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Variety marks animal husbandry expo



Amazing fauna: Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan examining a bull that belongs to the Vechur breed being exhibited at 'Jeevadarshan,' organised by the Department of Animal Husbandry. —

Photo: k. Ragesh

An elephant may not be a rare sight to Keralites, but its anatomy definitely is.

A chance to see the backbone, jawbone, thigh bones, and a full set of a jumbo tooth from a close proximity is what is taking people in droves to 'Jeevadarshan,' the Animal Husbandry Department's exhibition which started here on Friday.

An extensive range of farm animals, birds, ornamental fish varieties, a range of agricultural products, food products, and technology-driven farm devices are on show at the four-day. The Emu stall put up by Susi Emu Farm, Palakkad is a crowd-puller. Indigenous cow breeds including Gir, Vechur, and Kasargode Dwarf; Indian goat varieties such as Attappadi Black and Malabar; a variety of ornamental fowl and fish are also drawing visitors.

The Kerala Poultry Development Corporation and the Meet Products of India (MPI) have put up stalls featuring a range of ready-to-use meat products.

The exhibition, inaugurated by Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan, will have seminars and cultural programmes on all days.

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Call to modernise State's agriculture sector

Special Correspondent



REVIVING AGRICULTURE:Kerala State Planning Board member C. P. John addressing a seminar held at Kuzhur in Thrissur on Sunday as part of the launch of the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

Modernisation is the key to reviving the State's agriculture sector, Kerala State Planning Board member C. P. John has said. At a seminar on 'The importance of agricultural policies for women farmers' held at Kuzhur, near here, in connection with the State-level launch of the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), he said that food processing should get sustained attention.

He observed that the State had a long way to go in resolving the problems faced by women farmers.

The State had lost ground in paddy cultivation, he said. "But it will be wrong to say that the entire agricultural sector has been destroyed. Our revenues from agricultural production have gone down, while revenues from other sectors have grown," he added.

Land Revenue Commissioner K. B. Valsala Kumari presided. P.S. Geethakutty, who heads Kerala Agricultural University's Centre for Studies on Gender Concerns in Agriculture, called for a women-oriented agricultural policy.

She recommended development of specific agricultural schemes for women, inclusion of women farmers in mainstream agricultural programmes, better dissemination of information about existing welfare programmes for women; greater financial support through banks and other institutions and free insurance.

Kerala State Women's Commission member T. Devi, Kudumbasree governing body members Bindu Krishna, M. Abdullakutty and Agricultural Officer P. G. Sujith also spoke. Beena Agrawal, director of the New Delhi-based Institute of Economic Growth was the moderator.

The seminar highlighted success stories of farmers. Anil Akkara, chairman of the Thrissur District Panchayat Development Standing Committee, recounted how he transformed a tract of wasteland into paddy and plantain fields, and a duck farm.

Jessy Job, a Kudumbasree member of Nadathara Panchayat, said that farming was becoming a profitable enterprise.

A group of seven members, led by her, grows bitter-gourd in a 13-acre farm and each makes a profit of Rs. 2.5 lakhs every year.

K. N. Anila of Poyya Panchayat said how a group led by her had turned a stretch of land used for clay-mining into a paddy field.

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Agriculture fair highlights modern techniques

An agricultural fair organised at Khamnor panchayat samiti in Rajsamand district of Rajasthan over the week-end highlighted modern techniques for sowing of high-yielding crops and getting remunerative prices for the farm produce with the use of less quantity of water.

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister C. P. Joshi, inaugurating the fair, called upon the farmers to apply modern techniques to their agricultural fields and associate farming with dairy and animal husbandry to generate additional sources of livelihood.

The Agricultural Technology Management Agency and the State Government's Agriculture Department jointly organised the fair for the benefit of the local farmers mostly belonging to the tribal communities.

Mr. Joshi said the farmers should get the soil and water at their fields tested in the State Government's laboratories to get an idea about the land productivity and plan the crop cycles accordingly. Agricultural scientists in the State were rendering efficient services by recommending the use of certified seeds and suitable fertilisers, he noted.

Rajsamand MP Gopal Singh Shekhawat, Minister of State for Labour Mangilal Garasia and Khamnor panchayat samiti Pradha Purushom Mali were among those present. Over 25 stalls put up at the venue exhibited the latest trends in agricultural technology. (EOM)

KOCHI, February 27, 2012

'No NGO pressure for moratorium on Bt Brinjal'

Union Minister for Rural Development Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said no NGO influenced his decision to put a moratorium on Bt Brinjal, a statement that comes against the backdrop of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh raising questions about the role of foreign funded NGOs in blocking use of genetic engineering.

