THE HINDU

COIMBATORE, February 24, 2012

Meghalaya Govt. keen to tie up with TNAU

According to Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, the Meghalaya Government has shown keen interest in collaborating with the university for enhancing agricultural prosperity in Meghalaya.

This was revealed during the visit of R.M. Mishra, Principal Secretary (Planning), Government of Meghalaya, to TNAU. He said that two-third of the population of Meghalaya was engaged in agricultural activities and the farm holdings were also predominantly small and marginal like that of Tamil Nadu.

Farm development

On Integrated Basin Development and Livelihood Promotion Programme in Meghalaya, Mr. Mishra said knowledge-based solutions were necessary for making Meghalaya youth to be more creative in farm development.

“Convergence of potential livelihood opportunities and strengthening the whole supply chain will deliver desired goods. We hope to make use of the equipment developed by TNAU, especially for pepper, turmeric and food processing for reducing drudgery of farm operations in Meghalaya,” he said.

He added that he would request TNAU to share its expertise in the areas of plant tissue culture, information portal development, market intelligence, integrated pest and disease management, and developing a gene bank.

Database

P. Murugesa Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor of TNAU, said the university would compile basic farm related database of Meghalaya so as to initiate the strategic planning for the State. Particulars about landscaping, population dynamics, soil related details, climatic conditions, rainfall pattern, natural resources available, etc., would be recorded.

The Vice-Chancellor explained the Integrated Farming System models developed by TNAU for enhancing farm income on sustainable basis, which could be shared with the officers of Meghalaya during training interventions.

Published: February 24, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: February 24, 2012 04:26 IST

Improvised dry arecanut peeling machine

Correspondent

The dry arecanut peeling machine devised by Aravind Laxmeshwar of Aztec India, Sirsi.

An improvised dry arecanut peeling machine for the benefit of growers in Malnad has been devised by Aravind Laxmeshwar, an electrical engineer and ex-serviceman, of Aztec India, Sirsi.

Mr. Aravind told presspersons on Thursday that the machine would peel 50 kg of arecanut in one hour and it was scratch free and non-breaking. Only two workers were needed to operate the machine. The machine had auto-loading facility with escalator technology. It had a system that enabled simple, safe and hassle-free operation.

The machine would be demonstrated to areca growers on Friday, Mr. Aravind said.

ERODE, February 24, 2012

Turmeric farmers plea to govt.

This will help them get better rates for their produce

The Turmeric Farmers Association of India has urged the State government to commence the yellow spice auction immediately at the Integrated Turmeric Complex, which is under construction at Karumandichellipalayam.

The turmeric auction is now being held at four places belonging to Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, Regulated Marketing Committee, Erode and Gobichettipalayam Cooperative Marketing Societies.

These four markets in the town lack adequate space and amenities, which often leave the farmers to face untold hardships.

Besides there is a significant difference in the rates quoted for turmeric in each market, Association president P.K. Deivasigamani claims.

The farmers in the district boycotted the auction a few days ago protesting against the lack of space to place their sample lots at the private turmeric market.

High, this year too

The farming community would face similar issues in the future, as turmeric production was expected be higher this year as well, he pointed out.

Hence, the government should move all the four markets to the Integrated Turmeric Complex, facilitating the conduct of turmeric auction under one roof.

“The Regulated Marketing Committee has already completed the construction of two godowns and created a few other facilities in the complex. So we do not anticipate any problem in conducting auction at the complex,” Mr. Deivasigamani points out.

“If the government is not able to move the four markets to the complex at Karumandichellipalayam immediately, the association is willing to take a building for rent and handover it to the government to conduct turmeric auction under one roof,” Mr. Deivasigamani says.

The farmers will be able to get better rates for their produce only when the auction is held under one roof, he adds.

Mr. Deivasigamani and members of the association met Collector V.K. Shanmugam on Thursday and submitted a memorandum in this regard.

- ***The four markets in town, where auction is now held, lack adequate space and amenities***
- ***Farmers will be able to get better rates only when auction is held under one roof***

Published: February 24, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: February 24, 2012 04:20 IST

Farmers' meet put off

The monthly farmers grievances meeting that was scheduled for Friday has been postponed. According to an administration release, the meeting has been rescheduled for February 28.

MYSORE, February 24, 2012

Jaggery Park all set to reach out to farmers

R. KRISHNA KUMAR

Modern method of production assures chemical-free jaggery

making it safe for consumption:While jaggery produced in the conventional and traditional ‘aalemane' has a lot of chemical content, that produced at the Jaggery Park is devoid of chemicals and is made hygienically.— PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM

The Jaggery Park at the Visvesvaraya Canal (V.C.) Farm in Mandya is expected to go full steam to reach out to farmers in the manufacture of “chemical-free” jaggery.

The park, sanctioned under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, was inaugurated last April and is the second of its kind in the State to incorporate advanced technology in jaggery production.

While jaggery produced in the conventional and traditional ‘aalemane' has a lot of chemical content, that produced at the Jaggery Park is devoid of chemicals and is made hygienically, said K.T. Pandurange Gowda, Associate Director of Research at the V.C. Farm. Adaptation of new technologies had resulted in a 10 per cent increase in the production of jaggery for every tonne of sugarcane crushed, he told *The Hindu* . “We are crushing about 3 tonnes of sugarcane per day and producing about 1.5 quintal of pure, chemical-free jaggery for every tonne of sugarcane crushed,” Mr. Pandurange Gowda said.

