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'If farmers are the backbone of the economy, then it is fractured'

M. J. Prabu



R. Subbaian. Photo: M.J. Prabu

“All human toil is for the mouth, yet the appetite is not satisfied” says the Bible.

“This is true in agriculture too. Our politicians shout, preach from platforms that farmers are the backbone of the country's economy, but in reality, the backbone lies fractured and our politicians are just not bothered. Their attitude is to throw the produce from the broken bone in the garbage dump and import from the U.S. or Australia,” says Mr. R. Subbaian, of Kanakkan Thottam in Coimbatore district.

Polluted

Both the soil and water in Mr. Subbaian's field became polluted due to the chemical waste seepage from nearby dyeing factories into the Noyyal river which runs across his village.

Several farmers in the area started selling their lands and moved into the cities as the Government failed to check the pollution or clean up the river.

“Petitions, demonstrations, nothing seemed to work and the dyeing factories continue their pollution unabated,” says the farmer.

But unlike others, Mr. Subbaian did not sell his lands. “The fields are my extended family and the birds and insects here are my relations, I wanted to stay on and do something.

“During the course of my search for some information on what crops can be grown in these soils I came to know that Alfalfa (called Kudhirai masal in Tamil) grows well and I decided to cultivate it,” he says. The farmer also took to multiple cropping to increase his income.

“Multiple cropping system is ideal for farmers as it is an effective method of avoiding risk of loss for the farmers. In case one crop fails, the farmers need not worry but can easily tide over the financial crunch through income from the other crops,” explains Mr. Subbaian.

“In fact, much of the crop loss and farmers suicides happen only in areas where there is monocropping. Can you ever show me an instance of failure in multi-cropping?” he asks.

Mainly organic

The crops are mainly grown organically as chemical farming proved to be a failure for him.

“Though I did chemical based agriculture nearly a decade back, all that it left was debts, which accumulated to nearly Rs. 30 lakh.

One thing I realised in all my life as a farmer is that no government is really interested in helping farmers. The centre is willing to import anything from the West and these countries are ready to dump us with their produce. Our Ministers are only too willing to accept it with open hands at the cost of destroying the lives of crores of farmers' livelihoods,” he says.

Becoming a debtor

“How did farmers become debtors and suffer this wretched condition? Is it their own doing? Don't people in other professions take loans and default? But it is only when a farmer fails to make one or two payments that it becomes news,” he fumes.

He adds, “the bank goes in search of him as though he is a terrorist. What happened to the people who swindled crores? That money could have been used to improve agriculture and production for many years. Is anybody bothering about this?”

The much trumpeted green revolution in reality turned out to be a farce and was not able to either sustain production or improve farmers' lives, according to him.

“What is the use of only fields turning green? The lives of farmers must also turn green with money. Only then can we accept it as a revolution,” says his son Kulandaivel. “A sugarcane farmer goes through much hardship and it is the sugarcane mill owner who prospers.

A paddy farmer remains poor throughout his life but the rice mill owner expands his mill or even buys two or three additional rice mills. Similarly it is not a cotton farmer but the buyer who flourishes.

“This is the ground reality. Even a 10-acre farmer is driven to sell his lands for getting money to finance his daughter's wedding,” he emphasises.

Eye wash

According to the Mr. Kulandaivel the Government's campaign that rural India is shining and that too brightly, is just an eye wash. India no longer lives in villages; it lives in cities and cramped towns.

“The barren fields and almost empty streets in many villages with dilapidated homes are living proof of this,” he concludes.

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North-East stamps its rubber mark

K. A. Martin

The comparatively long gestation period for investments and social and political instability have not prevented non-traditional areas identified for natural rubber (NR) cultivation from making their mark on India's efforts to increase its production.

Increasing awareness and interventions by the respective State governments ensure that thousands of hectares are added yearly to rubber acreage. In Tripura, where rubber cultivation began in early 1960s, about 4,000 hectares are added to cultivation every year.

In Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, rubber cultivation is spreading rapidly even with constraints that were seen as insurmountable nearly a decade

ago, said an official of the Rubber Board. In each of these States, average productivity hovers around 1,200 kg a hectare, the national average being around 1,800 kg. A total of 4.5 lakh hectares have been identified as suitable for rubber cultivation in the Northeast.

While NR cultivation makes impressive gains in non-traditional areas, Kerala is expected to lead NR production over a long time. It is home to 80 per cent of the total cultivated area and 90 per cent of the NR production in India. In 2000-01, Kerala had an even higher share of NR cultivation and production at 84 per cent and 92 per cent respectively. India produced 8.31 lakh tonnes of NR from 6.86 lakh hectares during 2010-11.