Dr. Singh has said some NGOs based in the United States and Scandinavian countries were not “fully appreciative” of the development challenges that India faced.

“Green Peace, a foreign funded NGO, accused me of propagating the line of Monsanto during a public hearing in Bangalore. So on Bt Brinjal, since I was directly involved, I can confidently say no NGO influenced my views,” Mr.Ramesh, who is on a three-day visit to Kerala, told reporters here.

He said his position on Bt Brinjal was determined by the positions of the State governments, the lack of consensus among the scientific community, the fact that the tests were not completed and that there was no independent professional mechanism to instil confidence among the people. “I did not ban Bt Brinjal. I decided to put a moratorium. Let's fulfil all these four conditions and then revisit the whole issue,” he said.

His remarks came in response to a question on allegations that some NGOs based in Scandinavian countries funded the protests against Bt Brinjal. Mr. Ramesh said as Environment Minister he had enforced the moratorium on Bt Brinjal on February 9, 2010 after going through a seven-month process of public consultation. He said consultations were held with scientists, NGOs, civil society organisations and farmer organisations, in which around 8,000 people participated.

'No scientific consensus'

"I wrote to all Chief Ministers, I wrote to 50 scientists across the world. Firstly, States opposed Bt Brinjal. Secondly, there was no scientific consensus on the need for Bt Brinjal and in fact Father of Green Revolution M.S. Swaminathan himself had raised questions on where we were going," he said.

MADURAI, February 27, 2012

Study delves deep into roots of 'Madurai malli' growers' problems



Global brand: The famous 'Madurai Malli' jasmine variety on sale at the Mattuthavani flower market in Madurai.— Photo: R. Ashok

An extensive study done on the potential for 'Madurai malli' in domestic and international markets has revealed the constraints of jasmine growers after going deep into the roots of problems in demand-supply management.

As the famous and fragrant 'Madurai malli' is expected to get Geographical Indication tag any time soon after the patent application is processed, a comprehensive analysis has been done on why Madurai could not make an impact yet in the global and domestic jasmine market despite having good demand for its unique variety of 'malli.'

The study was carried out in Madurai district and a comprehensive strategic plan was prepared by the Business Planning and Development Unit of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore and the Agri Business Incubator of International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad.

Five blocks in Madurai and Dindigul districts were chosen for the study. In Madurai district, four major jasmine growing blocks —Tirupparankundram, Tirumangalam, Usilampatti and Chellampatti —were covered while Nilakottai block was studied in Dindigul district.

S.M. Karuppan Chetty, Chief Operating Officer, ICRISAT, has presented the report to Madurai District Collector U. Sagayam and others at the Madurai Jasmine Stakeholders' Meeting held at Agricultural College and Research Institute here on Saturday. "This study will aid the government authorities in framing a policy and scheme to promote entrepreneurs in jasmine industry. Jasmine value chain was analysed and missing links have been spotted," the survey report said.

As per 2009-10 figures, the total area under jasmine production is 1,220 hectares with production of 9,577 tonnes. This figure is expected to go up to 1,468 hectares and 11,656 tonnes respectively by 2014-15. Jasmine prices reach its maximum during December and at minimum price in June. Jasmine growers have been facing labour shortage. Long distance to flower market is a major constraint and jasmine growing areas are located far away from the market. In Madurai district, flower markets are located at Mattuthavani, Villapuram and Usilampatti. Tirupparankundram and Chellampatti, which are major jasmine growing areas, are at a distance from these markets. The report suggested that the wide gap between demand and supply of fresh flowers has to go.

Major sources of demand are the large consumer markets such as Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi and Mumbai. But, jasmine is grown only by 4,000 farmers over 1,250 hectares in Madurai district. It has recommended setting up of 'Madurai Malli Incubator' and 'Madurai Malli Development Cell.' More stress was also given to creating cold storage facilities. P. Murugesu Boopathy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, has given assurance that all technical expertise will be given by the varsity to make 'Madurai Malli' a global brand and make its fragrance felt in many countries.

Those interested to know more about the strategic plan report can get in touch with Mr. Karuppan Chetty on his e-mail: karuppanchetty@cgiar.org.

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'Efforts on to increase copra procurement price'

The State Government will initiate measures to have the copra procurement price increased, said Agriculture Minister S. Damodaran said at a function organised in Pollachi on Saturday to inaugurate copra procurement.

The Government had received feedback from farmers that the support price of Rs. 51 a kg, which the Central Government had announced, was uneconomical. The Government would take up the issue, he said. Last year the Government's procurement price was Rs. 41.25 a kg.

