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Banana genome sequence will aid crop improvement

N. Gopal Raj



Big step: Banana genome sequencing marks a major advance in unravelling its complex genetics. Photo: Special Arrangement

Scientists have sequenced the complete genome of the banana, an important crop in developing countries that provides a fruit widely enjoyed the world over and is a staple food in some of the poorest parts of the globe.

The draft sequence provided “a crucial stepping-stone for genetic improvement of banana,” observed Angélique D’Hont, a French agricultural research scientist, and colleagues from a number of other countries in a paper that is being published this week in the scientific journal *Nature*.

The sequence represented, they said, “a major advance in the quest to unravel the complex genetics of this vital crop, whose breeding is particularly challenging.”

Pests and diseases were an “imminent danger” for global banana production. Having access to the entire gene repertoire of the plant held the key to identifying those responsible for disease resistance as well as ones for other important traits such as fruit quality, they added.

The completion of the genome sequence was important for India, the world's largest producer of bananas, according to P. Padmesh of the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute near Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala. However, most of the country's production was consumed locally and exports amounted to only 0.5 per cent of the world trade in the fruit.

The potential for export was huge if India could increase its productivity both in terms of quantity and quality, he told *The Hindu* in an email. As most of the present day cultivated varieties were susceptible to fungal, bacterial and viral diseases, it was necessary to develop disease-resistant varieties.

The international team has sequenced the genome of DH-Pahang (*Musa acuminata*), a banana popular in south-east Asia and which is able to resist the devastating Panama disease fungus that has been spreading in Asia.

If the genes that provide such resistance could be characterised, they could be transferred to other cultivated varieties, noted Dr. Padmesh.

The genome that has been sequenced ran to 523 million ‘bases,’ the chemical units that make up DNA and encode the genetic information. Transposable elements — the ‘jumping genes’ that can relocate themselves to other places in the genome from time to time — accounted for almost half of those bases.

Bananas that are cultivated, unlike their wild relatives, are seedless and develop without going through a process of pollination, fertilisation and seed production. These domesticated forms are therefore propagated by using a part of the parent plant. As a result, the offspring are genetically similar to the parent. Such similarity can allow disease-causing organisms to rampage through a crop.

The transposable elements in the banana genome therefore provide a major natural source of genetic variation, noted Dr. Padmesh.

Managing bacterial leaf blight in paddy

Mallikarjun Kengal

V. R. Joshi

Bacterial blight is a serious infestation affecting paddy crops. Initially water-soaked yellowish stripes appear on the leaf blades starting at the leaf tip, later increasing in length with a wavy margin.

On the leaf surface a milky or opaque dewdrop can be noticed during early morning time. Lesions turn yellow to white as the disease advances. Severely infested leaves tend to dry quickly.

Colour change

Lesions later turn grey in colour. As the infestation progresses the lesions cover the entire leaf blade which may turn white or straw coloured. Later the leaves wilt and roll up. Under severe conditions the entire crop wilts completely.

Presence of weeds, rice stubbles and ratoons of infected plants, presence of bacteria in the paddy seeds and irrigation canals, warm temperature, high humidity, water stagnation, and over fertilization favour the infestation spread.

In the field, a portion of the infested leaf can be cut and placed inside a test tube with water for a few minutes. The cut portion inside the tube can be observed against sunlight to see bacterial ooze streaming out from the cut end into the water. After an hour the water turns turbid.

Remove weeds, rice straws, ratoons to prevent infestation.

Likewise maintaining shallow water in the paddy nursery beds, providing good drainage during severe flooding, ploughing under rice stubble and straw following harvest are proper management practices to be followed.

Right application of fertilizers is recommended. Use resistant varieties such as Ajaya, Asha, CO-43, Gobind, Radha, Sujatha, Suraj, Swarna, Udaya varieties.

Seed soaking

Soaking the seeds before sowing in 0.1 gm/litre of streptocycline and 0.1gm/litre of copper sulphate solution for 20 minutes is the best practice to avoid spread of this infestation.

Apply nitrogen in three split doses, 50 per cent basal, 25 per cent during tillering phase and 25 per cent during panicle formation phase.

(Mallikarjun Kengal, assistant professor and V.R. Joshi, plant pathology, Extension education unit, University of Agricultural Sciences, Koppal- 583231, phone: 08539- 230205.)

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Scientists must work with farmers to achieve food security

M. J. Prabu



Special Arrangement Prize catch: A beneficiary farmer holding his catch. Photo: Special Arrangement

About Rs. 80 lakh worth of fish has been sold in three months

When farming failed for residents of Shahjadapur village, Samastipur district, Bihar the perseverant farmers turned to fish farming and met with success.

The village is in Samastipur district, Bihar, and serves as a good example of perseverance by farmers. These farmers could not get any returns from their fields for the last 50 years due to water logging and heavy infestation with aquatic weeds.

The lands dried up after 20 years in 2009 due to severe drought, further adding to their misery.

Strategies

When they realised that they could not survive by being dependant on their lands for growing crops the farmers rallied together to discuss strategies to overcome this natural challenge.

Some of them decided that rearing fishes would prove ideal for them. Since Bihar has a good number of entrepreneurs in fish rearing these farmers decided on doing the same.

Initially three farmers contacted the department of fisheries at Samastipur, which sent them to Andhra Pradesh to undergo training in fish farming.

After their return, fisheries extension officials visited their site. Two farmers were identified to act as local leaders for mobilizing others to start fish farming.