Over a million hectares have been identified in non-traditional areas, including in States such as Orissa, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, as suitable for NR cultivation but less than two lakh hectares have been brought under cultivation, say Rubber Board figures.

Rubber Production Commissioner J. Thomas said that the relatively long gestation period for investments makes farmers shy away from rubber cultivation in some areas. The Board estimates that an investment of Rs. 1.85 lakh is needed for developing a hectare of rubber plantation in Tripura. It takes up to seven years for the rubber plants to be tapped.

With subsidy being offered only Rs.19,500 a hectare, no other agricultural crop has such a long gestation period for investments.

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Farm query

Freshwater prawns

Is there any farmer in Kozhikode region rearing freshwater prawns?

Sebastian Joseph, *Kerala*

You can visit Mr. K.K. Manoj's backyard freshwater prawn hatchery unit at Atholi in Kozhikode district, Kerala for your detailed study. The farmer started with tiger shrimp farming near my house, and later switched over to brackish water breeds such as Pearl Spot, Mullet and others. For more information you can reach Mr. Manoj at Koodathumkandi House, Velur Post, Atholi (Via), Kozhikode- 673315, mobile: 09387527887.

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First international grains conference

Aiming to open up new challenges and opportunities towards improving the quality, safety and nutritional value of grain-based foods, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) has teamed up with the Vienna, Austria-based International Association for Cereal Science and Technology (ICC) to conduct the first ever ICC India International Grains Conference.

Specific reference

With the theme “Developments in grain science and technology to ensure high quality, safe and healthy grain-based foods,” the conference brought together grain scientists and technologists, breeders, millers, bakers, cereal and grain food processors, suppliers and traders to discuss the quality, safety and nutritional value of grain and foods made from cereals, with specific reference to the needs of India and the Indian subcontinent.

Growing demand

“The demand for grains is growing as a number of major global issues continue to impact the world's food security,” says ICRISAT Director General William D Dar.

He pointed out that grain science and technology has become vital in addressing major concerns such as minimizing grain post-harvest losses, providing people access to quality and safe food, fighting hunger and malnutrition, and improving livelihoods of resource-poor households in the semi-arid tropics.

ICC Secretary General and CEO Mr. Roland E Poms, said that while focussing on the Indian context, the program is also globally relevant as it covers such areas as crop improvement, storage, and nutrition processing and analysis for all major cereal grains and products.

The NutriPlus Knowledge (NPK) Program of the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) of ICRISAT is coordinating the event.

Knowledge sharing

During the conference, renowned speakers from international and national research institutes, multinational and domestic food companies, entrepreneurs, and food research and consultancy organizations shared knowledge and information on grain and food quality.

An expert panel discussion followed and a technical trade exhibition, and a poster paper program was also presented.

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'Irrigation to get top priority in Budget'

Staff Correspondent

Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda has said that irrigation will get top priority in the State Budget.

Speaking to presspersons after laying foundation stone for various development works here on Wednesday, he said the Government was making preparations for taking up works on the third phase of Upper Krishna Project. The Chief Minister said that the Government would ensure the rehabilitation of affected people.

The Government had discussed with elected representatives proposals to complete irrigation projects under UKP.

Officials had been instructed to take up drought relief works on a war-footing and the works in the five taluks of Bagalkot district were in full swing, he said.

The former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa said that the Government had released funds for the development of 100 backward taluks as identified by Dr. Nanjundappa Committee.

Minor Irrigation Minister Govind Karjol, Large-and-Medium-scale Industries Minister Murugesh Nirani, P.C. Gaddigoudar, MP, G.S. Nyamgouda, MLC, zilla panchayat president Kavita Daddenavar and vice-president Huvappa Rathod were present.

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Poultry farmers observe fast

Special Correspondent

Poultry farmers of Cuddalore district observed a day's fast in front of the Collectorate on Thursday, seeking adequate relief for the losses suffered by them in the cyclone.

They called upon the authorities to conduct village-wise survey to know about the number of poultry farms affected and the number of birds which perished in the cyclone.

A spokesperson said that since it was an agriculture-allied activity, the authorities should give importance to poultry farmers and take measures to alleviate their sufferings.

Share

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Farmers observe fast seeking Rs.2,000 per quintal of paddy

Special Correspondent

Flay Kerala government for trying to demolish the Mullaperiyar dam



empty stomach:Members of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association observing a fast in Tiruvarur on Wednesday.Photo: B.Velankanni Raj

Farmers of delta districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam observed a fast in Tiruvarur on Wednesday appealing to the State and Central government for payment of Rs 2,000 per quintal of paddy. S.Ranganathan, secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, led the fast.