Mr. Damodaran said that the State Government had opened seven procurement centres in Pollachi, Kinathukadavu, Anaimalai, Thimmankuthu, Negamam, Chengeri and Telugupalayam. It was ready to open more centres, if necessary.

The Government had also opened two copra drying yards at Vadakipalayam and the Pollachi Agriculture Co-operative Marketing Society premises.

The Centres had been opened on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Agriculture Marketing Federation. The Government charged 60 paise a coconut for drying.

Urging the farmers to make use of the facility, he said that the Government was ready to open more drying yards, if necessary.

He told the farmers that the procurement would commence as per Government orders. The officers at the procurement centres would give preference for farmers with photo identity cards. He asked the farmers' to renew their identity cards. The Agriculture Department was in the process of establishing a coconut sapling farm on 100 acres. It also planned to launch an initiative to control pest in coconut trees.

K. Sugumar, MP, M.K. Muthukaruppanasamy, MLA, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies K.M. Vellingiri and other officials participated in the function.

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Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 81.59 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 639 cusecs and the discharge 1,832 cusecs.

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Workshop on jackfruit products

A two-day workshop on "Value addition for jackfruit products" will be held at Yoga Mandir from Tuesday under the auspices of Gramabyudaya unit of Swarnavalli Mahasamstana, NABARD,

Karwar, and Kadamba Marketing Society, Sirsi. Sonda Swarnavalli Gangadharendra Saraswati Swamiji will inaugurate the programme at 10.30 a.m. KDCC Bank Director Bhaskar Hegde, S.V. Rangarao of NABARD, Karwar, Assistant Director of Horticulture H.R. Naik, and Kadamba Marketing Society manager Vishweshwar Bhat will be the chief guests.

KOCHI, February 27, 2012

Pepper prices on a boil following supply squeeze

Farmers unlikely to benefit as most have sold off their stock

Pepper market is on a boil following a supply squeeze set off by, as per the reports of the market sources here, a substantial fall in pepper production in the country.

But the rising price is not going to help the farmers in any way as most of them have sold off their stocks even before the price appeared to head for the (December 17, 2010) record high of Rs.360 a kg when trading closed on Saturday. Rise in price from now on would help only those who were holding stocks and would offload them for a kill, industry sources said. Reports indicated that arrivals had thinned substantially in Wayanad and in the High Ranges of Kerala.

Export prospects grim

Pepper price has been rising steadily over the last fortnight at the Kochi terminal market with India Pepper and Spices Trade Association (IPSTA) data showing that spot pepper closed at Rs.35,900 a quintal on Saturday. Pepper gained Rs.60 a kg over the last eight days, said an exporter here. He painted a grim picture for pepper export business for now.

Indian pepper production was estimated to be around 50,000 tonnes. Farmers had, however, said production was much lower. Some traders even said that production would have been down by about 40 per cent. The situation is equally dismal in Karnataka. Industry sources have expressed doubts whether Indian production will be able to meet even the domestic demand.

Global scene

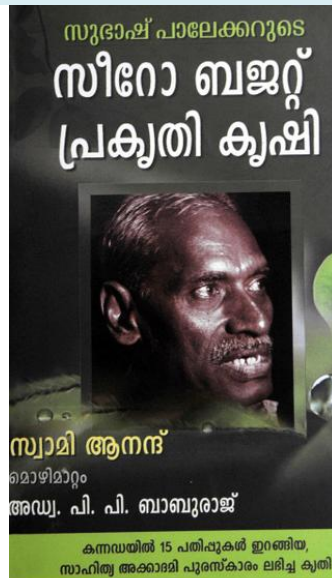
The Brazil crop will arrive only by late June and until then the global market is likely to be marked by shortage, with buyers turning mostly to India for supplies. But they are likely to be turned off by the current price of US\$7,850 a tonne for Indian pepper while Vietnam and Indonesian pepper prices are lower by US\$750 and 800 a tonne. Monday will provide an

indication of how the prices will behave considering the price advantage provided by these two countries. Estimates for global pepper production during 2012 is over 2.50 lakh tonnes, according to figures gleaned from the recently concluded World Spices Congress 2012. India is expected to produce 45,00 tonnes of pepper during 2012. pices Board figures show that the international price of pepper was US\$7.28 a kg in the week ending February 17, 2012, up from the previous week's level of US\$7.06 a kg. This is a substantial increase from the US\$5.51 a kg in the second week of February, 2010. India's export of pepper between April and December 2011 stood at nearly 20,000 tonnes valued over Rs.600 crore compared to the 13,350 tonnes valued nearly Rs.260 crore during the April-December period in 2010. The per unit realisation improved substantially from Rs.193.34 a kg during the 2010 period to Rs.313.49 a kg during the 2011 period.