The new manufacturing process obviates the need for the use of hydrose which lends a rich golden hue to the product. The jaggery produced using the new method attains a golden hue naturally and is safe for consumption.

Focus on research

Swami Gowda, who heads the project, said the production was expected to pick up and the focus would now be on research. “The physical infrastructure for the research laboratory and demonstration facilities are in place. We are in the process of procuring the laboratory equipment,” he added.

Research will focus on the development of low-cost technology to benefit farmers involved in jaggery production. The usual method of production is not only primitive with liberal application of hydrose, but compromises on hygiene.

During the recent Krishi Mela, more than 8,000 farmers from Mandya and surrounding areas visited the Jaggery Park and witnessed the use of the new technology. Earlier, there had been criticism against the park for not disseminating information to farmers. Karnataka Sugarcane Cultivators' Association president Kurubur Shanthakumar had described it as “ineffectual”.

But officials say the authorities have now evolved a methodology for the outreach programme for farmers. “We have formulated a scientific and technical training programme and the participants will be exposed to the modern methods of jaggery production,” Mr. Swami Gowda said.

Cost factor

The conventional cost of jaggery is Rs. 750 per quintal but this can be reduced considerably through mechanisation. Chemical-free jaggery produced under hygienic conditions is in demand and mechanised production can augment the farmers' income considerably, said Mr. Shanthakumar.

- *The new manufacturing process obviates the need for the use of hydrose*
- *Its adaptation has resulted in 10 p.c. increase in production for every tonne of cane crushed*

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, February 24, 2012

Highest priority for farming in 12th Plan

The government has identified agriculture as the sector that shall receive the highest priority during the 12th Plan period, which begins with the coming financial year, Finance Minister K.M. Mani has said.

Inaugurating a workshop discussing the scope for introducing hi-tech agricultural practices in Kerala, organised by the State Planning Board here on Thursday, Mr. Mani said the distribution of wealth would be more widespread and egalitarian when development happened in the farm sector than in either industries or service sectors.

Kerala's service sector was developing at a very good rate and the industries sector was not doing badly. But in agriculture, the trend had been disheartening.

Only by giving some special attention to this sector to reverse the stagnant or negative growth trend could the State hope to achieve a double-digit growth rate during the 12th Plan period.

To achieve an overall growth of say 10 per cent, the State's agriculture had to contribute its share in a handsome way.

Mr. Mani said the upcoming budget should signify the launch of a new strategy for the State's development.

He said ‘protected cultivation' methods and ‘precision farming' methods had brought excellent results in countries such as Israel. These methods meant adopting new technologies.

Kerala could take to new technologies like fish to water because the State had highly educated youth in the rural areas. The youth could be retained in agriculture only by making it attractive and exciting with the infusion of the best methods of the day, he said.

Published: February 24, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: February 24, 2012 04:31 IST

‘Mechanised farming only alternative'

Andhra Pradesh is the only State which is getting more share of Rs.800-crore Central subsidy on farm mechanisation. Keeping this in view the State chapter of the Indian Society of Agricultural Engineers (ISAE) is promoting more use of machines by farmers as employing labour is now costly.

K. Sreenivas Reddy, chairman of the chapter, told *The Hindu* on the sidelines of a two-day State-level exhibition on ‘Mechanisation of agriculture and water management' at Neelagiri farms, Charlapalli, near here on Thursday that mechanised farming was the only alternative.

Dr. Reddy, who is the principal scientist at the Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA), said water management practices, recently introduced rain gun and automatic/drip irrigation facilities were among the technologies on display, which was inaugurated by Nalgonda Member of Parliament G. Sukender Reddy and Collector N. Mukteswara Rao.

The MP said the Centre was taking steps to extend 50 per cent subsidy to some agricultural machinery which was hitherto not eligible for such facility, by constituting 250 clusters this year. It had agreed to link the employment guarantee scheme to agriculture to provide more benefits to ryots. The issue of increased MSP for grains, along with bonus, would be discussed in Parliament and with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The Collector observed that farmers would benefit more financially if the latest technology was made available at the field level. The administration would shortly organise a district-level convention to be attended by 1,000 able ryots to make others aware of latest know-how.

Farmers feted

Both, Mr. Reddy and Mr. Rao, went round the 63 stalls put up by the government and private firms. They honoured farmers Muralidhar Rao and Sathi Reddy of Chityal mandal. Ramana Reddy, ISAE vice-president, Vijayabhaskar Reddy, general secretary, DWAMA Project Director Koteswar Rao, Joint Director of Agriculture Jayaraj, DRDA project director Rajeshwar Reddy, were present. Ministers K. Lakshminarayana and K. Jana Reddy are slated to attend the concluding function on Friday.

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hindustantimes

Fri,24 Feb 2012

weather

Delhi - INDIA

Today's Weather	
Partly Cloudy	Friday, Feb 24 Max Min 28º | 11.6º
Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs	**Sunrise:** 7:14
Humidity: 63%	**Sunset:** 17:48
Wind: Normal	**Barometer:** 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast	
Partly Cloudy	Saturday, Feb 25 Max Min 28º | 12º

Extended Forecast for a week

<table>
<tr><td>Sunday</td><td>Monday</td><td>Tuesday</td><td>Wednesday</td><td>Thursday</td></tr>
<tr><td>Feb 26</td><td>Feb 27</td><td>Feb 28</td><td>Feb 29</td><td>Mar 1</td></tr>
<tr><td>29° | 12°</td><td>30° | 13°</td><td>28° | 14°</td><td>30° | 13°</td><td>31° | 15°</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sunny</td><td>Sunny</td><td>Sunny</td><td>Sunny</td><td>Sunny</td></tr>
</table>

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indian express .com

Tax rich farmers: Assocham

Agencies Posted online: Thu Feb 23 2012, 22:38 hrs

New Delhi : In a suggestion that may not go well with political leaders, industry chamber Assocham today urged the government to bring rich farmers under the ambit of income tax to increase revenue generation.