The farmers demanded declaration of Cauvery delta districts as Thane cyclone-hit; immediate commissioning of Koondakulam atomic power plant; supply of 20-hour continuous power supply to agriculture pump sets; procurement of samba paddy with 22 per cent moisture content; and payment of Rs 3,000 per tonne for sugarcane.

The farmers condemned the Kerala government for trying to demolish the old Mullaperiyar dam, and appealed to the Centre to intervene in the matter. They also sought protection for Tamils in Kerala.

S.Jayakumar, president, Vivasayigal Mandram, Tiruvarur; T.N.Dasarathan, vice president of the Mandram; N.V.Sundaram, secretary of the Mandram; J.Varadarajan, assistant secretary;

M.Seran, president of Federation of Farmers Associations of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam; and Arupathi Kalyanam, general secretary of the federation; participated.

Mr.Ranganathan said Mullaperiyar issue and Koodankulam atomic power plant have been highly politicised. Mullaperiyar is a classic example of inter-state cooperation, but unfortunately local interests and politics, have completely spoiled the atmosphere.

"We have to wait for the court order on Mullaperiyar issue," he said.

Arupathi Kalyanam urged the Centre to implement the recommendations of the national farmer's commission headed by M.S.Swaminathan.

He said India has about 141 million hectares as net sown area, and the present food grain production is around 220 million tonnes.

To the growing population, the nation needs about 360 million tonnes of food grain by 2025, and around 426 million tonnes by 2050.

"Assuring life security to the farmers and considering their welfare as prime is the only way to achieve the nation's food security," Mr.Kalyanam said. Professor V.Muthukumaran inaugurated the fast.

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Integrate universities in the interest of farmers: experts

Special Correspondent



Against trend:R. Dwarakinath, former Vice-Chancellor of the UAS-Bangalore, addressing the roundtable in Bangalore on Wednesday.— Photo: K. Gopinathan

A committee has been formed under the chairmanship of the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Sciences R. Dwarakinath, to suggest ways of making all agriculture universities sensitive to the needs of farmers at the grassroots level.

This resolution was adopted at the roundtable discussion organised by the Institution of Agricultural Technologists here on Wednesday, in which several former vice-chancellors participated.

Most participants felt there should be integrated agricultural universities covering all disciplines such as agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, sericulture and forestry in the best interest of agriculture development and farmers. They argued against fragmentation of universities in the guise of specialisation.

Experts at the meeting felt that the trend towards specialised universities, while the agricultural policies are geared to integrated farming, is a contradiction and would prove counter-productive. The trend of starting separate universities for agriculture, horticulture and others should be stopped, they argued. Citing the example of how fragmentation had affected farmers, T.N. Prakash professor of UAS- Bangalore, said that areca farmers were suffering because various issues related to areca farming were divided across different universities.

Availability of comprehensive information in one place would help farmers, he added.

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- *'Setting up separate varsities for agriculture, horticulture should be stopped'*
 - *'Fragmentation has affected farmers'*
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UAS research indicates higher returns from organic farming

N. Dinesh Nayak

A seven-year-long research programme on organic farming conducted by the University of Agricultural Sciences , Dharwad, has provided a boost for organic farming.

The research, the first of its kind in India and funded by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), has established that organic farming can ensure higher returns and improvement in soil health.

H.B. Babalad, principal investigator of the project, told *The Hindu* that it had proved that organic farming could be profitable under rain-fed conditions.

Investigation

UAS Dharwad selected 12 cropping systems of north Karnataka for the research project. The results indicated 20 to 25 per cent more net return, 10 per cent higher yield and 15 to 20 per cent lower cost of production in organic practices, as compared to inorganic and integrated systems.

Although the yield was similar in organic and integrated systems, the cost of production was more in the latter because of the use of chemicals, Mr. Babalad said.

The experiments were held at the UAS biofarm, and over 600 acres of land in the villages of Guddada Hulikatti (Haveri), Mallapur (Bagalkot), Muttagi (Bijapur), Hulkoti (Gadag), Donagar (Uttara Kannada) and Hosur (Belgaum).

Higher yield

While there was reduction in yield in case of crops such as chilli, maize and cotton, during a two-year conversion period, this was not the case for soybean, groundnut, chickpea and onion, the scientist said.

For example, in the groundnut-sorghum cropping system, pooled data of six years showed significantly higher yield of groundnut (2,975 kg a hectare) with organic practice as compared to inorganic (2,604 kg a ha) and integrated (2,842 kg a ha) practices.

During the rabi season, sorghum too recorded a higher yield of 1,166 kg a ha in organic farming, as compared to 1,043 kg a ha in inorganic farming. Yield was almost on a par with integrated systems (1,155 kg a ha).