About 50 farmers were selected and out of them 37 came forward and organized themselves into a society registered as 'Sonamar Chaur Matsya Vikash Samitee.'

"Once the farmers were organized, a detailed project report was prepared by the department of fisheries, namely, 'Eco system approach of integrated wetland area management.'

Cluster approach

"This project is designed on the concept of a cluster approach of a common interest group with individual ownership in order to avoid conflict among different stakeholders (farmers)," says Dr. Tun Tun Singh, Fisheries Extension officer, Office of Deputy Director Fisheries, Darbhanga, Bihar.

The project is based on integrated aquatic resource management so that the output of one sub system can be utilized as input for another to maximize profit.

The United Bank of India and Samastipur Kshetrya Garnin Bank, Samastipur, granted a loan of Rs.40 lakh initially for constructing tanks.

To further hone the skills about 18 fish farmers were sent to Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh and simultaneously a similar type of on farm training was also conducted at Samastipur.

The construction work of this project was over in 2010 but due to severe drought, farmers failed to culture fish in their ponds.

Loan

The Government also granted a loan of Rs. 48 lakhs to help the farmers install generators, electric motors, transformers and solar pumps.

“This project proves two things. One, the interest of the farmers and their grit and determination to go about it, and two the keen interest of the Government to support them,” says Dr. Singh.

Good option

“Especially in a big agricultural country like India, cluster or group approaches seem a viable option for farmers to succeed.

“Also as a group their voice, demands can be easily heard in the Government corridors. For a state like Bihar that is quite backward in terms of several facilities when compared to other states in the country fish farming has been able to achieve quite a good response and attention,” explains Dr. Singh.

Work together

Mere scientific discoveries far removed from the everyday life style of farmers can never hope to bear fruit. Scientific experts must work together with farmers for a country to attain security in food production.

Focus must be on farmers and not merely on scientists and their inventions, according to Dr. Singh.

For further details interested readers can contact Dr. Tun Tun Singh, Fisheries extension officer, office of Deputy Director Fisheries, Darbhanga, Bihar: 846001, email: ttsingh2002@yahoo.com, mobile:09431086114.

NEW DELHI, July 12, 2012

Monsoon advances, but crop situation in Karnataka, Maharashtra worrisome

GARGI PARSAI



People wade through a flooded road after heavy rains in Kolkata on Wednesday.— PTI Photo

The south-west monsoon has covered the entire country in the last ten days but the crop situation remains worrisome in Karnataka and Maharashtra, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said here on Wednesday. Sowing of coarse cereals has been hit hard due to delay and slow progress of monsoon in parts of the country.

Mr. Pawar reviewed the advance of the monsoon with Minister of State for Food K.V. Thomas and India Meteorological Department Director-General L.S. Rathore.

The monsoon was deficient by 23 per cent. Karnataka and Maharashtra had received scanty rain so far and the position had not improved to a satisfactory level.

“There is a cause for concern about production of coarse cereals and drinking water in the two States. Elsewhere sowing is on in paddy, cotton and sugarcane and they are expected to pick up,” Mr. Pawar said.

Cultivation of groundnut and soyabean was expected to improve as there was good rain in parts of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat in the last two days.

“The only problem is in coarse cereals (maize, bajra and jowar) where 50 per cent sowing operation is over,” he said but added that planting of these crops could take place till August.

Speaking to journalists, Mr. Rathore said sowing of paddy, soyabean and groundnut would gather momentum in the coming days. "Monsoon is covering the entire country today with parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan receiving heavy rain," he said.

With the sowing of majority kharif crops lagging in comparison to last year, Mr. Thomas later said his Ministry had moved a proposal to enhance the subsidy in imported pulses being distributed through the public distribution system. The yellow pea will be made available to Below Poverty Line population at a subsidy of Rs. 20 per kilogram instead of Rs. 10 per kilogram.

The delay in arrival of monsoon and its slow progress has affected sowing of major kharif crops including paddy, pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals. The rainy season is crucial for kharif season as only 40 per cent of cultivable area is irrigated.

NEW DELHI, July 12, 2012

Water policy against 'heavy under-pricing' of power for farmers

GARGI PARSAI

Giving in to public protest against privatisation of water services and indiscriminate pricing of water, the modified national water policy provides for subsidy to the poor but at the same time emphasises the need for subjecting water to allocation and pricing on 'economic principles'.

It says the private sector can become a service provider in public private partnership mode if the states so decide.

The twice-revised draft calls for withdrawal of power subsidy to the agriculture sector on the plea that it leads 'over-use of electricity' and water. It, however, proposes separate electric feeders where "limited" ground water use for agriculture is "desirable".

The policy, however, is generous to the industry by providing incentives to them for setting up water treatment plants. Significantly, the policy, a copy of which is available with *The Hindu*, paves the way for the Centre to legislate on water by providing for an "over-arching national legal framework of general principles on water".

Union Water Resources Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal outlined the broad features of the draft policy at the meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of his ministry here on Wednesday. Endorsing some of the controversial features of the policy, the Minister was emphatic about “the need to move towards transparent and participatory mechanisms of pricing of water by independent Water Regulatory Authorities”. The policy over-rides objections by irrigated states like Punjab and Haryana, and suggests modification of the Irrigation Act and the Indian Easements Act, 1882, that gives propriety rights to a land owner on groundwater under a particular person’s land. The document emphasises the need for a comprehensive legislation for optimum development of inter-State rivers and river valleys to facilitate inter-State coordination taking river basins/sub-basins as a unit.