In a pre-budget memorandum to Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, the chamber has said the government should set up an expert panel for taxing the agriculture community to up to 20 per cent over a period of time depending on the income of individuals. Currently, there is no tax on agricultural income.

"We have requested the government to bring agriculture under the tax net. Nowadays, many corporates have gone into agriculture. Agriculture sector should be divested to increase revenue generation," Assocham President Rajkumar Dhoot told reporters here.

He, however, said farmers with very less income should be spared from any taxes.

"Why should big farmers not be taxed? There is a tax exemption limit on income. If that is crossed, farmers should also be taxed," Dhoot said, adding 80-90 per cent of farmers are poor and should not be taxed.

The industry body has suggested that a farmer with up to 10 hectares of land should not be taxed at all, Dhoot said.

He said a farmer owning cultivated land of up to 20 hectares should be taxed at the rate of 5 per cent, while those having 20-50 hectares of land should be imposed 10 per cent tax.

"Besides, large farmers having 50 hectares or more land should attract a tax of 20 per cent," Dhoot said, adding in all cases, the productivity of the land should be taken into account while imposing any tax.

In their suggestion to the Finance Minister, Assocham said farmers should not be brought under the tax net immediately and an expert panel should be formed to see how farmers could be taxed over a period of time, he added.

Dhoot said by bringing the farming community under the income tax net, the country could generate an additional revenue of Rs 20,000 crore every year.

When asked about the political fallout of this suggestion and feasibility of its implementation, Assocham Senior Vice President Rana Kapoor said: "We know that politically it is a very sensitive issue. However, it is a progressive taxation issue... I think there is a business case."

Talking about food-subsidy, Dhoot said it should be given to "only needy people".

"I fully support food security. We have suggested to the government that subsidy should be given to targeted people and should be reduced gradually keeping in mind their condition," he added.

Dhoot also said India should consider hiking import duties to protect homegrown firms and cautioned that giving away too many concessions to the EU in the proposed FTA will hurt the domestic industry.

On diesel prices, he said subsidies on the fuel should not be offered to luxury cars, telecom towers and other industries and must be restricted only to agriculture and transport sectors. "The biggest challenge in India is to manage the fiscal deficit. We have talked to the Finance Minister on this. It is possible to achieve nine per cent GDP growth if the government takes some drastic decisions," Dhoot said.

For 2011-12 fiscal, the government had estimated a deficit of Rs 4.12 lakh crore, or 4.6 per cent of GDP.

However, the fiscal deficit is expected to exceed the target due to rise in subsidies and lower revenue growth.

According to the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) data, the government's fiscal deficit went up to Rs 3.53 lakh crore or 85.6 per cent of the Budget estimates at the end of November 2011 as the growth of non-tax revenue slowed down.

The Finance Minister had said that India's subsidy billis likely to increase by about Rs 1 lakh crore, over and above the outlay of Rs 1.34 lakh crore estimated in the Budget for 2010-11, mainly on account of higher outlays for oil, food and fertilisers.

Business Standard

Friday, Feb 24, 2012

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

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

BS Reporter / Mumbai/ Ahmedabad February 24, 2012, 0:50 IST

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.

Green palm oil output likely to cross 5 mn tonnes

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi February 24, 2012, 0:50 IST

A likely increase in Chinese demand could push global production of green palm oil to over five million tonnes this year, according to Swiss-based association RSPO.

“World production of palm oil that is produced in an environment-friendly and socially-responsible way is expected to be more than 5,000,000 tonne in 2012,” said Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) secretary general Darrel Webber.

The production is likely to improve as demand from China, — the world’s second biggest palm oil importer — for green palm oil is expected to surge, he said, without disclosing current status of China’s demand for green palm oil. In 2011, five million tonnes palm oil was produced from one million hectare, certified for adopting sustainable production practices, he added.

Currently, green palm oil comprises 11 per cent of the world’s total palm oil output of 49 million tonne. Much of green palm oil is produced in Malaysia and Indonesia, global leaders in palm oil production. RSPO is a non- profit association that represents stakeholders of palm oil industry to develop and implement global standards for sustainable palm oil.

Webber, however, said that in 2011, half of the total green palm oil was sold.

Increasing consumer awaand said increasing awareness especially in India and China could help boost environment-friendly palm oil production.

India, which imports 6.5 million tonne of palm oil annually, hardly buys green palm oil, at present. At present, Adani Wilmar, Godrej Industries, Kamani Oil Industries and VVF Ltd are members of RSPO, who have bought virtual certified sustainable palm oil. RSPO, which has membership of over 700 globally, said stakeholders can either buy sustainable palm oil in physical form or virtual certificates to support the cause to protect environment and minimise damage that could otherwise be neglected in normal palm oil plantations.

