectares against 1453 kg per hectare. Low rainfall, joined with pest attack in castor growing regions, is believed to have hampered productivity.

The central government's second advanced estimate for castor seed production is put at around 2.34 million tonne, against the targeted 1.39 million tonne of castor seed production in the country.

According to the survey, which was released on Saturday, Gujarat's castor seed production is estimated to swell up by 36 per cent to 1.22 million tonne with a rise in the acreage of about 44 per cent to 697,000 hectares. This is considered as the highest ever production of castor seed in the history of Gujarat.

"In Gujarat, the crop shift was seen mostly in cotton, wheat and jeera. However, the average yield in the state for the season is likely to be lower at around 1760 kg per hectare, against 1863 kg per hectare recorded last year. This is mainly on account of shortage of water, pests attack and late beginning of winter in the key castor growing regions in the state," Naresh Pednekar, executive director at Nielson said, while releasing the survey.

Castor seed production in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh is likely to rise by 15 per cent and 11 per cent to 207,000 tonnes and 156,000 tonnes respectively. Other states are likely to produce 30,000 tonnes of castor seed.

Since castor crop has multiple picking rounds, the estimates for total production are likely to be revised accordingly after two picking. The weather condition, in major castor growing regions during past two months, has been fluctuating and is feared to mark a dent in the castor output estimates. "We will revise the estimates (for castor seed production) after two rounds of picking at a later stage," added Pednekar. Meanwhile, robust production estimate is feared to affect prices. During the discussion on the price outlook for castor seed at the forum, experts maintained that prices may remain steady to firm during the first half of the year. But as

supplies would start mounting, the prices may soften in the second half.

THE HINDU Business Line

Aromatic rice unlikely to see further fall



Karnal, Feb. 20:

Due to lack of buying in the market, prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice remained rangebound on Monday.

Mr Amit Chandna, Proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told *Business Line* that prices of aromatic rice have already dropped to their lowest levels and it is unlikely to see any major fall from here.

Traders' expectations

Traders expect that market may witness some moves in March, he added.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121(steam) quoted at Rs 3,900-4,000 a quintal while Pusa-1121(sela) sold at Rs 3,400-3,490.

Duplicate Basmati sold at Rs 3,200-3,310. Pure Basmati (Raw) sold at Rs 4,450-4,520, while Pure Basmati (Sela) at Rs 3,950-4,020.

For the brokens of Pusa-1121, Tibar sold at Rs 2,800, Dubar was at Rs 2,425 while Mongra was trading at Rs 1,950.

Sugandha (Steam) was trading at Rs 3,200 while PR14 (steam) was at Rs 3,300. Sharbati (steam) at Rs 2,800-2,840 while the Sharbati (Sela) sold at Rs 2,700-2,760. Permal (sela) sold at Rs 2,000-2,130, while Permal (Raw) quoted at Rs 2,000-2,150.

Soyabean, oil firm on global cues



INDORE, FEB. 20:

Soyabean and soya oil ruled firm in private trading on Monday. *Mandis* across Madhya Pradesh were closed because of *Maha Shivratri*.

Soya refined in private trading was unchanged at Rs 670-673 for 10 kg, while soya solvent ruled at Rs 637-642. Soya oil was on an uptrend for the past few days on strong global cues and buying support from crushers. In the past one week, soya refined prices have gone up by Rs 6 for 10 kg, while soya solvent went up by Rs 10.

According to some traders, bullish trend in soya oil seems unlikely to sustain as substitutes palmolein is cheaper at Rs 635 and Rs 673 for 10 kg. Another set of traders said with mustard oil ruling high, demand for soya oil will most likely remain unaffected and, thus, soya oil prices will either remain range-bound or decline marginally.

The National Board of Trade was closed on Monday. Soyabean was unchanged in private trading at Rs 2,430-2,500 a quintal and its plant deliveries were static at Rs 2,520-2,555 a quintal. There were hardly any arrivals due to the holiday.

Cardamom rules steady on demand-supply match

G. K. Nair



Kochi, Feb. 20:

The cardamom market ruled almost steady on bullish sentiments as the season is nearing to a close and a consequent squeeze in supply at auctions held last week.

Arrivals dropped last week from around 600 tonnes in the previous weeks to about 490 tonnes.