ARIYALUR, July 12, 2012

Groundnuts, gingili sold

A total of 120 bags of groundnut and 150 bags of gingili were marketed at the Regulated Market Committee at Jayamkondam on Wednesday. In a press release issued here, Kumaragurubaran, superintendent of the committee, said that the average price per bag of 80 kg stood at Rs.5,088 and Rs.5,092 for groundnut and gingili respectively.

PUDUCHERRY, July 12, 2012

Probe confirms exploitation of Irulas on sugarcane farms

RAJESH B NAIR

For 7 years, barring daily allowance, they weren't paid any wages



IN A BIND: Irula community members residing at T.N. Palaiyam in Puducherry. —Photo: T. Singaravelou

An inquiry conducted by the Revenue Department here has confirmed the exploitation of Irula community members on sugarcane farms of Tamil Nadu.

The department ordered a probe after the Puducherry Scheduled Tribes People's Federation lodged a complaint that 35 Irula families were being kept as bonded labourers and subjected to cruel treatment at Peravurani in Thanjavur district.

Puducherry tahsildar M.S. Ramesh, who conducted the probe, told *The Hindu* that the Irulas were ill treated by an agent and his associates. Some of them were physically assaulted. The issue had been taken up with the Thanjavur Collector and the Pattukottai RDO had recorded the statements of victims.

Capitalising on

their plight

Kaliamurthy, a resident of Old Colony at Eripakkampet here, engaged the Irulas seven years ago by paying each family Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000. They were without a job after the government put curbs on their traditional profession of catching snakes and rats.

He entered into an oral agreement with the community members who were to accompany him for farm work when needed. Since then, every year from November to June they are taken for cutting sugarcane in Thanjavur and Pudukkottai. As many as 41 Irulas were caught in Kaliamurthy's trap, the inquiry revealed. For a two-member family, one kg of rice was provided and Rs. 10 paid, every day.

If there were more than two members, Rs. 20 and two kg of rice were given. In some places, night shelters were provided while in others the families, which included children, women and elderly, slept out in the open.

In the last seven years, apart from the daily allowance, the Irulas were not paid any wages.

Those who refused to accompany the agent and complained of ill treatment were assaulted.

Mounting 'interest'

Sakthivel, an Irula member, who escaped from the workplace, informed the federation about their plight. "This year, when we demanded more money, the agent told us that we owed him several thousands as interest for the principal amount he gave us seven years ago," he told *The Hindu*.

V. Perumal, secretary of the Puducherry unit of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which recently staged a protest on the issue, said that the government should immediately initiate criminal proceedings against the agent and others.

Federation chief K. Ramkumar urged the government to provide compensation of Rs. 20,000 to each of the family members under the provisions of Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976.

TIRUPUR, July 12, 2012

Weak monsoon hits sowing for kharif crops

R. VIMAL KUMAR

Weak monsoon is triggering concerns among the farmers involved in cultivation of kharif food crops such as pulses, millets and oil seeds, among others, with sowing already hit in many rain-fed blocks in the district.

The dry situation is causing jitters as the area coverage under key crops like pulses and millets, besides overall acreage under agriculture crops, already had witnessed a decline in the district during the last fiscal vis-à-vis the financial year prior to it.

Pulses

In 2011-12, area under pulses, which include green gram, black gram, cow pea, red gram, Bengal gram and few other varieties came down to 20,776 hectares from 25,261 hectares registered in 2010-11 fiscal.

Millet cultivation came down from 40,775 hectares achieved in 2010-11 period to 38,364 hectares during the last financial year.

Overall area under 'agriculture crops' declined in the district by 5,152 hectares in 2011-12 when compared to 2010-11.

Farmers in rain-fed areas of Avinashi, Uthukuli and Tirupur blocks, who sowed the seeds of pulses, fodder cholam (coming under millet category) and groundnut after seeing scanty rains in May and expecting a good monsoon in the coming days, are in a dilemma as skies did not open up in the subsequent days.

The farmers in Palladam, Kundadam, Pongalur, and Dharapuram blocks, who normally start sowing in July-August period for kharif crops, is now adopting a wait and watch policy owing to deficit monsoon instead of taking a risk and suffering losses by sowing before the arrival of rain.

"Situation is drifting into a panicky state as weak monsoon has dealt a severe blow to the fortunes of the agrarian community who have already been experiencing poor price realisation for their produces.

"Moreover, dry conditions have already affected the cultivation of fodder crops necessary for sustaining cattle farming business meaning that the dry conditions will have a cascading effect on even the allied activities too," pointed out K.C.M. Balasubramaniam, a former professor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, and a farmer himself raising crops in Pongalur and Tirupur blocks.

Dip

A senior agriculture department official pointed out that with the forecast of rain not good for the next few weeks, there could be a significant dip in the overall production of agriculture and horticulture crops in the district during this fiscal.

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- *Overall area under agriculture crops declined by 5,152 hectares in Tirupur district*
 - *Dry conditions have already affected fodder crops*
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DAVANGERE, July 12, 2012

Scanty rainfall hits kharif sowing

H.S. NARASIMHA KUMAR

Crops such as pulses, oil seeds and cash crops in the district are likely to be severely hit if there is no rainfall in the next 10 to 15 days.

The district has received scanty rainfall in the kharif season and chances of crop failure are high owing to scanty rainfall.

The average rainfall in the district between January and July-end is 296.2 mm while the rainfall this year until July 10 is 168.8 mm. The district received 209 mm rainfall last year between January and July. According to senior officials in the Agriculture Department the district has received rainfall of 115.3 mm as against the average of 38.08 mm in April, 17.7 mm in May as against the average of 84.2, 25.6 mm as against the average of 68 mm in June and 9.4 mm until July 10 against the average of 98.1 mm.