Turmeric up 2% on spot demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi February 23, 2012, 14:09 IST

Turmeric futures prices moved up by Rs 92 to Rs 4,790 per quintal today, as speculators created fresh positions, tracking a firming trend at spot market on pick up in demand.

However, Estimates of a bumper crop restricted the gain.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, the May contract rose by Rs 92, or 1.96%, to Rs 4,790 per quintal, with an open interest of 8,085 lots.

The April contract gained Rs 74, or 1.58%, to Rs 4,760 per quintal in 16,220 lots.

Analysts attributed the rise in turmeric futures to fresh buying by speculators after pick-up in demand in the spot market.

After China, Vietnam likely to ban agri imports from India

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai February 24, 2012, 0:26 IST

After China removed India from the list of its oilmeal importing countries from January 1, Vietnam has laid down impossible phytosanitary regulations for Indian exporters, thereby threatening one of the largest agri-commodities export markets in India. Vietnam may suspend the import of agri-commodities from India.

China reacted harshly and suspended the import of oilmeals from India in response to India’s ban on import of milk and milk products from China, announced late last year. Traders believe Vietnam’s threat is supported by genuine quality problems and is not politically driven, as in the case of China.

“Since last year, Vietnamese Plant & Quarantine Authority has been complaining about infestation of khapra beetle in agriculture commodities imported from India. They detected a number of cases with presence of khapra beetle and live weevils in Indian cargo and had warned the Indian authorities of their intent to ban the exports of agricultural commodities from India, if immediate corrective measures were not taken," said Sushil Goenka, president of the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA).

On receipt of a series of complaints from Vietnamese authorities on the quality of maize imported from India, a trade delegation visited Vietnam and inspected several Indian consignments, between February 5 and 10. The delegation found large number of live weevils and other infestations, indicating a serious lapse on the part of fumigation agencies.

"It is evident that specific fumigation agencies have hideously failed to comply with the phytosanitary regulations laid down by the importing country. Disappointingly, exporters also do not seem to have taken this issue seriously," Goenka added.

India is exporting various agriculture commodities, like maize, millet, soybean meal, ricebran extraction and rapeseed extractions to Vietnam totaling over 1.5 million tonnes per annum and worth Rs 3,000 crore. Thus, Vietnam is the largest market for Indian maize and the second-largest for oilmeals constituting over 18 per cent of annual trade.

To resolve the issue, a meeting was convened by the Union ministry of commerce with leading trade representative bodies on Tuesday here. However, the meeting was postponed.

Meanwhile, India's commerce ministry has assured the Vietnamese Quarantine Authority of tightening the phytosanitary regulations to ensure strict compliance of the quality norms.

Taiwanese auth-orities, however, have rejected several consignments of maize and oilmeals originating from India in the past, which were later diverted to Malaysia and Indonesia.

According to trade sources, the level of aflatoxin should be below 50 parts per billion (ppb), which is acceptable for other countries also, including Taiwan. But, high moisture can lead to higher aflatoxin of 120 ppb, which is not acceptable for these Asian countries.

Meanwhile, Shantilal Lunkad, a Mumbai-based exporter, said, "The phytosanitary regulation is impossible to meet. Yet we feel, the move may not be politically driven, being China's closest neighbour and important trade partner."

Meanwhile, SEA has appealed to exporters not to risk the rejection of the entire cargo just to save a small amount on fumigation and to deploy services of reputed and well-established fumigation agencies.

“Giving the responsibility of proper fumigation, both on the fumigator and the cargo surveyors, will prevent recurrence of such problems in future. We sincerely hope all stakeholders in the export of agri-commodities to Vietnam would take this matter with utmost seriousness and strive towards exporting well-fumigated cargo and restore the pristine trade glory of India of being a supplier of quality goods,” Goenka said.

Last year, authorities in Vietnam had quarantined two shiploads of oilmeal from India after very high levels of methyl bromide – a fumigant used for pest control – were found in the commodity. After keeping the shipment on hold for two months, Vietnam rejected it and Indian exporters were forced to sell the commodity at a discount to Vietnamese traders.

The current global industry norm allows up to 30 gm per sq meter of methyl bromide for 72 hours, which Indian oilmeal exporters are maintaining. Including demurrages for over a month, Indian exporters lost nearly $0.5 million in two shipments.

THE HINDU Business Line

Edible oils drop as traders turn cautious

Mumbai, Feb. 23:

The edible oil market witnessed a weak trend on Thursday with imported palmolein and soya refined oil ruling lower by Rs 2 for 10 kg. Cotton refined oil dropped by Rs 3 for 10 kg.

Groundnut and sunflower oil remained unchanged, tracking steady arrivals at producing centres. The volume remained thin in the absence of fresh demand due to month-end and lower rate offering by resalers.Market sources said that in the absence of fresh local demand, there was a cautious undertone. In palmolein, huge price difference between refineries and resellers kept volume limited. About 100 tonnes of palmolein were traded in resale. Improved arrivals of mustard, soyabean and groundnut at producing centres cooled down the sentiment. . To arrest the lower resale rates, one refinery offered buy back palmolein at Rs 570, sources said.In Mumbai, resellers quoted palmolein at Rs 565-566 for JNPT. Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 579-580. Ruchi was quoted palmolein at Rs 578, soya refined oil at Rs 682 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 688. Allana's palmolein was Rs 579 and Mewah quoting at Rs 578.In Saurashtra – Rajkot, groundnut oil ruled steady at Rs 1,700 for *Telia* tin and Rs 1,100 for loose - 10kg. About 1.75-2 lakh bags of mustard seeds and about 2-2.25 lakh bags of soyabean arrived at mandis in producing centres. In Madhya Pradesh, soyabean prices were Rs 2,440-2,470 a quintal. Malaysia's crude palm oil March futures settled at MYR 3,225 (MYR 3,216), April at MYR 3,255 (MYR 3,241) and May at MYR 3,272 (MYR 3,250) a tonne. On the National Board of Trade – Indore, soya refined oil March futures closed higher at Rs 720.20 (Rs 713.90) and April at Rs 707.50 (Rs 708.50).