The net returns per hectare was Rs. 48,345 in organic, Rs. 40,790 in inorganic and Rs. 46,090 in integrated practices.

The research also showed that organic practices were more sustainable and environment-friendly. They facilitate 10 to 15 per cent increase in the soil's water holding capacity, which in turn helps induce drought tolerance in crops.

Disease resistance

Besides, the carbon content in soil too increased from 0.41 per cent to 0.65 per cent, and incidence of disease was lower, Mr. Babalad said.

With the availability of inputs for organic practice being a major challenge because of drop in cattle population, the UAS has designed a holistic model to supplement the nutrition requirement of the crops by way of green leaf manuring, compost, vermin compost, biofertilizer and liquid organic manure, he added.

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Organic vegetable farming

District panchayat president T.N. Khandamuthan has said that the local bodies in the district will take up organic vegetable cultivation, to make the district self-sufficient in vegetables. The project would be included in the 2012-13 annual plan. The project would be implemented by the district panchayat in association with the Organic Farmers' Committee, he said. A seminar on the project would be inaugurated by K. Achuthan, MLA, at the district panchayat hall here on Thursday.

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Fisheries Dept to register all fish farmers of State

THURSDAY, 19 JANUARY 2012 02:16

STAFF REPORTER | BHOPAL

The Fisheries department will register all the fish farmers of the State. Messages about availability of fish seeds demanded by registered fish farmers will be given to them through short message service (SMS) by the department.

This information was given at a review meeting of Fisheries department chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan here on Wednesday. At the meeting, the Chief Minister gave instructions to convene fishermen's panchayat in February.

The Chief Minister said work on all the possibilities of production and marketing in the fisheries sector should be undertaken in an integrated manner. He said field-level activities should be monitored regularly. Those who are working excellently in the department will be rewarded, but there will be no hesitation in punishing those who indulge in irregularities.

Fisheries Minister Ajay Vishnoi informed that schemes and programmes are being implemented by the department in a planned manner. One thousand housing accommodations covered with fruit-bearing trees, lavatories, solar energy and drainage system are being provided to fish farmers. All types of economic assistance and subsidies are deposited directly in their bank accounts. Surprise physical verification of fish farmers' bank passbooks has also been made.

He informed that fishing activities will soon commence in Rajghat project. The department is also starting fish production in Jobat, Mahi and Manisagar irrigation projects. With a view to benefiting marginal fishermen, the department has laid special emphasis on running fish production activities in small reservoirs where water is available for only four months.

Fisheries Federation has also increased rates of labour. Chief Secretary Avani Vaish and Principal Secretary Fisheries Ajita Vajpayee were also present on the occasion.

Business Standard

Thursday, Jan 19, 2012

Global coffee consumption grows in 2011, says ICO

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi January 19, 2012, 0:06 IST

Coffee consumption has grown the world over in 2011, despite economic turbulence in many importing countries, says International Coffee Organisation.

“Preliminary information on world consumption in 2011 indicates that it has remained resilient to the economic turbulence seen in many importing countries,” the organisation (ICO) said in a report.

Total consumption in 2010 reached 135 million bags of 60 kg each, with the most dynamic growth coming from domestic consumption in exporting countries, it added.

Global consumption of coffee rose 2.4 per cent to 135 million bags in 2010 from 131.8 million bags in 2009.

ICO expects the global coffee consumption to rise on the back of the rising number of consumers in exporting countries.

Demand prospects for coffee continued to be promising, particularly given the growth of niche markets in traditional consuming countries and the arrival of new consumers in emerging markets and exporting countries, it noted.

Consumption of the brew has also been steadily growing in India, where growth rate of coffee consumption is faster than the global consumption.

According to the government-run Coffee Board of India, the country's consumption grew by 6 per cent to 1,08,000 tonnes in 2010, as against 102,000 tonnes in 2009.

ICO estimates that the consumption in the country has risen 7 per cent to 103,500 tonnes in 2010, compared to 96,300 tonnes in 2009.

Bird flu fears may make eggs cheaper

Anindita Dey / Mumbai January 19, 2012, 0:04 IST

Cautious exports due to bird flu fear in Orissa and Meghalaya may result in softening of egg and poultry product prices in the domestic market.

According to industry sources, India has just started receiving orders from West Asia and Saarc countries after the export ban was lifted a month before. However, orders were suspended after bird flu was confirmed in Orissa and Meghalaya. Both states have now put a quarantine procedure in place and started bird culling.

Some hatcheries have reportedly stopped selling in the north-eastern states as a precautionary measure.