Of the targeted sowing area of 3,40,000 ha in the kharif season, sowing has been completed on 95,485 ha. Cereals have been grown on 73,457 ha as against the targeted area of 2,51,350 hectares. Among cereals, maize has been grown on 66,162 ha and jowar on 6,340.

Pulses have been grown on 4,460 ha as against the targeted area of 17,250 ha. Oil seeds have been grown on 2,745 ha against the target of 28,800. Cash crops have been grown on 14,823 ha against the targeted area of 42,600 ha.

Green gram has been grown on over 260 ha.

Of the targeted area of 3,40,000 ha, 70,000 ha in Davangere, Harihar, Honnalli, Chennagiri taluks and parts of Harpanahalli taluk come under the Bhadra command area. However, the Irrigation Consultative Committee of the Bhadra reservoir had taken a decision not to let water from Bhadra reservoir into the canals till the water level in the reservoir reached 145 ft.

According to the official sources, water level in the reservoir is 138 feet.

The committee is expected to hold a meeting on July 16 to take stock of the situation in the command areas and consider releasing water to the canals.

Since the inflow into the reservoir has been low since some times , , there is little chance of water being released into the canals. .

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 12, 2012

Curbs soon on sale of paddy lands

Legislation to be enacted, says Chief Minister

The government will consider enacting a legislation to prevent the sale of paddy fields other than for construction of houses by the landless and for public purposes, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy told the Assembly on Monday.

Opposing notice for an adjournment motion in the Assembly, the Chief Minister said the law would stipulate that only farmers would be able to purchase paddy lands and that too for farming purposes alone.

There was no question of the government allowing conversion of paddy lands for real estate development, he said.

Mr. Chandy also assured the House that the ongoing review of the database on paddy land ownership would result only in correction of errors in the current data and that there would be not attempt to undermine the spirit of the Kerala Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act of 2008.

The government would seek the cooperation of the Opposition when drafting the new law, he said.

Earlier, seeking leave for the motion, V.S. Sunil Kumar (CPI) alleged that the government had decided to review the database pertaining to 975 local bodies in the State to help the land mafia.

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) government had completed much of the work connected with preparation of the database and then Revenue Minister Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan had told the Assembly that the database would be published at the earliest, he pointed out.

Revenue Minister Adoor Prakash said the government had decided to carry out the review as several flaws were detected in the database prepared in the districts.

The government had ordered a review of the database in every panchayat and other local bodies by a three-member panel comprising the Deputy Tahsildar, Agriculture Officer, and a nominee of the local body concerned in three months. The draft database would be ready within the time frame and would be published on September 17, he added.

Leader of the Opposition V.S. Achuthanandan said the Opposition was taking the Chief Minister's statement at face value, particularly his assurance that the government would take the Opposition into confidence when drafting the proposed law to prevent conversion of paddy lands for other purposes.

The government should also consult leaders of farmers and farm workers' organisations when drafting the law, he said.

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- *Database on paddy land to be published*
 - *Consult farm organisations: VS*

GUNTUR, July 12, 2012

JAC's appeal to chilli farmers

The Joint Action Committee of chilli farmers, who incurred a huge loss due to fire accidents in cold storages, has called upon the farmers not to bring their produce to the market yard here on July 12 and 13 in view of the protests to be held against the delay in payment of compensation.

The JAC has sought the cooperation of traders and workers in the market yard for successfully organising the two-day protests thereby exerting pressure on the government to take urgent steps for paying compensation to the beleaguered farmers.

The National and Oriental Insurance Companies have got premiums duly paid but were finding ways to defer the payment of compensation.

The loss incurred by farmers in fire accidents that took place in Nandini, Sai Surya, and Vengamamba cold storages was estimated at Rs 50 crore in April and May last year.

The issue of compensation had since been hanging fire as the district administration gave up its responsibility, the JAC alleged.

hindustantimes

Thursday, July 12, 2012

Zia Haq, Hindustan Times

New Delhi, July 12, 2012

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Last Updated: 02:05 IST(12/7/2012)

Poor monsoon hits grains, spares sugar

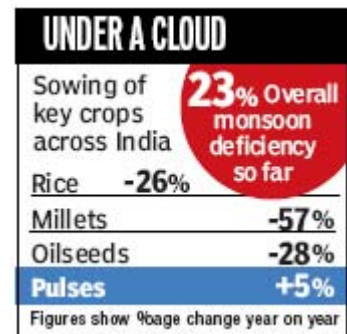
India's monsoon, vital for Asia's third-largest economy, remains 23% deficient overall, fuelling concerns that the country may end up with a lower annual food output and higher prices. The patchy rains have hit planting of key summer crops even as major food-bowl states are well into their peak sowing period, typically the first fortnight of July.

The rains are critical as two-thirds of India's population depend on farm income and 60% of croplands do not have assured irrigation. The monsoon also replenishes 81 nationally monitored water reservoirs vital for drinking, power and irrigation.

Official data showed that the sowing of rice — the main summer-grown cereal — is deficient by 26%, while planting of oilseeds has been 28% less than last year's for this time of the year.

For coarse cereals such as maize, bajra (pearl millet) and jowar (sorghum), which traditionally form the food basket of the poor, the shortfall has been highest at minus 57%.