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 1,080 (1,080), soya refined oil 680 (682), sunflower exp. ref. 640 (640), sunflower ref. 700 (701), rapeseed ref. oil 810 (815), rapeseed expeller ref. 780 (785), cotton ref. oil 642 (645) and palmolein 572 (574).

Seasonal offtake boosts jeera

Rajkot, Feb. 23:

Spot as well as futures in jeera gained on fresh demand. Traders have started to cover for seasonal demand that will beginnext month.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), jeera March contracts increased by Rs 149.50 to Rs 14,082.50 a quintal while the April contract moved up by Rs 194 to Rs 14,350.

Analysts said fresh buying by traders following pick-up in demand in the spot market mainly helped jeera futures to trade higher. At Unjha, jeera was traded higher by Rs 30-35 to Rs 2,225-3,333 for a *maund* of 20 kg. About 4,500-5,000 bags arrived at Unjha Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee yard. In Rajkot, jeera was traded higher by Rs 30-40 at Rs 2,200-2,800 for 20 kg. About 1,000-1,100 bags of jeera arrived in Rajkot.

Rajkot-based jeera traders said that jeera price went up as traders were covering the demand for the oncoming season. According to the Spices Board of India, exports of jeera during April-December in the current fiscal stood at 31,500 tonnes (21,750 tonnes).

According to spot market sources, production of jeera in 2011-12 is expected to be around 35 lakh bags (29 lakh bags).

Sugar mills under pressure to exhaust sale quota

Mumbai, Feb. 23:

Sugar prices declined by Rs 10-15 a quintal in Naka rates. Spot prices ruled steady on routine local demand on Thursday. Mill tender rates dropped by Rs 5-10 and were expected to drop lower further, as mills will be under pressure to exhaust this month's sale quota. A leading trader said that in the absence of buying by neighbouring States , only State-level markets were the main buyers.

Sugar prices in Uttar Pradesh and in the southern States are ruling at a par with Maharashtra, keeping away buyers from eastern and southern States. Since January, no volume has been witnessed through rail rakes, mounting pressure on producers. Local demand is also very need-based presently due to month-end. With the expectation of higher production this year, the Government may declare higher free sale quota for March compared with this month. Despite lower free sale quota, the market has not witnessed any improvement or big upside this month, but with the increase in temperature, demand for sugar is expected to rise significantly soon, which may improve the sentiment over all.

Opportunity for sugar exports is improving with the constant rise in world sugar prices. Arrivals in Vashi market were 50-52 truckloads and local dispatches were around 48-50 truckloads.

On Wednesday evening, about 22-23 mills offered tenders and sold about 58,000-60,000 bags in the range of Rs 2,730-2,800 (Rs 2,730-2800) for S-grade and Rs 2,840-2,880 (Rs 2,840-2,900) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 2,876-2,932 (Rs 2,876-2,932) and M-grade Rs 2,982- 3,042 (Rs 2,986- 3,042).

Naka **delivery rates**: S-grade Rs 2,830 - 2,870 (Rs 2,840 - 2,880) and M - grade Rs 2,920-3,000 (Rs 2,940-3,020).

Wheat, flour rule steady on firm demand

Karnal, Feb. 23:

After rallying for the last ten days, dara and flour prices ruled unchanged on Thursday, while desi wheat continued to rule flat. Following domestic demand for flour, interest in dara wheat remained firm, said Mr Subhash Chander, a wheat trader. Prices of dara and flour have increased by Rs 45-50 a quintal and Rs 40 a quintal for a 90-kg bag, respectively, over the last ten days.

In the physical market, dara remained unchanged and quoted at Rs 1,240-1,250 a quintal. Around 35 tonnes of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and stocks were directly offloaded at mills.

Mill delivery of dara quoted at Rs 1,240-1,245 a quintal, while delivery at chakki was at Rs 1,250 a quintal. Tohfa, a desi wheat variety, continued to rule flat and quoted at Rs 2,300 a quintal. New crop of desi wheat will hit the market in mid-March and then prices may start to soften, said Mr Chander.

Wheat prices on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange increased by Rs 25 to Rs 1,408.20 a quintal.

With a steady trend in wheat, flour ruled unchanged and sold at Rs 1,230 for a 90-kg bag. Similarly, Chokar continued to rule flat and went for at Rs 660 for a 49-kg bag.

Poor allocation to agriculture sector flayed

Hyderabad, Feb. 23:

Rythu Swarajya Vedika has flayed the Andhra Pradesh Government for allocating meagre allocations for agriculture and allied sectors in the 2012-13 Budget .