Exporters bought consistently, estimated at around 120 tonnes last week. Upcountry dealers were covering but were not aggressive. The last round of picking may end by mid-March and from then till the arrival of the next crop in July it will be the lean season.

If the current dry spell prevailing in major growing areas for the past nearly two months continues it might impact the crop, trade sources said. Normally, these areas receive some shower after mid-February and any failure will have an effect on the next crop, they said.

The 2011-12 crop has been good and the quantity auctioned so far has shown a substantial increase over last season. The weather was favourable last year with timely rains, but this year the weather does not seem as favourable, growers in Idukki said.

Cardamom requires intermittent showers without which the plants will wither, they said.

The current sentiments indicate a steady to firmer market as the harvesting is expected to come to an end by mid-next month, Mr P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *Business Line*. Arrivals have shown a declining trend, he said. Good quality cardamom was fetching good price and its availability was limited, he said.

At the Sunday auction conducted by the KCPMC, total arrivals stood at 80 tonnes as against 109 tonnes the previous week. The maximum price was at Rs 967 a kg and the minimum Rs 429 a kg. Auction average increased to Rs 653.11 a kg from Rs 625.11 a kg the previous week. Individual auction average remained in the range of Rs 635 and Rs 685 a kg last week.

Total arrivals as on February 19, 2012 were at 12,928 tonnes and the sales at 12,589 tonnes as against around 7,160 tonnes of arrivals and about 6,985 tonnes sales in the same period last year.

Weighted average price as on February 19, 2012 was at Rs 562 a kg as against around Rs 1,118 a kg on the same date last year, according to official sources.

Prices of graded varieties were steady at previous levels. They were in Rs/kg: AGEB Rs 820-830; AGB Rs 680-690; AGS Rs 670-680 and AGS 1: Rs 640-650.

Open market prices of graded varieties in Bodinayakannur in Rs/kg were: AGEB Rs 790-800; AGB Rs 675; AGS Rs 640 and AGS 1: Rs 620, trade sources in Bodi said.

Good quality 8 mm bold was at Rs 950-975 a kg while good bulk was fetching Rs 725-750 a kg.

The weather conditions prevailing in the main cardamom growing tracts were not favourable so far, as the area continued to be in the grip of dry spell.

Turmeric farmers agree to withdraw protest



Erode, Feb. 20:

Turmeric sales took place only at the Regulated Marketing Committee (RMC) on Monday but an end to farmers protest in the other three markets in Erode is in sight.

On Friday, over 1,000 farmers brought their produce to the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard. But at the market premises, space was available to place 970 samples only. The remaining 30 farmers objected to it and demanded cancellation of the sale or adequate space to place all samples. Due to this, the market was closed and no sale was conducted in all four places then. It was also announced that sales would not be conducted on Monday but the RMC said it would go ahead with auctions.

Meanwhile, farmers and turmeric traders represented their problem with the district administration and an urgent tri-partite meeting called on Monday.

At the tri-partite meeting held at the office of Revenue Divisional Officer, Dr Sugumar, representatives of the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, farmers representatives and officials took part.

Farmers representatives sought the setting up of an integrated turmeric complex with auctions being conducted by all four turmeric markets.

Traders said that already a place has been purchased at Semmampalayam where 53 acres are available. Traders associations have constructed a sales yard, where auctions can be conducted. They said that they are ready to offer three acres for RMC, but RMC demanded five acres.

After a two-hour long meeting the RDO, Dr Sugumar, asked the farmers and traders to maintain 'status-quo'. He said he would send a detailed report to collector and asked the Turmeric Merchants Association to hire a private hall for placing all samples immediately. No farmer should be let out from participating in the auction sale, he said.

Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President of the Association, assured that he would arrange for rented building to place samples. However, the market will be closed on Tuesday for 'Maha Sivarathri'. Arrangements will be made on Wednesday to place all samples for sale. Farmers' representatives also agreed to bring their stocks to the market and participate in auctions.

In Mondays sale at the RMC, a few farmers brought 640 bags. A few traders visited the RMC and placed tender for low quality turmeric. Out of 640 bags, only 170 bags were sold.