India's headline inflation, already elevated at 7.55% in May, could climb higher if a weak monsoon were to crimp food output. According to a UN advisory, world food prices are expected to rebound in July after falling for three straight months. India relies on imports to meet domestic demand of pulses and edible oils, whose prices are likely to be hit.



Normal rains, which act as a strong check on inflation through good farm output, are critical if India is to recover from a sharp slowdown. "A deficient monsoon would impact recovery to an extent, but (its effect on) prices are a real cause of concern although stocks are plentiful," said NR Bhanumurthy, an economist at the state-run National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. Planting of cash crops such as cotton and sugarcane, sturdy crops that are less water-intensive than rice, are progressing normally.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/887376.aspx>

water

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Thursday, Jul 12

Max Min

37.2° | 25.9°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Sunrise: 5:45

Humidity: 62%

Sunset: 18:39

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 993

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Friday, Jul 13

Max Min

31° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Jul 14	Sunday Jul 15	Monday Jul 16	Tuesday Jul 17	Wednesday Jul 18
31° 27°	33° 27°	32° 27°	31° 27°	31° 27°
Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy

11 JUL, 2012, 10.20PM IST, REUTERS

Gold rebounds with oil, crops; still near one-year low

NEW YORK: Gold rose on Wednesday, rebounding from the previous day's 1.4 per cent drop with lift from rising grains and energy prices, but the precious metal remained near its one-year low, and analysts said more losses could be in store. Soaring grain prices amid a severe drought in the US Midwest and rising crude oil spurred inflation worries, which traditionally boost gold's appeal as a hedge. Trading was quiet ahead of the release of the minutes of US Federal Reserve's latest policy meeting in June.

The metal had dropped 3 per cent in the last four sessions on signs of global economic slowdown and frustrations over a lack of more monetary easing by the US central bank. Gold is just \$40 above its one-year lows near \$1,530-1,540 an ounce, and analysts said a failure to hold that support level could lead to a steep price correction.

"The long-term, upward-sloping trend line in gold's favor is in jeopardy of being broken," said Dennis Gartman, a veteran trader and publisher of the daily Gartman Letter.

"Indeed, it has made a progression of lower lows and a steady progression of lower highs, and gold's 200-day moving average is itself trending downward and has been since mid-May," Gartman said. Spot gold was up 0.5 per cent on the day at \$1,575.26 an ounce by 11:42 a.m. EDT (1542 GMT). US COMEX August gold futures were down \$4.30 at \$1,575.50 an ounce, narrowing the difference between the futures price and spot gold.

INVESTMENT, PHYSICAL DEMAND LAGS

By Tuesday's close, holdings of gold in the world's largest exchange-traded products (ETPs) fell to the lowest level since mid-June, down nearly a quarter of a million ounces in two trading days, the largest two-day drop since May. The bulk of the outflows are coming from the SPDR Gold Trust, the world's largest gold ETP, which has shed 333,500 ounces in the last three weeks. Consumer demand for gold has also been subdued. In India, where the government in the world's largest bullion buyer has raised import duties and taxes on the metal, any weakness in the rupee against the dollar suppresses purchases. Silver rose by 0.9 per cent on the day to \$27.06 an ounce. The silver price is trading close to its lowest levels this year, having echoed the persistent weakness in gold to fall by nearly a third in value since the end of

February. Among platinum group metals, platinum eased 0.1 per cent on the day to \$1,415.75 an ounce, while palladium rose 0.8 per cent to \$575.50.

Business Standard

Thursday, Jul 12, 2012

AgriMin seeks details of potato, onion storage

Concerned at price rise, advises states to use anti-hoarding rules, undertake market intervention where needed

Anindita Dey / Mumbai July 12, 2012, 0:39 IST



The Union ministry of agriculture has called for a report on the nationwide storage of potatoes and onions, in the backdrop of the rising prices of vegetables. The ministry, in coordination with the ministry of food, keeps checking on the prices of onions, potatoes and tomatoes, as these are considered primary vegetables for consumers.

A report prepared by the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation said 20-22 million tonnes of potato had been stored in cold storages across the country and about 15 per cent of this had been used. In addition to the storage data, the ministry has also sought data

from the ministry of food processing to assess the quantity used in that industry and to ascertain there is no extra storage over and above the requirement of the businesses.

There has been a sharp increase in potato prices, currently Rs 1,150-2,300 per quintal (Rs 11.5-23 per kg), against Rs 510-600 per qtl (Rs 5-6 per kg) in the same period last year. However, market sources said the price may only rise another Rs 4-6 a kg and then remain range-bound, due to consumer buying resistance and decisions to curb use.

Official sources said states have been asked to step up anti-hoarding mechanisms to 'unlock' the stored potatoes. Many producers prefer to export instead of selling at home, to make more profit on the produce. States have been advised to introduce market intervention schemes (MIS) where there is a glut-like situation, as was witnessed in Punjab two months earlier. Under an MIS, a state government would procure the surplus and the cost shared equally with the central government, official sources said.

If the situation worsens, the ministry could suggest a minimum export price, to divert the export quantity to the domestic market, sources said.

Onions

NHRDF has also prepared a status report on onions. As an experiment, the government has started a railway service called the 'Horticulture Express' to transport onions from Nashik in Maharashtra to West Bengal and Bihar, where the production is less but demand is much more. Official sources said transport by train is done within 30 hours, compared to 100 hours by road.

The report says 2.95 million tonnes of onions are in different types of storage in the country and the present arrivals in the markets are from this stored stock. Around five to 10 per cent of the storage has been used till date.