“In a huge Budget of Rs 1.40 lakh crore, agriculture has got just Rs 2,946 crore. Even if you add allocations to allied sectors, the figure would touch only the 5,890-crore mark. A good part of it goes as salaries. Farmers will get nothing,” Mr Kiran Kumar Vissa of AID India and Dr. D. Narasimha Reddy (Chetana Society), said.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, they criticised the Government for not giving enough focus to a sector that takes care of the livelihood of 60 per cent of the population. “Farmers and non-governmental organisations have been asking for at least 20 per cent allocation. Farm sector is facing a severe crisis with poor remunerative prices and sharp increase in cost of production. The sector needs urgent attention,” they said.

“Support prices announced by the Centre for various crops are not sufficient enough to meet the costs. They have been asking for increase in MSP. But what should they do if the Union

Government fails to listen to their appeals? It is the responsibility of States to see to it that farmers get remunerative prices," they said.

"Farmers can reduce cost of production if they follow sustainable practices. The Government should provide financial resources to farmers to follow such practices ," Mr K. Ravi of the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, said.

'Aquaculture sector needs a focussed national policy'

Our Bureau

The Hindu Broader vision: Former Director of Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture, Mr E.G. Silas (left), with the MSSRF Chairperson, Prof M.S. Swaminathan, and the ICAR Deputy Director-General, Ms B. Meenakumari, at the silver jubilee celebration of CIBA in Chennai. — K. V. Srinivasan

Chennai, Feb. 23:

The aquaculture sector needs a focussed national policy covering the entire spectrum of coastal aquaculture and mariculture for streamlined growth, according to Dr E.G. Silas, Founder and former Director of the Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA).

Aquaculture has seen a sea change in development over the last two and a half decades with output exceeding that of capture fisheries. However, the policies governing it are yet to match the needs of the time. Separate policies are needed for fisheries and aquaculture for sustained development of the coastal economy. Such a policy can cover the gamut of traditional and riparian rights of those in the coastal areas, ensure environmental safeguards and sustainable development.

A model fisheries and aquaculture Bill had been formulated but the final outcome is yet to be seen, he said.

Also, CIBA comes under the Indian Council for Agricultural Research, but fisheries and aquaculture are different from the land-based agriculture and animal husbandry. The work of CIBA, a research and policy driving institute, should not be restricted to a narrow range of aquaculture species but its scope should be widened. It should be redesignated as a Central Institute of Coastal Aquaculture, said Dr Silas, addressing the inaugural of a seminar on new vistas in Indian aquaculture coinciding with the silver jubilee of CIBA and the inaugural of the Aquatic Health Testing Facility.

Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, supporting the call for a aquaculture policy and redesignating CIBA as a coastal aquaculture institution, said fisheries and aquaculture gain greater significance in the context of the proposed National Food Security law. The Right to Food law provides for quality and quantity of nutrition and seafood are an important protein source. An integrated aquaculture development service is needed to address seed, feed, health and processing of aquaculture output.

Pepper hot on strong demand

Kochi, Feb. 23:

The pepper market continued to head north on strong demand and limited supply while remaining highly volatile following the ‘tug of war' between the bull and bear operators.

As reports of no default spread in the market in the morning, March contracts fell sharply in the opening session and touched the lowest price while April contracts also followed suit but did not touch the lowest price. After immediately recovering and trading at high volatility, March contracts moved up in the forenoon session to hit the highest price of the day and touched Rs 34,050. April contracts stood at Rs 34,450 a quintal and traded with high volatility and fell sharply in the afternoon session. There was high fluctuation as both operators were vying each other.

There was no arrival of spot pepper and, at the same time, there were no sellers. Primary market dealers who had opted for delivery in February liquidated their positions. Some of the dealers and exporters bought it at March delivery prices. Similarly, Karnataka-based dealers, who had also opted for delivery, were seen liquidating. As the pipeline in upcountry markets appears to be empty, there was strong demand from trading and consuming side, market sources told *Business Line*.

Availability at present is on the exchange platform only, they said.

March delivery on the NCDEX increased by Rs 325 to close at Rs 33,700 a quintal. April and May delivery increased by Rs 360 and Rs 495 respectively to close at Rs 34,125 and Rs 34,400 a quintal.

Total turnover fell by 1,791 tonnes to 9,996 tonnes. Total open interest declined by 140 tonnes to close at 6,746 tonnes showing liquidation.

March open interest fell by 287 tonnes to 4,247 tonnes while that of April and May increased by 149 tonnes and 25 tonnes respectively to close at 1,665 tonnes and 569 tonnes.

Spot prices increased by Rs 200 on strong demand to close at Rs 32,600 (ungarbled) and Rs 34,100 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was $7,300 a tonne (c&f) in Europe and $7,600 a tonne (c&f) in the US. Due to the high volatility in the futures market, exporters here said they were not able to take any base price for making any offer to overseas buyers because they do know whether they would be able to cover tomorrow. “It is a case of uncertain price coupled with uncertainty in availability”, they said.

According to an overseas report, Vietnam remained firm and unchanged. Activities in Brazil are yet to restart after the Carnival. However, prices quoted for B1 560 GL at the Dubai Food festival was $6,500 a tonne (fob). Vietnam reportedly quoted FAQ 500 GL and 550 GL at $6,200 and $6,500 a tonne (fob).

Fear of poor crop haunts mustard oil market

Indore, Feb. 23:

Mustard oil ruled firm in mandis across Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat with marginal decline in buying at the higher prices. Mustard oil prices have gone up by Rs 20-40 for 10 kg in the past one week because stockists are busy building inventories amid apprehensions of poor yield this year.