The finger variety was sold at Rs 3,266-3,711 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 2,911-3,511. The RMC authorities said all the quality stocks were not purchased by any trader and only the new Number 8 variety turmeric was sold; but at a lower price.

Slump in Europe may drag demand for organic products

M. R. Subramani

Recently in Nuremberg (Germany):

The outlook for growth in the global market for organic products is positive. However, the pace of growth is likely to be mixed, particularly in Europe due to economic instability.

According to experts of the organic products industry who took part in BioFach 2012 that had India as the 'Country of the year, the demand for organic products could witness a slower growth in the UK and Italy. However, Germany and France could see a better growth rate.

The US is witnessing better overall growth this year and therefore, it could see its demand for organic products increased to a record \$30 billion. This year, the market for organic products in the US could further grow to \$31.5-32 billion, according to Ms Laura Batcha, Organic Trade Association of the US.

"The growth for organic products in the US is currently 10 per cent against 0.6 per cent for conventional food," she said, adding that farmers' markets in the US increased 17 per cent 2010 – an indicator of growth in organic products.

Dr Helga Willer, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Switzerland, said that cultivation of organic produce increased to 10 million hectares in Europe last year, while it declined in Asia.

According to Mr Amarjit Sahota, Organic Monitor, the UK, the area under organic farming is likely to touch 2 million hectares this year with Asian organic markets likely to grow approximately by 20 per cent until 2012.

RISE IN DEMAND

The promise for growth comes from increasing small and medium enterprises sector that is developing awareness of food quality and a cosmopolitan outlook. This has led to rise in demand for organic products in China and India.

Ms Diana Schaack, Agrarmarkt Informations-GmbH, Germany, said that the growth in organic food last year was helped by dioxin and e-coli scandals in Europe. Dioxins that were reported to have been found in animal feed, pushed up demand for organic animal products, particularly, she said. The E-coli outbreak during May-June last year changed consumer spending from certain vegetables such as cucumber to organic and conventional foods. "The year 2011 saw a rebound in prices and production of organic farm produce. Fresh products will continue to dominate the organic market," she said. Dr Susanne Padel of the Organic Research Centre in the UK, said the area under organic farming dropped to 50,000 hectares in the UK from 1,20,000 hectares in 2009 due to faltering 'political commitment'. "There is stagnation in land being diverted for organic farming, while retail outlets are unwilling to stock organic products," she said, pointing to the dropping demand. France, the second largest market for organic products in Europe, has been witnessing a boom since 2008 and already four out every 10 French people consume organic food.

Brazil, too, could see growth in demand for organic products.

However, the growth rate will depend on how the European crisis is solved according to Mr Sahota. Russia and the US could see healthy growth but much would depend on how supply can match demand since there was a growing imbalance with consumption.

"Food inflation will also have a role to play in growth of organic food," said Mr Sahota.

Fall in area pushes up poppy seed

G. K. Nair



Kochi, Feb. 20:

Short supply of poppy seeds due to reduction in area under the crop coupled with unfavourable weather conditions has pushed up its prices in the domestic and international markets.

“Prices increased by Rs 20 a kg in the past two days and thus it was up from Rs 150 to Rs 190 a kg,” upcountry market sources told *Business Line*. In the international markets, it was in the range of \$2,800-2,900 a tonne, the trade claimed and said, “Goods are there, but next crop is going to be small, so all goods are getting covered, while import permits issuance will be slower too,” they said. The existing import permits are valid only up to March 31 and issue of it for the next fiscal will take at least three months from April first, importers said. “Best white cargo sortex,” they said, was at Rs 220 a kg and it might touch Rs 300 a kg as there is going to be huge demand for pure cargo. “Festival and marriage buying will start and that in turn will push up the prices,” they claimed.

Opium Availability

Indian poppy seed crop, which used to be normally between 6,000-7,000 tonnes, will be somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 tonnes this year following reduction in growing area by 50 per cent by the Narcotic Control Board. The Board does this every three years so as to restrict the opium availability in the country, the trade said. Such decisions are taken in line with the rules of the International Narcotic Control Board, Vienna, which is the global controlling body. Add to this, severe cold climate has inflicted damage to the existing crop and according to reports about 50 per cent of crop has been damaged, the trade claimed.