The early kharif crop area in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka is expected to be less in comparison to last year, due to low availability of underground water, stated the report. Sowing of kharif onion has begun but is yet to pick up, as growers were waiting for rain, especially in Maharashtra, the biggest producer. On the other hand, the early kharif crop in the southern states is expected to arrive in the markets from September.

Govt moves 50% of wheat kept in open to safe places

Due to inadequate storage capacity, 6.6 MT wheat are kept in 'katcha' complexes

Press Trust of India / New Delhi July 11, 2012, 19:40 IST

Fearing damage due to rain, nearly half of the 6.6 million tonnes of wheat stored in open spaces in Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh have been moved to safe places and the remaining will also be shifted by next month.

The government is grappling with the problem of plenty as its godowns are overflowing with over 82 MT of foodgrains against the storing capacity of 64 MT.

Due to inadequate storage capacity, 6.6 MT wheat are kept in 'katcha' complexes in Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

"We have already moved three million tonnes of wheat on a priority basis to safe places. The remaining will be transported next month," Food Minister K V Thomas told PTI.

The Food Ministry had decided to move 6.6 million tonnes of the grain on a priority basis to save them from damages during the monsoon which has progressed across the country.

To ease the storage crisis, the ministry had asked states to lift foodgrains meant for ration shops for the next six months in advance.

Besides, the government recently decided to offload additional 8 MT of foodgrains to BPL families and to bulk consumers. It has also allowed export of 2 MT of wheat.

Speaking separately at a event organised by Assocham, Thomas said the government manages huge stock of 82 MT of foodgrains and losses are not even 1 lakh tonnes.

Foodgrains damages have come down to 0.006% now as against 2.5% five years ago, he said.

High retail prices affect coffee consumption in 2011: ICO

Microeconomic turbulence also ascribed to high prices

Press Trust of India / New Delhi July 11, 2012, 15:53 IST

World coffee consumption grew marginally to 8.27 million tonnes in 2011 calendar year due to high retail prices and economic turbulences, International Coffee Organisation (ICO) has said. Worldwide consumption of the beverage rose by only 0.6% to 137.9 million bags (8.27 million tonnes) last year from 137.1 million bags of 60 kg each (8.23 million tonnes) in 2010, ICO data said. The growth rate in coffee consumption is much lower compared to that achieved in 2010, when consumption rose by 3.5% to 137.1 million bags in 2010 as compared to 132.5 million bags in 2009. "This reduction in the estimated growth rate of consumption for 2011 may be attributable in large part to high retail prices of coffee and macroeconomic turbulence in some major importing countries," ICO said in its report. The highest increase in retail prices of coffee were recorded in Finland, where retail prices rose by 36.8% between 2010-2011, Latvia by 38.5%, the US by 32.9% and Sweden by 26.4%, it added. The lowest increases were observed in Germany (2.3%), Portugal (3.5%), Japan (4.5%), Spain (7.6%), France (8.9%) and Bulgaria (9.4%), it said. "Although retail prices have increased in many countries, overall consumption does not appear to be adversely affected," ICO noted.

Pepper sheds 0.33% on profit-booking

Contract traded so far with an open interest of 1,013 lots

Press Trust of India / New Delhi July 11, 2012, 15:19 IST

Pepper fell by Rs 145 to Rs 42,625 per quintal in futures trade today after participants locked-in gains at prevailing levels but tight supplies and dwindling stocks limited losses.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, pepper for delivery in August fell by Rs 145, or 0.33%, to Rs 42,625 per quintal, with an open interest of 4,036 lots.

The July contract shed Rs 140, or 0.32%, to Rs 42,250 per quintal, with an open interest of 1,013 lots.

Analysts said profit-booking by speculators at prevailing higher levels led to a fall in pepper prices at futures trade but squeezed supplies and dwindling stocks limited losses.

Cardamom fall 1.34% on profit-booking

However, strong export demand may limit the downtrend

Press Trust of India / New Delhi July 11, 2012, 14:35 IST

Cardamom prices fell by Rs 18.40 to Rs 1,352.60 per kg in futures trade today as speculators booked profits at prevailing higher levels, driven by subdued demand in the spot market.

Adequate stocks availability in the physical market also put pressure on the cardamom prices.

However, strong export demand may limit the downtrend.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in August declined by Rs 18.40, or 1.34%, to Rs 1,352.60 per kg, with a business turnover of 444 lots.

The July contract shed Rs 8.40, or 0.56% to Rs 1,474 per kg, with a trading volume of 183 lots.

Market analysts said subdued demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position mainly kept pressure on the cardamom prices at futures trade.

Natural rubber production could rise 4.9% in FY13

George Joseph / Kochi July 12, 2012, 0:42 IST

Production from the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC) region might rise 4.9 per cent to 10.9 million tonnes (mt) for 2012-13.

The rise in production is on the back of increased output from Indonesia, the world's second-largest producer, likely to go up to 3.26 mt, Malaysia's to one mt and Vietnam's to 915,000 tonnes.

ANRPC has 11 members — Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. These account for 92 per cent of the global production of natural rubber.