As a fallout, industry sources say domestic prices may soften a bit due to an artificial increase in supply in some parts of India, while demand remains the same. "The first impact is that people just stopped buying eggs and poultry on such news. Besides, egg is a perishable commodity. Even if the shelf value is bit longer due to winters, except for very cold places, many parts of India, especially in central western and southern parts, it needs to be sold fast," added sources.

However this may bring some relief to retail customers, who have witnessed a sharp surge in egg prices in the last few months. From Rs 2 per egg in the beginning of 2011, prices have doubled to Rs 4. In some places, it is even available at Rs 5-6 per egg. In Chennai, reportedly, prices have already been slashed from Rs 3.20 to Rs 2.95 per egg, due to resistance from buyers.

In December, the National Egg Coordination Committee, besides raising prices, had also raised the prices for layer birds to Rs 43 a kg (Rs 38), while the Broiler Co-ordination Committee's rate for cull birds is up by Rs 9 a kg to Rs 50. According to egg producers, the sharp increase in prices is attributed to the cold wave in north India and cyclone in the south India, which is a hub for poultry. These two factors have led to a decline in production.

In 2008-09, following the outbreak of bird flu in northeast India, the West Asian countries banned poultry products from India and it led to a fall in egg exports, especially from the Namakkal zone in Tamil Nadu, otherwise dubbed as an export hub for poultry.

Currently, while there is no export ban from India, importers are holding back orders and watching the situation, said an egg exporter from India.

Mentha oil futures turn weak, shed 2.19%

Press Trust of India / New Delhi January 18, 2012, 12:25 IST

Mentha oil futures fell by Rs 32.50 to Rs 1,453.90 per kg today, as speculators booked profits at existing levels amid a weak trend at spot market due to sluggish demand.

Adequate stocks position following increased arrivals from Chandausi in Uttar Pradesh, also weighed on mentha oil futures prices.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, January mentha oil fell by Rs 32.50, or 2.19%, to Rs

1,453.90 per kg in business turnover of 3,221 lots.

The February delivery declined by Rs 25.20, or 1.70%, to Rs 1,456.90 per kg in 1,179 lots.

Market analysts said the fall in mentha oil prices was mostly due to profit-booking by speculators at prevailing higher levels amid a weak trend in the spot market on sluggish demand.

THE HINDU Business Line

Govt set to slash subsidy on non-urea fertilisers

Bearish global prices seen behind the move



New Delhi, Jan. 18:

The Government plans to reduce the subsidy on phosphorous (P) and potash (K) nutrients in the wake of bearish global price signals for these fertilisers.

An Inter-Ministerial Committee is understood to have approved a proposal to bring down the per-kg subsidy on P from the existing Rs 32.338 to Rs 22 and from Rs 26.756 to Rs 25 in the case of K for the coming fiscal. On the other hand, the subsidy on nitrogen (N) is to be retained at the current Rs 27.153 a kg.

For di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), containing 18 per cent N and 46 per cent P, the proposed new nutrient subsidy rates translates into an effective total subsidy of Rs 15,000 a tonne, as against the existing Rs 19,763. Likewise, the total subsidy payable to companies selling muriate of potash (MOP, which has 60 per cent K content), would fall from Rs 16,054 to Rs 15,000 a tonne.

The new subsidy rates, to be applicable for 2012-13, are subject to Union Cabinet clearance.

“It’s not a bad move as we expect global prices to ease considerably in the next couple of months. Lower subsidy payout by India will put further downward pressure on prices”, industry sources pointed out.

Landed prices of DAP had touched \$677 a tonne (cost & freight Indian ports) in September. “Today, you can make even spot purchases at \$ 590-600 and they could soon go below \$550 a tonne”, the sources said.

Low global demand

One reason for this is low demand in Europe and even in markets such as Brazil and Argentina. That, in turn, is linked to lower crop prices. Since September 1, the most active contract of corn traded at the Chicago Board of Trade has fallen from \$ 7.39 to \$ 6.04 a bushel, while slipping similarly from \$ 7.61 to \$ 6.05 for wheat and from \$ 14.35 to \$ 11.84 in soyabean.

Global DAP suppliers such as PhosChem of the US and Morocco's OCP Group have sought to prop up prices by going in for strategic plant shutdowns. But that would be undermined by Saudi Arabia's Ma'aden Phosphate Company set to increase output from its newly commissioned DAP plant to 2.5 million tonnes (mt), from last year's one mt level.

The same goes for MOP, where the current import contracts by India are at \$530 a tonne. “This, too, is bound to fall, as China is today self-sufficient in both DAP and to a great extent even MOP. Besides, unlike last year, there is not going to be huge demand from Brazil and other swing markets. So, it all depends on how much India buys”, the sources added.