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- *Pepper arrival thinned in Wayanad, high ranges*
 - *Spot pepper at Rs.35,900 a quintal on Saturday*
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KOCHI, February 27, 2012

A campaigner for natural farming



The cover of the book by Subhash Palekar. Subhash Palekar, author of zero-budget natural farming, is a messiah for thousands of bankrupt farmers in Karnataka.

When penury drove scores of farmers to take the extreme step, Mr. Palekar, a frail but energetic old man from Maharashtra came in their midst with the mantra of *nisarga krishi* (natural farming) that eventually got them out of the woods.

The simple organic farming methods caught the fancy of R. Swami Anand, a journalist-turned-farming activist, who trailed the 'farming wizard' and ended up penning a handbook in Kannada on Mr. Palekar's solutions for no-cost farming.

First published in 2005, the book soon attained canonical status as lakhs of debt-ridden farmers of Karnataka began sacredly embracing its farming recipes.

Given award

The Karnataka Sahitya Academy recognised it with an award.

Now in its 15th edition, the book has sold over 75,000 copies till date.

Drawing upon tradition

On Friday, a Malayalam translation of the book was released at a function here by the guru of alternative schooling, Sarang Gopalakrishnan by handing over a copy to artist T. Kaladharan.

Simple solutions

"Amazingly simple, it encapsulates Palekar's philosophy that draws heavily upon millennia-old traditional farming practices in India. Tending a cow helps you have the fertiliser to farm over several acres of land, says Palekar, and it is wonderfully true. The book also offers brilliant solutions for farming on dry land. As the phantom of debt returns to haunt the farmers of Kerala, the book would be of immense use to them," says P.P. Baburaj, a Mysore-based lawyer, who translated the book into Malayalam way back in 2007 and waited for almost five years to bring it out as a volume.

Doom of agriculture

In his brief foreword to the book, writer K.N. Shaji, a self-confessed farming enthusiast without a piece of agrarian land in his possession, exposes the vices of 'modern agricultural practices'

based on extensive, rather indiscreet use of chemical fertilisers which has spelled the doom of agriculture across the country.

Return to nature

The book tells us things that we tend to overlook for being extremely familiar and simple.

Return to nature, it quotes Mr. Palekar as saying. The nature has everything that everybody needs. It advises farmers to go natural rather than force nature to follow their diktats in vain.

The volume, published by the Bangalore-based Agni Prakashana, is no doubt the organic agriculturists' scripture.

Mr. Palekar's mantra of natural farming came to the aid of scores of bankrupt farmers in Karnataka.

Published: February 25, 2012 23:13 IST | Updated: February 25, 2012 23:14 IST

Kerala's plucky women

M. J. Prabhu



The Hindu SCALING NEW HEIGHTS: Reena plans to form a women's self-help group to make coconut-based, value-added products such as tender coconut lassi. Photo: Special Arrangement

With traditional coconut-pluckers vanishing, women are trained in tree climbing

Women of Kerala are scaling new heights. Meet Reena, who has been trained to pluck coconuts.

Those crossing the Pallikkara railway gate in Kasaragod cannot but notice this entrepreneur, surrounded by heaps of tender nuts, most of which she herself plucks. She sells about 200 nuts daily and earns around Rs. 1,000.

“After attending the coconut-climbing programme, I'm able to pluck nuts myself and save on the harvesting cost of Rs.3 apiece,” the mother of two, who has studied up to Class X, says.

She plans to form a women's self-help group to make coconut-based, value-added products such as tender coconut lassi.

'Secure & independent'

“Apart from making me financially secure and independent, this helps me gain self-confidence and self-esteem,” she says. Her average work-day lasts 12 hours. Whenever she gets the opportunity, she works as a bus driver as well. Indeed, with traditional coconut-pluckers turning a vanishing tribe in the State, getting the nut down from atop had in recent years turned out to be a headache. There have been efforts by individual inventors, aided by government agencies, to design and commercialise mechanical climbers that would enable virtually anyone to go up the trunk. And some models have indeed proved themselves up to the task. The tougher part was to get people interested in acquiring the skill. The Coconut Development Board, working through Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) of the Kerala Agricultural University and Krishi Bhavans, recently came up with a scheme to train groups of people, including women, to use the devices to climb and pluck the nuts.

Women are better

And, belying expectations, women have proved to be quite good at it. In recent months, a large number of women, primarily in the northern parts of the State, have been trained in going up the tree using the mechanised climbing devices.

Women who complete the programme have also been trained and encouraged to take up coconut-related small businesses that they can run on their own. Several of them have started tender coconut parlours – confident and competent enough to harvest the nuts themselves and sell them from roadside units, often with some value-addition.