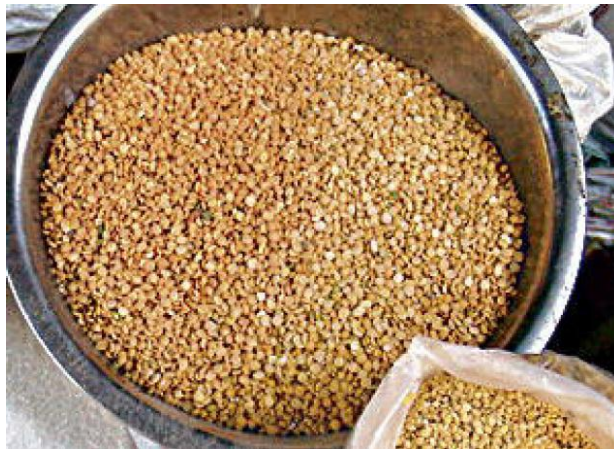
According to the initial trends from various countries, ANRPC earlier scaled down its production estimate for 2012 to 10 mt from 10.42 mt. This was based on the output in the first quarter (January-March) which fell 9.5 per cent, as farmers in Thailand and Malaysia trimmed tapping on a steep drop in prices.

According to latest reports from these countries, production is likely to go up this financial year.

Meanwhile, the biggest concern over global production is dropping prices. International markets have shown a continuous fall for the past few weeks and the Bangkok market today quoted Rs 176 a kg for the commodity. This was Rs 180 a kg last Wednesday. The Indian counters are also on a decreasing mode and RSS-4 quoted at Rs 187 a kg. Experts feel that prices are likely to pick up in the coming months, as despite a slowdown in top consumers, China and India, the demand will be almost steady this year. Demand from emerging markets, such as West Asia, Brazil and Russia will also support prices. On the supply side, erratic rain in Thailand — the largest producer — has been disrupting tapping and slowing supplies after the low-output winter season.

THE HINDU Business Line

Arrival of bulk imports pounds tur



Indore, July 11:

Arrival of imported tur in bulk and sluggish demand pounded tur in Indore mandis by Rs 100-Rs 150 a quintal with tur (Maharashtra) declining to Rs 4250 a quintal. Tur (Indore variety) also declined by Rs 100 to Rs 3100-Rs 3500 a quintal on poor buying support.

About a week back, tur (Maharashtra) on the back of higher demand and delayed monsoon had been ruling high at Rs 4500 a quintal but recent bout of monsoon rains and large arrival of imported tur have dragged down tur prices.

Sluggish demand and decline in buying support at the higher rate also dragged tur dal with its prices in the past one week declining by Rs 100 a quintal. In the spot, tur dal (full) ruled at Rs 6100-Rs 6200, tur dal (sawa no.) at Rs 5300-Rs 5400 a quintal.

Tur marka however remained unchanged at Rs 7000 a quintal On the other hand, moong and urad which are essentially rain-fed crops gained marginally higher on weak arrivals and delay in sowing of crops. Moong (best) quality ruled at Rs 4300-Rs 4500 a quintal, while moong (medium) ruled at Rs 3600-Rs 4000. Rise in spot moong also perked up its dal with moong dal being quoted at Rs 5300-Rs 5400 a quintal (Rs 5100-Rs 5200), moong dal (bold) at Rs 5900 (Rs 5750-Rs 5800), while moong mongar ruled at Rs 5500-Rs 5800 a quintal (Rs 5300-Rs 5600).

Similarly weak arrival and buying pressure also perked up urad with urad (best quality) being quoted Rs 3875-Rs 3900 a quintal (up Rs 75), while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 2800-Rs 3250. Contrary to rise in urad, its declined on slack demand with urad dal (medium) being quoted at Rs 3900-Rs 4000 a quintal, urad dal (bold) at Rs 4700-Rs 4800, while urad mongar ruled at Rs 5500-Rs 5800 a quintal (Rs 5800-Rs 6200).

Castor future was moved up on buying support



Rajkot, 11 July:

Despite of lower demand in spot market, castor seed future price was gained on the back of some limited buying support. On National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, castor August contract was increased Rs 57 to Rs 3,465 per quintal with an open interest of 55,990 lots. NCDEX September castor seed was moved up Rs 49 to Rs 3,517 with an open interest of 28,940 lots. According to Kedia Commodity from Mumbai, castor seed contract gained due to some buying support but upside was limited on the back of higher production in the crop year amid poor overseas demand. At Rajkot Commodity Exchange castor September contract was gained Rs 48 to Rs 3,508 per quintal. Against it RCX spot castor price was declined Rs 32.50 to Rs 3,157.50 per quintal on lower demand. Castor was traded down by Rs 10 to Rs 615-630 per 20 kg in various markets of Gujarat and about 25,000-30,000 bags of castor seed arrived in Gujarat. About 3,600-3,700 bags of castor arrived in Saurashtra region and price was quoted down by Rs 10 to Rs 600-640 per 20 kg. Industry insiders estimate a total castor production of about 1.7 to 1.75 million tonnes (mt) in India, higher by about 500,000 tonnes from the last year. Now support for the castor seed is seen at 3399 and below could see a test of Rs 3,336. Resistance is now likely to be seen at Rs 3,502, a move above could see prices testing Rs 3,542, says Kedia Commodity.

Sugar prices firmer as crushing season nears close



Mumbai, July 11:

Sugar prices at the Vashi market continued to head north on Wednesday on strong sentiment and expected tight supply as the crushing season is almost over at the national level. Markets took a breather and ruled steady the previous day after a continuous rise of Rs 150 this month.

Prices in the physical market shot up by Rs 30-50. Naka rates were up by same margin, tracking a jump of Rs 10-30 in mill tender rates. In the spot market, despite routine local demand and profit-booking led weak domestic futures market, sentiment remained firm, said market sources.