Moreover, unlike last year, the stocks position in India is fairly comfortable now. On April 1, there will be inventories of 2.5-3 mt of DAP, one mt of MOP and 1.5 mt of NPK complexes with companies and dealers. “There is no urgency for India to enter the market now. The subsidy cuts would only help here”, the sources noted.

The other benefit of lower P and K subsidy is that it would reduce the requirement of steeply hiking administered retail prices of urea. A per-tonne subsidy cut of Rs 4,763 on 10 mt of DAP, Rs 3,000 on 11 mt of NPK complexes, and Rs 1,000 on 2.5 mt of MOP would confer savings of Rs 8,500 crore or so.

“These savings can be diverted towards urea and to that extent will limit the need to raise farmgate prices”, the sources added. harishdamodaran@thehindu.co.in

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated January 19, 2012)

15-week low volume on offer at Coonoor tea auction

Coonoor, Jan. 18:

A volume of 11.39 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No: 3 of the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association to be held on Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of brokers' listing.

This is the lowest volume of the last 15 weeks. It is as much as 3.51 lakh kg less than last week's offer, but 1.85 lakh kg more than the offer this time last year.

Of the 11.39 lakh kg on offer, 8.09 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades, and 3.30 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades.

As much as 10.55 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.84 lakh kg, orthodox variety.

The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades.

In the leaf counter, only 0.41 lakh kg belongs to orthodox, while 7.68 lakh kg, CTC.

Among the dusts, only 0.43 lakh kg belongs to orthodox, while 2.87 lakh kg, CTC.

In the 11.39 lakh kg, fresh teas account for 10.41 lakh kg. Only 98,000 kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Curzon got Rs 219, Chamraj Rs 192, Havukal Rs 171 and Corsely Rs 170. In all, 29 marks got Rs 100 and more.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated January 19, 2012)

Mixed trend in rubber

Our Correspondent

Kottayam, Jan. 18:

Physical rubber prices firmed up further on Wednesday. The market improved following the early gains on the National Multi Commodity Exchange, but the late declines in domestic futures failed to make any visible impact on prices. Positive reports from the international markets and

the expectations on a short term uptrend kept sellers on sidelines though major consuming industries were not active in the market. The trend was partially mixed.

Sheet rubber increased to Rs 191.50 (190) a kg as quoted by the traders. The grade firmed up to Rs 191 (189.50) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi according to Rubber Board.

In futures, the February series closed at Rs 195.55 (195.82), March at Rs 199.40 (199.75), April at Rs 205.12 (206.10), May at Rs 209.40 (209.00), June at Rs 206.01 (206.50) and July at Rs 204.51 (205.03) a kg on NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs 184.7 (179.71) a kg at Bangkok. The January futures for the grade flared up to ₹284 (Rs 186.83) from ₹274 a kg during the day session but then dropped to ₹280.5 (Rs 184.58) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 191.50 (190); RSS-5: 185 (183); ungraded: 180 (180); ISNR 20: 186.50 (185) and latex 60 per cent: 107 (107).

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Spices Board workshop to focus on increasing exports, improving quality

Our Bureau

Kochi, Jan. 18:

There has been increasing global demand for spices and an emerging need for India to consolidate and maintain its position as the world leader in this sector, the Spices Board said. However, the export of spices in quantity terms has seen a decline.

Spices account for a a major share in the total agricultural exports of the country, and a substantial jump in exports was observed in the past five years. But there has been a shortage in supplies, especially the quantities available for exports.

The industry is faced with the challenge of declining quantity for exports, mainly due to supply shortfalls and quality concerns.

Export figures for April-August 2011 indicate that there has been a hike in export value of spices by 26 per cent, while quantity-wise there was a decline of 23 per cent. While 32 per cent of the quantum and 40 per cent of the value targeted for export has been achieved, the question as to why there is a fall in quantity remains.

One-day workshop

It is in this context that the Kerala Department of Agriculture is organising a one-day workshop in association with Spices Board and World Spice Organisation on January 20.

Spice farmers from various parts of Kerala, spices exporters, traders, scientists from Kerala Agriculture University, the Indian Institute of Spices Research, the Spices Board and the Directorate of Coco Arecanut and Spices are expected to participate.

The workshop is expected to provide a platform to discuss and chalk out action plans for improvement and enhancement of better quality spices, especially black pepper, cardamom, ginger, turmeric and nutmeg. Problem of pesticide residues, presence of aflatoxin and illegal dyes continue to be issues that require immediate attention. There is also the need to make this promising sector competent in the global environment, a press release issued here said.

Joint initiative

To ensure that quality assurance becomes mandatory, production processes that result in hygienic products, satisfying international standards, should be made available.