The KVK in Kasaragod, attached to the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), has organised nine training programmes in which 180 rural youth have participated. The fifth batch of the programme gained media attention as it was an all-woman batch.

The KVK training programme in “mechanical palm climbing and plant protection,” is meant to develop a professional group of youths as “Friends of the Coconut Palm.” They would learn to harvest coconuts, manage the trees and undertake crop protection.

Many women who have mastered climbing felt the task was daunting initially but soon turned out to be unbelievably effortless.

The highlight of the training programmes is exposure to prepare value-added products from the coconut.

CPCRI Director George V. Thomas lauded the efforts of the ‘Friends of Coconut Palm’ in making coconut farming women-friendly.

Reena readily provided her telephone number for anyone who may want to contact her: 097443 58365.

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hindustantimes

Mon, 27 Feb 2012

weather

Delhi - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, Feb 27

Max Min

23.8° | 9.7°

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy






Tuesday, Feb 28

Max Min

25° | 9°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs Sunrise: 7:14
Humidity: 71% Sunset: 17:48
Wind: Normal Barometer: 1011

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Feb 29	Thursday Mar 1	Friday Mar 2	Saturday Mar 3	Sunday Mar 4
				
27° 9°	26° 10°	27° 10°	29° 11°	27° 12°
Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

27 FEB, 2012, 03.37AM IST, ET BUREAU

Poll code comes in way of India's first dedicated horticulture train

PUNE: This summer, fruits and vegetables will miss journey by India's first dedicated and air conditioned horticulture train due to state elections.

After its maiden trail carrying bananas from Bhusaval to the Azadpur mundi, the train is waiting for a trial run of its return journey carrying potatoes from Agra to Vashi mundi due the election code of conduct in Uttar Pradesh.

The Rs 16-crore fully air-conditioned and mechanised horticulture train is a joint initiative of the National Horticulture Board and ConCor.

"During the first trial run, the horticulture train carried bananas from Bhusaval to the Azadpur mundi in 26 hours. But the train could not take the return journey with potatoes from Agra to Vashi, Nashik and then Bhusaval, completing the cycle due to the election code of conduct. We will hold a meeting with potato growers after the voting gets over," said NHB managing director

Bijay Kumar.

The NHB will have to place orders for spare rakes for running the train on a regular basis. "Only after farmers are satisfied, we can place orders for the additional rakes," said Kumar. The rakes may take about two months to come. This means that the horticulture train will not be useful for fruit and vegetable growers for most of the summer months.

Banana growers have other issues with the train. "The main banana growing region is Raver, Savda. We have to transport bananas for 45 km to load them on the train at Bhusaval. Farmers are not willing bear this additional transportation cost," said All India Banana Growers Association president Bhagvat Patil.

27 FEB, 2012, 03.31AM IST, JAYASHREE BHOSALE,ET BUREAU

Cost & energy audits now mandatory for Maharashtra sugar co-operatives

PUNE: The Maharashtra government has made it mandatory for the co-operative sugar industry to perform cost and energy audits. This, if implemented seriously, is expected to save crores of rupees of the co-operatives. Maharashtra is the country's top sugar producer, having a turnover of about Rs 25,000 crore. The industry is concentrated in the co-operative sector which is controlled by political leaders. High level of inefficiency is one of its features and the industry often gets financial support from the state and Nabard.

"We decided to make it mandatory for the sugar mills to do the cost audit because it is mandatory for the private sugar mills," Sugar Commissioner Vijay Singhal said.

Business Standard

Monday, Feb 27, 2012

China cotton imports down 1 mn bales

Reuters / Washington February 26, 2012, 0:08 IST

China will cut its cotton imports one million bales to 16 million bales of cotton in 2012-13 from

the previous year, the US Agriculture Department (USDA) said yesterday, as world cotton consumption rises for the first time in three years.

At its annual Outlook Forum, USDA said China's domestic support price, which is higher than projected world prices, "is likely to constrain consumption growth and support demand for imported raw cotton and yarn, as well as synthetic fibers."

USDA estimated China would grow 30.5 million bales of cotton in 2012, import 16 million bales, use 45 million bales and have ending stocks of 19.5 million bales. By comparison, the 2011-12 outlook is a crop of 33.5 million bales, imports of 17 million, use of 44 million bales and end stocks of 18.05 million bales.

"Declining world cotton prices will enable cotton to regain competitive advantage with respect to other fibers in 2012-13," said USDA. "A significant portion of the decline in cotton consumption in recent years has been a shift to competing fibers, mainly polyester."