India has an annual requirement of an estimated 35,000 tonnes of poppy seeds and remains a net importer and one of the major consumers of this commodity in the world. It is used in *sambhar*, *chutney*, sweets, rice dishes, etc. In

Prices drop at Coonoor tea auction

P. S. Sundar



Coonoor, Feb. 20:

Even as the Tamil Nadu Government was conducting "Tea and Tourism' festival with the Tea Board's support in the Nilgiris this weekend ending Monday, tea traders suffered a reduction of Rs 14 lakh in their earnings at Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions.

At Sale No: 7, only 8.98 lakh kg could be sold against 9.15 lakh kg in Sale No: 6 and that too by dropping prices to an average of Rs 72.25 a kg from Rs 72.51 last week.

Consequently, the overall earnings slid to Rs 6.49 crore from Rs 6.63 crore.

This meant that the traders lost Rs 14 lakh in just one week, marking a decline of 2.11 per cent.

"All varieties of CTC leaf teas eased up to Rs 3 a kg. Orthodox leaf, however, gained up to Rs 4. High-priced CTC dusts lost Rs 2-5 and mediums Rs 1-2 but plainers gained up to Rs 3. Primary orthodox dusts gained Rs 2-5", an auctioneer told *Business Line*.

Among CTC teas from bought-leaf factories, Homedale Estate, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped at Rs 149 a kg. Highcliff supreme got Rs 141, Vigneshwar Estate Rs 139, Blue Mont Speciality Rs 138, Wavertree Rs 137, Hittakkal Estate Rs 135, Darmona Estate and Shanthi Supreme Rs 132 each. In all, 101 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 236, Kairbetta Rs 179, Havukal Rs 168, Highfield Estate Rs 167, Singara Estate Rs 163, Kodanad and Tiger Hill clonal Rs 162 each, Prammas Rs 161 and Curzon Rs 160. In all, 32 marks got Rs 100 and more.

On the export front, Pakistan bought selectively for Rs 53-57 a kg and the CIS Rs 53-81.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 48-55 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 85-141 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 56-59 for plain dusts and Rs 85-139 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Scale up growth in farm sector: PM

PTI

New Delhi, Feb 20:

The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, today said the agriculture sector is likely to achieve about 3.5 per cent annual growth in the 11th Five-Year Plan, but stressed on scaling it up to 4 per cent or more in the next Plan (2012-17).

Addressing the Golden Jubilee Convocation of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) here, Dr Singh said the Government is committed to at least double the spending on research and development in the farm sector by the end of the 12th Five-Year Plan from the existing level of about one per cent of gross domestic produce (GDP). "It now looks as if agricultural growth is likely to be about 3.5 per cent per annum during the 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-12), which is much better than in the 10th Plan. This is a commendable achievement but we must improve upon it in the 12th Plan to reach 4 per cent or even higher," the Prime Minister said. The agriculture sector remained sluggish during the 10th Plan period, achieving merely 2.5 per cent expansion. Dr Singh emphasised that a determined effort is needed by both Central and State Governments to achieve the higher growth. Stating that farm research is a key element to achieve higher expansion, he said the agricultural research system needs to be strengthened to meet the future challenges.

"One requirement is the financial resources. Our Government is committed to raising research and development spending as a whole to at least 2 per cent of GDP by the end of the 12th Plan from the current level of about 1 per cent," he said.

Urad dal, sugar decline

PTI



Chennai, Feb 20:

The prices of urad dal and sugar declined while gram dal moved up and all other commodities remained unchanged in the wholesale foodgrains market here today.

Urad dal dropped by Rs 100 per quintal to Rs 5,200 from its previous rate of Rs 5,300. Similarly, sugar went down by Rs 30 per quintal to Rs 2,850 from its last rate of Rs 2,880.

In contrast, gram dal firmed up by Rs 100 per quintal to Rs 4,300 from its earlier rate of Rs 4,200.

Toor dal, moong dal, wheat, sooji and maida remained unaltered from their previous levels.

The following are the wholesale rates of various agri-commodities today (in Rs per quintal, except where stated otherwise): Toor dal 6,200, urad dal 5,200, moong dal 6,000, gram dal 4,300, sugar 2,850, wheat 1,800, maida (90 kg) 1,550, sooji (90 kg) 1,850.

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