Mustard oil in Indore mandis is ruling at Rs 736 for 10 kg against Rs 697 a week ago. Similarly, mustard oil at Neemuch mandi has gone up by Rs 40 to Rs 730 for 10 kg in the past one week. In Morena, it is ruling at Rs 740 for 10 kg against Rs 705 a week ago. In Kota, it ruled at Rs 735 (Rs 710 a week ago). Similarly in Ganganagar, mustard oil ruled at Rs 745 (Rs 710 a week ago) and Gujarat at Rs 730 (up Rs 40 in a week).

With decline in oilseed production in the country this year — it is expected to be 305 lakh tonnes (324 lakh tonnes) — and further decline in the estimated output of mustard seeds and rapeseed which is estimated to be around 45 lakh tonnes against estimates of 50-55 lakh tonnes made a few days ago,, mustard oil and seeds prices are surging.

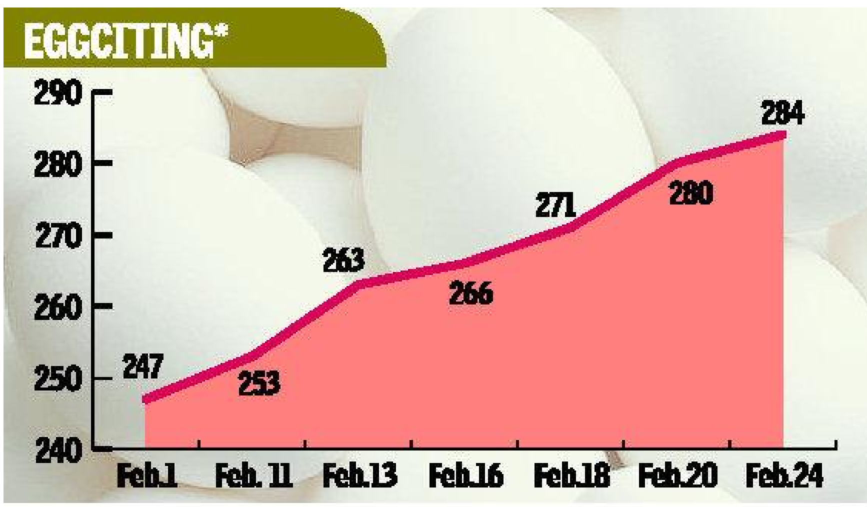
Strong global cues with steep rise in the prices of crude oil, bullish futures and buying support from crushers and stockists are also cushioning the bullish trend in mustard oil and seeds, said Mr Kamlesh Nahta, a Neemuch-based mustard seeds trader.

Decline in output and stockists' buying spree have also pushed up prices in Madhya Pradesh mandis. Supported by bullish future and weak arrivals, mustard seeds at Neemuch mandi went up to Rs 3,300 a quintal in the evening (up Rs 50), while at Mandsaur mandi, it gained the same amount to touch Rs 3,200 a quintal.

Last year, prices in State mandis ruled between Rs 2,000- 2,600 a quintal, while in the current year, mustard seeds prices have already touched a new high. Arrival of mustard seeds in Neemuch was recorded at 4,000 bags, while it was 8,000 bags at Mandsaur mandi.

Poultry industry set to fly on export wings

Gayathri G



* - Prices in Rs/100 eggs at Namakkal Source: NECC

Chennai, Feb. 23:

The poultry industry can look forward to better times now with exports looking up and appreciation in the farm-gate price of egg. The industry that had a roller-coaster ride last year is set to reap fortunes this year.

Mr P Selvaraj, Chairman, National Egg Coordination Committee (Namakkal zone), told *Business Line*, “Exports have started looking up. We are now shipping considerable containers of eggs to Afghanistan,” although he declined to specify the quantity. On the domestic front too, egg prices are on the rise owing to a cut in production, a usual phenomenon during summer.

Prices that touched a record Rs 3.20 a piece in December 26 last year (and maintained till January 7) were on the downside, but not for too long. Egg prices perked up again towards

January-end and have seen a constant rise and are slowly inching up towards the Rs 3- mark. On February 1, egg prices were ruling at Rs 2.47 a piece and yesterday it was Rs 2.80. The NECC has decided to hike the price by another 4 paise to Rs 2.84.

Mr Selvaraj attributed the price rise to good domestic offtake coupled with a cut in output. “Now that the austere seasons are over, the demand for poultry products has risen. Average daily production of eggs fell by 15 lakh a day. Namakkal produced around 3.07 crore eggs in January this year.”

The cold wave in North India was the main reason for prices to touch a record during the fag end of last year. The seasonal market attracted an average 25-35 lakh eggs a day of Namakkal's average daily production.

Meanwhile, price of layer birds is also witnessing a slow and steady rise with the NECC increasing the rate by Rs 2/kg to Rs 35 while the Broiler Coordination Committee's rates for cull birds is down by Rs 9 a kg to Rs 46.

5-lakh t sugar exported so far this year

PTI

Out of the first tranche of one million tonne that the Government allowed, physical shipment of 5,00,000 tonnes has taken place as of now.

New Delhi, Feb 23:

India has exported about 5,00,000 tonnes of sugar so far in the current marketing year, which started from October 2011, mainly to Africa, Sri Lanka and Australia, a top industry official said today.

“Out of the first tranche of one million tonne that the Government allowed, physical shipment of 5,00,000 tonnes has taken place as of now,” Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) Director-General, Mr Abinash Verma, told PTI.