Cotton use worldwide was forecast for 114.5 million bales, up 4 per cent from this year and the first increase in three years. The world crop was estimated at 118.5 million bales, down 4 per cent. End stocks would climb to 64.8 million bales in 2012-13, up 7 per cent, said USDA.

Smaller plantings are anticipated in China, India, Pakistan, Brazil, central Asia and Australia, which account for 70 per cent of global output. India was forecast to grow 26.5 million bales in 2012-13, down 2 per cent from the previous year, Pakistan 10 million bales, down 4 per cent, Brazil 8.5 million bales, down 6 per cent and Australia 4.7 million bales, down 6 per cent.

Asia grain-mills slow purchases, Malaysia open for April cargoes

Reuters / Singapore February 26, 2012, 0:04 IST

Malaysia has yet to cover 80,000 tonnes of corn for April shipment, while Vietnam is open for 100,000 tonnes of soymeal as most buyers postponed purchases this week, expecting prices to ease.

The market is awaiting the result of a South Korean tender to purchase 55,000 tonnes of corn

for April and May shipment, which is expected later yesterday.

Argentine corn is being offered around \$323 a tonne, including cost and freight (C&F), up from \$315 quoted last week with a jump of 1.2 per cent in benchmark US corn futures in three days.

Indian corn was offered at \$305 a tonne, C&F, up from \$290 a tonne last week. Ukraine corn is being quoted around \$310 to \$315 a tonne. But traders said Asian buyers were expecting prices to soften on expectations of ample supplies.

“The outlook on grains is bearish, as buyers are looking at higher supplies in the coming months,” said one trading manager with a global trading company in Singapore. “They will try to put off buying plans until the last moment.”

Global crop prices will retreat sharply this year, as farmers around the world expand production to bring stability back to commodity markets and ease fears of food inflation, according to the US government.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecast US wheat plantings at 58 million acres, up 3.6 million from 2011. The USDA pegged world wheat stocks at a record 213.1 million tonnes. The USDA’s outlook conference left unchanged from its baseline projections the forecast for 94.0 million acres of corn this year in the United States, the most since 1944.

Larger volumes of corn and wheat are also expected to come to international markets from the Black Sea region’s leading grain producers, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, posing a bigger challenge to US exporters and threatening to drag down global prices. The International Grains Council raised its global wheat production forecast by five million tonnes to a record 695 million and expects world stocks to rise to 211 million tonnes, eclipsing the previous record in 1999-2000. As a result of higher wheat supplies, prices of Australian feed wheat fell this week with traders quoting \$289 a tonne, C&F, to Southeast Asia, down from \$296 traded last week. The forecast on soybean prices is bullish, with South American drought curbing supplies. US soybean futures rose to a five-month high this week, helped by a weaker dollar, good export demand and concerns about crop production in Argentina and Brazil.

THE HINDU Business Line

Chana futures may rally further

Rajalakshmi Sivam

February 26, 2012:

Chana futures have been witnessing strong rally in the last two weeks. From a low of Rs 3,076 a quintal on January 18, they have moved by 19 per cent to Rs 3,735 now. Is this just speculation or is spot demand supporting prices? Chana, the main rabi pulse crop, is in short supply even as demand is robust. The advance estimate from the Government on pulses for this season ending June has pegged the production lower than expected. Technical charts too indicate a positive view.

Chana in 2011

Last year was a spectacular one for those who bet on chana in the futures market. The most traded contract in chana futures saw a 31 per cent rally to Rs 3,354/quintal by the year-end.

Despite it being a year of record production, the Government had to import more pulses to feed the market. With rupee depreciating against most global currencies (from 44.7/dollar to 53.06), the landed price of imported chana was higher which in turn pushed up domestic prices. A frenzied momentum set-in in the futures contract of chana as demand started rising further during Navratri and Diwali festivals. Volumes on the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) increased from an average of 3.7 lakh contracts a month in 2010 to 6.4 lakh contracts in 2011.

2012: Short term

Overall pulses output is expected to be lower in the current season. The second advance estimate of crop production from the Ministry of Agriculture pegs the estimated production at 17.4 million tonnes (mt), a four per cent drop from 2010-11.

Chana output may be affected by adverse weather conditions in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The Government's estimates chana output at 7.66 mt, a 10 per cent drop from 8.22 mt last year.

Poor supply in the domestic markets will mean higher imports. During April-December, 2.4 mt of pulses had been imported. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has estimated the current year (2011-12) import to be around 2.75-2.8 mt.

With rupee ruling higher against the dollar compared with last year (49.17 vs 45), imported chana will be costlier against last year levels. This will lend further support to prices in local *mandis*.

When the new chana crop arrives in the market in March, there may be a brief pause in the rally. But as the year's supply is expected to be lower overall, the price correction will not be much and the uptrend can resume.