As a measure to ensure this, Spices Board has already made plans for the Twelfth Plan, including promotion of organic cultivation.

The joint initiative will focus on promotion of cultivation and quality assurance to increase exports, major challenges in spices trade, developmental programmes, field problems, research interventions and practical knowledge of farmers. *cjp@thehindu.co.in*

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Pepper gains on thin arrivals of new crop

G.K. Nair

Kochi, Jan. 18:

Pepper futures continued its northward move on Wednesday on local bullish sentiments despite liquidation. There was plain liquidation as Jan delivery is close to its maturity. Some switching over to Feb was also there.

Activities were very much limited as there were no arrivals from the major growing districts due to a 'hartal' on the Mullaperiyar dam issue today. Thin new crop arrivals are being construed as

a possible squeeze in supply in the coming days and that phenomenon is keeping the market here bullish, trade sources told *Business Line*. At the same time, they said, the market has undergone a drastic correction in recent weeks with a fall in prices of around \$1,000 a tonne to the present levels and hence, it has now consolidated and stabilised. Therefore, “it is unlikely to move towards south in the near future until heavy real physical arrivals take place”, they claimed. Not much activities were reported from the primary markets, they said. Jan contract on the NCDEX moved up by Rs 195 to Rs 31,350 a quintal. Feb and Mar increased by Rs 170 and Rs 245 respectively to Rs 31,905 and Rs 31,260 a quintal.

Total turn over fell by 1,052 tonnes to 3,240 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 213 tonnes to close at 8,342 tonnes. Jan open interest decreased by 445 tonnes to 2,141 tonnes while that of Feb and Mar moved up by 216 tonnes and 5 tonnes respectively to 4,043 tonnes and 1,059 tonnes.

Spot prices remained steady at the previous levels of Rs 30,300 (ungarbled) and Rs 31,800 (MG 1) a quintal on limited activities. Indian parity in the international market was at \$6,550-6,600 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and \$6,850-6,900 a tonne (c&f) for the US. Vietnam is going on *Tet* holidays and this has aided the upward trend of late in the futures market, they added.

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Promote India brand coffees overseas, says Anand Sharma



Batting for the brew: Mr Anand Sharma, Union Minister of Commerce & Industries, along with Mr Jawaid Akhtar, Chairman, Coffee Board, during the India International Coffee Fair 2012 in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Kamal Narang

New Delhi, Jan. 18:

The Union Commerce and Industries Minister, Mr Anand Sharma, urged the coffee industry to brand Indian coffees in the overseas markets to spread awareness.

Inaugurating the fourth edition of the India International Coffee Festival (IICF) 2012, Mr Sharma said the industry should look at popularising the India brand of coffees, focussing on specific flavours. He also stressed upon the need to promote coffee cultivation in the non-traditional areas.

The IICF 2012 is organised by the India Coffee Trust, an industry body, in collaboration with the Coffee Board of India to promote consumption.

The event also aims to highlight the growth opportunities for growers, roaster and retailers among others. About 400 delegates from both India and abroad including Australia, Germany, the US, Nigeria and the UK are participating in the event.

The Coffee Board Chairman, Mr Jawaid Akhtar, said coffee has transitioned from being a traditional South Indian beverage to a national drink over the past few years. The Board is actively involved in promoting the beverage in non-traditional markets, he said.

Consumption in non-traditional markets has grown 40 per cent year-on-year and the northern States have contributed to more than half of it. The growth is attributed to the spurt in out-of-home consumption triggered by rise in café outlets coupled with increasing income levels and urbanisation. vishwa@thehindu.co.in

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Limited demand keeps sugar on leash

Our Correspondent



Mumbai, Jan. 18:

Sugar prices on the Vashi market were steady on routine middle-month demand on Wednesday. Weak sentiment arrested firm futures market. Sugar futures were up by Rs 25-30 a quintal till noon on talk of possible decontrol of sector. In the physical market, prices dropped by Rs 10-15 a quintal based on quality while *naka* rates witnessed mixed trend with S-grade up Rs 10 and M-grade down Rs 10. Mill tender rates for M-grade dropped by Rs 10-20 a quintal as few mills sold sugar at lower rates. Tender rates for S-grade ruled steady. Volume was lower than on Tuesday day on limited demand. A wholesaler said local demand is limited as is the trend in the middle of the month. Millers continued selling in local market in absence of demand from neighbouring States. Crushing season is at its peak now and producers are willing to avoid big inventories. Despite lower free sale quota for the current month prices are under pressure. Retail demand is expected to improve in the last week of the month. Sugar industry is waiting for the Centre's move towards decontrolling of the sector. Meanwhile, arrivals at Vashi market was 48-50 truckloads and local dispatches were around 46-47 truckloads. On Tuesday 12-13 mills offered tenders and sold about 50,000-55,000 bags at Rs 2,760-2,840 (Rs 2,760-2840) for S-grade and Rs 2,830-2,930 (Rs 2,860-2,940) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade — Rs 2,892-2,972 (Rs 2,892-3,001) and M-grade — Rs 2,961-3,092 (Rs 2,976-3,092). **Naka delivery rates:** S-grade — Rs 2,850-2,900 (Rs 2,840-2,890) and M-grade — Rs 2,930-3,030 (Rs 2,940-3,050).