The maximum quantity has been exported to Africa, Sri Lanka and Australia, he added.

The Government has permitted two mt sugar exports in two equal tranches to offload it in the global market and ensure timely payments to domestic cane growers.

Mr Verma said exports are viable at present and “we are getting a premium of Rs 3 on one kg of sugar’’.

Sugar production in India, the world’s second biggest producer but the largest consumer, is estimated to outstrip the annual demand of 22 mt this year.

The Government has pegged sugar output at 24.5 mt for 2011-12 marketing year, while the industry body ISMA expects it to be 26 mt.

In 2010-11 marketing year (October-September), the country had exported 2.6 mt.

Green palm oil output likely to surpass 5 mt in 2012

New Delhi, Feb 23:

A likely increase in Chinese demand could push the global production of green palm oil to over five million tonnes this year, according to Swiss-based association RSPO.

“World production of palm oil that is produced in an environment-friendly and socially responsible way is expected to be more than 5,000,000 tonne in 2012,” RSPO Secretary General, Mr Darrel Webber, told PTI.The production is likely to improve as demand from China — the world’s second biggest palm oil importer — for green palm oil is expected to surge, he said, without disclosing the current status of China’s demand for green palm oil.In 2011, five-mt palm oil was produced from one million hectare, certified for adopting sustainable production practices, he added.Currently, green palm oil comprises 11 per cent of the world’s total palm oil output of 49 mt. Much of green palm oil is produced in Malaysia and Indonesia, global leaders in palm oil production.The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is a non-profit association that represents the stakeholders of palm oil industry to develop and implement global standards for sustainable palm oil.

Mr Webber, however, said that in 2011, half of the total green palm oil was sold but he expressed confidence that increasing consumer awareness, especially in India and China, could help boost the environment-friendly palm oil production.India, which imports 6.5 mt of palm oil annually, hardly buys green palm oil, at present. At present, Adani Wilmar, Godrej Industries, Kamani Oil Industries and VVF Ltd are members of RSPO, who have bought virtual certified sustainable palm oil.

RSPO, which has membership of over 700 globally, said stakeholders can either buy sustainable palm oil in physical form or virtual certificates to support the cause to protect the environment and minimise damage that could otherwise be neglected in normal palm oil plantations.

Farmer's Notebook: Paddy crop records a significant yield with organic inputs

M.J. Prabu
February 23, 2012:

Given the multitude of problems in agriculture today, getting a substantial yield and a good market pose serious concerns for a farmer, but Mr. R. Kulandaisamy, organic entrepreneur and owner of Tari Biotech, Thanjavur says, “Increasing yield for any crop is not difficult. My newly developed Organic plus and other natural inputs can easily help a farmer increase the yield without spoiling the environment.”

Not paper findings

“My findings are not mere paper theories but practical experiments. I used my inputs in the fields of Mr. S. Ranganathan, General Secretary, Tamil Nadu Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association and Chairman, Centre for Cauvery Delta Development at Perugavazthan village, Mannargudi. We recorded more than two tonnes of paddy from an acre,” he says.Mr. Ranganathan readily offered 30 acres for this experiment and during the harvest several farmers, district officials, and scientists from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University were invited see the process and results.

Good increase

While the scientists' concern was more on how the yield increased using only organic inputs, the farmers paid attention to the number of gunny bags being filled. In fact after the preliminary introductions and explanations, the eager farmers expressed their astonishment and happiness to learn that the paddy yield recorded a fair increase.

“So far, for the last several years I could harvest 1 to 1.75 tonnes of grains from an acre. But after applying Mr. Kulandaisamy’s inputs I harvested about 2. 43 tonnes from an acre. It is 400 kgs more than the usual yield," says Mr. Ranganathan. In addition he agrees that the cultivation cost also scaled down.

First time

Being a conventional farmer all these years, Mr. Ranganathan's experience in organic agriculture according to him was not noteworthy. He says that "the media's role in highlighting the awareness and importance of going organic urged me to try it."And he adds that "even now I am sceptical as to how the entire country can afford organic inputs, especially with dwindling land and cattle resources."But personally I am convinced and am planning to increase my acreage in the coming years to check whether it is sustainable. I always believe that organic farming is for health, and chemicals for greater production," he says.Many farmers who attended the harvest programme wanted the Government must make such practices popular in other areas of the state also.

Need of the hour

"As a farmer in the delta region growing paddy all my life, this is just what I need. Today for an acre of chemicals I need to spend anything between Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 3,000 as input cost alone. In addition, the labour shortage and low price makes it practically impossible for me to break even. But Mr. Kulandaisamy's input for an acre costs Rs. 800 to Rs. 1,000 and I can hope to save some amount on the input," says Mr. Ganesan, from Tirukatupalli village.According to Mr. Kulandaisamy not only paddy but any crop can be grown well using this organic plus input."If farmers are able to follow my suggestion dedicatedly then I can assure that their yield can be increased. Those interested can visit my farm, factory at Thanjavur to see and get convinced personally," he says.

University support

When contacted, the Vice Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Dr. P. Murugesa Boopathi expressed surprise on the yield increase and promised to help Mr. Kulandaisamy."It is the duty of the University and our scientists to motivate such persons," he says.Readers can contact Mr. S. Ranganathan on phone at: 04367-252170, mobile: 09442281037, and Mr. Kulandaisamy, Web site: www.tarigroup.com, mobiles: 98430-59117 and 98434-39909 to know more.