Technical outlook

The charts of NCDEX chana contract show that it is consolidating in the range Rs 3,000-3,700 since August. It can continue to move within this band for some more months. But a break above the Rs 3,700-mark can make it move up fast.

Investors can buy if it moves down to the support around Rs 3,000 and easily find an exit at around Rs 3,700-3,800. However, the trend is upwards with it forming higher bottoms every time since 2011.

Pepper stays hot on supply-demand mismatch

Kochi, Feb. 26:

The pepper market was so hot last week that the prices of active contracts shot up by over Rs 5,000 a quintal during the week.

Good domestic demand amid tight supply scenario pushed the market up to such higher levels that the sellers were said to have demanded Rs 360 a kg for farm grade pepper. At the same time 'tug of war' between both the bull and bear operators also kept the market highly volatile.

There were no sellers even after the harvesting has reached its peak during the current season.

But as against the usual arrival of 300 to 400 tonnes a day at this time of the season the actual quantity of fresh pepper landing at the terminal and primary markets are reportedly at around 100 tonnes.

Meanwhile, the upcountry dealers based at major trading centres have started buying to replenish their stocks which they liquidated in recent months.

They were hoping that the prices would decline once the new crop hits the markets. But, contrary to their expectations, the arrivals did not pick up giving the impression either of a sharp fall in the output or of what ever crop available is being held back by the growers and primary market dealers who can afford to keep for long.

The domestic market has become so strong that the stake holders are seems to be not keen to sell overseas, market sources told *Business Line*.

Tamil Nadu-based dealers were buying directly from the primary markets at terminal market price and on cash and carry basis.

Contrary to the expectations of both domestic and overseas buyers supply continued to remain squeezed. New crop arrivals in India have so far been negligible despite the harvesting being in the peak time of the season in the main growing area, Kerala.

Similarly, harvesting in Vietnam has also reportedly began in the second week of Feb and yet there were not much arrivals.

Mar, Apr and May contracts on the NCDEX soared by Rs 5,150, Rs5,085 and Rs 4,950 respectively to close at Rs 36,230, Rs 36,550 and Rs 36,700 a quintal.

Total turn over increased by 34,777 tonnes to 50,578 tonnes. Total open interest increased by 1,594 tonnes to close at 7,579 tonnes during the week.

Spot prices on strong demand amid limited supply also shot up by Rs 3,600 during the week to close at Rs 34,400 (Ungarbled) and Rs 35,900 (MG 1) a quintal.

If the current trend continued it may cross the previous highest level of Rs 36,000 a quintal in the coming days.

Indian parity has reached \$7,500 a tonne (c&f) for the Europe and \$7,800 a tonne (c&f) for the US.

Even though all other origins were reportedly firm Indian parity turned out to be much above others, they said.

The other origins were firmer last week. Vietnam prices at the weekend were reportedly at FAQ 500 GL at \$6,300 a tonne (fob) and FAQ 550 GL at \$6,500-6,600 a tonne (fob). Vietnam Asta 570 GL was quoted at \$7,080 a tonne (fob) NETT.

Europe worried over spread of Bt cotton in India

M. R. Subramani

Recently in Nuremberg



THE HINDU Home varieties wilt: A file photo of Mahyco's Bt. cotton raised by South India Cotton Association at a private farm in Coimbatore. Due to the shift to Bt cotton, India has begun to lose some great traditional varieties such as DCH-32.

February 26, 2012:

India has made rapid strides in cotton production ever since adopting the genetically modified technology 10 years ago. It has also helped the country emerge as a key supplier of the natural fibre to the global market, especially China.

However, the large-scale adoption of genetically modified technology is causing concern to other nations, especially in Europe. This, in turn, could begin to hurt exports of other agricultural products exports, especially ones that are organic and non-genetically modified.

According to available statistics, India exported about 300 organic products fetching Rs 1,960 crore in 2011. In contrast, it shipped out 66 lakh bales (170 kg each) of cotton earning over Rs 15,500 crore. This year, it is projected to export 80 lakh bales and it could end up earning foreign exchange of about Rs 14,000 crore.

Of the nearly 12 million hectares brought under cotton this year, nearly 95 per cent grew Bt cotton.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda) has fixed a target of touching Rs 5,000 crore in organic products exports by 2015.

“We in Europe, particularly Germany, are worried over the spread of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in India. Your Government has to deal with that immediately,” said Mr Ulrich Walter of Ulrich Walter GmbH, Germany. Mr Walter's company is one of the largest importers of organic Darjeeling tea. It is also importing coffee and spices from Kerala, mainly Peeramedu, and holy basil (tulsi) from Uttar Pradesh.