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Castor may fall on higher inflows



Rajkot, Jan. 18:

Higher arrivals of the new crop and lower demand depressed castorseed prices on the spot market on Wednesday, while castor future contracts fell as investors booked profits. Prices may dip further to Rs 3,100-3,200 a quintal as arrivals gather pace, said Mr Harilal Patel, Senior Member, Rajkot Commodity Exchange.

Castor's February contract declined by 4 per cent or Rs 149 to Rs 3,576 a quintal with an open interest of 6,710 lots on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, while March was down Rs 110.50 to Rs 3,550 with an open interest of 4,230 lots.

Castorseed's March contract decreased by Rs 109 to Rs 3,453 a quintal on the Rajkot Commodity Exchange. Spot castor slipped by Rs 110 to Rs 3,615 a quintal on the exchange.

While about 38,000-40,000 bags of castorseeds arrived in Gujarat and sold at Rs 710-725 for 20 kg, about 3,400-3,500 bags arrived in Saurashtra and quoted at Rs 690-726 for 20 kg.

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Uncertain weather, low buying pound paddy

Our Correspondent



Karnal, Jan. 18:

Paddy arrivals dropped to just around 2,000 bags on Wednesday following uncertain weather in Haryana.

Stocks are arriving mainly from Uttar Pradesh at present as local stocks have already been sold out, and because of uncertain weather and inconsistent rainfall, farmers are not releasing stocks, said Mr Tara Chand Sharma, Proprietor of Tara Chand and Sons. Not only the weather but low buying is also a big reason behind the low arrivals. Because of reduced offtake by the

rice mills, paddy arrivals have been falling continuously since the beginning of December, he added.

In the trade, rice market witnessed a steady trend with prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties being little changed.

After witnessing a downtrend earlier this week, aromatic rice managed to maintain the previous levels, while non-basmati continued to rule firm due to moderate buying.

Pusa-1121 (steam) quoted at Rs 4,100-4,125 while Pusa-1121(sela) was at Rs 3,400-3,500 a quintal. Duplicate basmati sold at Rs 3,200-3,250. Pure basmati (raw) was at Rs 4,820-4,850, while pure basmati (sela) sold at Rs 4,000 a quintal.

Among brokens of Pusa-1121, Tibar sold at Rs 3,200-3,250, Dubar at Rs 2,700 while Mongra was trading at Rs 2,200 a quintal.

Permal (sela) sold at Rs 1,800-2,150 a quintal, while Permal (raw) quoted at Rs 2,000-2,125.

Around 2,000 bags of Pusa-1121 arrived at the Karnal grain market terminal and sold at Rs 1,900 a quintal.

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Mixed trend in turmeric despite poor arrivals

Our Correspondent



Erode, Jan. 18:

Turmeric prices witnessed a mixed trend on Wednesday even as arrivals were poor.

“After four days of *Pongal* holiday, few farmers have brought stocks for sale to the market. Only 3,200 bags of turmeric arrived for sales, but there was no improvement in prices. In the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, Erode and Gobichettipalayam Marketing societies, prices improved by Rs 150 a quintal, but in the Regulated Marketing Committee, prices decreased by Rs 150 a quintal for both the varieties of finger and root. Sixty per cent of the arrivals were sold,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said that prices of the hybrid Salem crop also decreased by Rs 250 a quintal due to poor quality. More than 300 bags of Mysore crop which arrived for sales were sold for Rs 3,200 a quintal. Traders said that they have not yet received fresh orders from other States and so were buying very limited stocks to supply the same to the local masala firms.

Turmeric farmers said that this year also harvesting of the crop which was cultivated over 13,000 hectares in Erode district will begin from January-end and they will bring in new turmeric stocks in the second or third week of February. Heavy rains in November-end and December affected turmeric crop in over 1,000 hectares due to rhizome disease.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety fetched Rs 3,317-4,339 a quintal, root variety Rs 3,209-Rs 4,101.

Salem crop:The finger variety was sold at Rs 4,191-4,489 a quintal, root variety Rs 3,895-4,119. Out of a total arrival of 615 bags, 429 bags were sold.

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