He made these remarks at a session on tea at BioFach 2012 that was held here last week.

'cannot coexist'

“Europeans want to consume products with a clear conscience. Therefore, there is increasing awareness on organic and fair-price products,” said Mr Walter.

He told *Business Line* later that genetically modified and conventionally produced crops cannot coexist. “They may be kept at a distance but still there could be pollution of conventional and organic crop through wind and pollen,” he said, adding that people in Germany were particularly concerned over the strides made by India in Bt cotton.

According to Apeda, 4.84 million hectares are under organic farming in India and 75 per cent of this is grown in the wild. Again, only 16 per cent of organic products produced in the country is exported.

Among products treated as non-GMOs, soyameal accounts for a major share in exports. Indian organic products are primarily exported by Europe, the US, Canada and Japan. In Europe, Germany and Switzerland are the main buyers.

Mr Gerald A. Herrmann of Organic Services Germany GmbH said that organic products' exports from India were increasing by 33 per cent every year and most products were being marketed as being free from pesticides.

“However, at the recent World Spice Congress at Pune in India one of the speakers pointed out that India topped in cases of pesticide residues being higher than permitted limits,” he said.

Mr Herman Lanting, an agronomist, said that it was increasingly becoming difficult to find non-Bt cotton in India. "India has begun to lose some great traditional varieties such as DCH-32," he said.

According to Ms Simone Seisl of Remei AG, Switzerland, her firm that sources organic cotton for retailing is finding it difficult as farmers were switching over to Bt varieties. "Though some want to get back, it is a big task to get them going again, particularly due to the switch over," she said.

However, Mr Mukesh Gupta of Morarka Organics Foods said that Bt cotton is not posing danger since it was grown in irrigated areas. "Organic products are mainly grown in rain-fed areas and there need not be any fear of GMOs getting mixed," he told an interactive session at BioFach.

"Every buyer, particularly in Europe, wants a face to any product that he or she buys. They are just not satisfied with buying organic products. What more is their question. In these circumstances, GMOs and mere non-GMO products could put Indian exports under pressure," said a global consultant who did not wish to be identified.

CAG picks holes in Haryana's livestock breeding policy

Press Trust of India

Chandigarh, Feb. 26:

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has found holes in implementation of Haryana's ambitious livestock breeding policy for genetic upgradation of indigenous cattle.

The CAG has also found that the State is missing target of setting up Hi-Tech Commercial Dairies.

Haryana, famous for its high-yielding Murrah breed of buffaloes, launched a Livestock Breeding Policy for cattle and buffaloes in January 2010, envisaging genetic upgradation of cattle and buffaloes, boosting milk output, avoiding indiscriminate breeding of poor germplasm and bringing entire livestock under organised breeding through artificial insemination (AI) or natural insemination (NI).

The government auditor while assessing the performance of Haryana Animal Husbandry and Dairying Department discovered that the data regarding NI was not being maintained and department did not supervise NI as per the requirement of State Livestock Breeding Policy.

The department admitted that no record of NI was being maintained and NI was carried out through stray bulls or by bulls supplied by Gram Panchayats.

The Livestock Policy also envisaged that indigenous and exotic breed levels should be maintained at equal level, but CAG found that data regarding exotic breeds of cattle and buffaloes were not collected during livestock census in 2007.

In the absence of data, it could not be ensured whether the level of exotic breed up to the level of 50 per cent could be maintained, report said.

CAG observed that the data of exotic breed could have been collected with the help of owners of animals while conducting livestock census to find out level of exotic breeds.

CAG also discovered that against the target of providing doorstep service for 10.89 lakh AI, service was given for only 0.65 lakh AI during 2008-11 which was only 6 per cent of the target, raising the possibility of misappropriation of funds (Rs 50 per AI) by erring officials.

TAFE holds Farmer's Day in AP

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, Feb. 26:

Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd (TAFE), India's second-largest tractor maker, organised a Farmer's Day in Ongole in Andhra Pradesh, aimed at bringing the farming community and agricultural experts for interaction on a common platform.

The thrust of the interaction was on farming and pest management practices, apart from farm mechanisation for improving pulses, cotton and rice yields.

Over 300 farmers from Ongole and neighbouring areas participated in the sessions, which included demonstrations and display of the latest techniques and scientific practices in farming and related areas like seed-bed preparation, introduction of hybrid varieties of seeds, irrigation methods, crop protection, harvesting and storage. Officials from financial institutions and government representatives also shared information on agricultural loans, subsidies and policies available for farmers.

Dr S.S. Nagarajan, Vice-President, Agri Research, TAFE, wanted better interaction between farmers and research institutions spread out across the country.