Mr Jagdish Rawal, a wholesaler, told *Business Line*: "Prices headed north as millers are not very eager to sell in a big way, expecting higher prices in the coming festival days. Domestic demand is sure to improve during the Ramzan, Raksha Bandhan, Janmashtami and Ganeshotsav festivals, to be celebrated during July-September. Maharashtra is also expected to see improved demand from neighbouring States such as Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. As prices are ruling below mill parity, sentiment will remain bullish. There are about 90-100 truckloads lying as inventory in the Vashi market; hence, there is ample supply of the commodity to feed festival demand. Mills are also selling regularly, with steady price rise," he said.

In the international markets, white sugar futures in London ended up, hitting a three-and-a-half month high as brisk consumer buying and lingering problems in top growers Brazil and India stoked the sweetener's steady advance. Prices rallied since the start of June, after heavy rainfall in Brazil heightened shortage concerns.

International sugar futures prices showed a mixed trend on Wednesday. August -12 futures closed higher by \$3.90 to \$650.00 (\$646.10) and an October-12 future was down by \$1.20 to \$608.30 (\$609.50) per tonne. In the domestic market sugar futures showed a weak trend, losing Rs 40 till noon on profit-booking. A Europe-based sugar broker said: "This is a 'weather' market, and what it does next will depend on the rains in Brazil and India."

In Vashi market, arrivals were 50-52 truckloads and local dispatches were 51-52 truckloads. Freight rates ruled unchanged at higher level. On Tuesday evening, 15-16 mills offered tenders and sold about 54,000-55,000 bags (each, 100 kg) to the local stockists at the higher range of Rs 3,060-3,110 (Rs 3,030-3,100) for S-grade and Rs 3,120-3,170 (Rs 3,090-3,150) for M-grade. Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 3,160-3,221 (Rs 3,102 -3,235) and M-grade Rs 3,221- 3,331 (Rs 3,201- 3,301). Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,150 -3,170 (Rs 3,100 -3,130) and M-grade Rs 3,200-3,270 (Rs 3,160-3,240).

Mixed trend in pepper futures

G. K. Nair



Kochi, July 11:

The pepper market was highly volatile on Wednesday with ups and downs and eventually ended in a mixed trend.

Two active contracts moved up slightly while the third dropping marginally. Buying support was weak.

Many of operators were buying spot and selling futures, July/August delivery and tendering the goods on exchange platform. "In fact, bull operators were squeezing the short position holders," market sources told *Business Line*.

The stock position gives the impression that there is going to be no material which will have its validity expiring on Aug 5, they said.

On the spot, 15 tonnes of farm grade pepper arrived and they were traded at Rs 396, 399 and 401 a kg depending upon quality, grade and area of production.

July contract on the NCDEX moved up by Rs 45 to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 42,435 a quintal while August also increased by Rs 45 a quintal to the LTP of Rs 42,815 a quintal.

September dropped by Rs 190 to the LTP of Rs 43,250 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover increased by 526 tonnes to 4,308 tonnes. Total open interest increased by 102 tonnes to 5,175 tonnes.

July open interest fell by 231 tonnes to 845 tonnes while that of August and September went up by 320 tonnes and 13 tonnes respectively to close at 4,100 tonnes and 197 tonnes.

Spot prices on slack buying interest declined by Rs 100 a quintal to close at Rs 39,600 (ungarbled) and Rs 41,100 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$7,850 - \$7,900 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and \$8,150 - \$8,200 a tonne (c&f) for the US.

Overseas trend

According to an overseas report, the pepper market continued to show an easier trend besides being nervous.

Difference between various producers was wide. However, Vietnam remained relatively steady with FAQ 500 GL at \$6,075 a tonne (fob), FAQ 550 GL at \$6,325 - \$6,350 a tonne (fob) while Brazil B1 was at \$6,350 a tonne (fob) August shipment. Lampong Asta was at \$6,500 and tonne (CFR) New York.

Most edible oils decline



Mumbai, July 11:

Barring Rapeseed oil which increased by Rs.5 most edible oils decline on Wednesday, tracking extended decline in Malaysian Palm oil futures. Imported palmolein and soya oil drop by Rs.7 and Rs.2 each. Groundnut oil and sunflower refined oil eased by Rs.5 each while cotton refined oil lose by Rs.2 on arrivals of monsoon in key oilseed producing centers giving a boost to sowing. Local refineries have reduced their rates in line with weak foreign markets. Local demand was routine with thin volume on bearish sentiment overseas.

Malaysian Crude Palm oil futures closed lower by 50, 48 and 49 ringgits a tone. Market fall to their lowest level this month tracking weaker Dalian oilseed and CBOT soya oil futures amid worries about a slowdown in China's economy. The declines in the palm oil prices went against higher agriculture markets that were lifted by US drought hurting soyabean crops, a view likely to be reflected in a key US report late evening that may boost the prices Analyst said.

Mr. Shailesh Kataria of Riddhi Broker told Businessline "Tracking bearish Malaysian Palm oil futures prices on eased exports data and arrivals of monsoon in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan has increase selling pressure in physical market. Need based local demand forced local refineries to reduce the rates to keep fit with market mood. About 250 – 300 tones of Palmolein was resale traded for ready, July and August delivery in the range of Rs.614 – Rs.617. Vaibhavi sold about 150- 200 tones palmolein at Rs.613 – 614. Traders are expecting higher demand during festival months August – December.

End of the day Liberty was quoting Palmolein at Rs.625-628, Super palmolein Rs.660, Soya oil Rs.760 and Sunflower refined oil Rs.753. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 615 for Ready delivery, Rs.618 for July and Rs.623-625 for August. Soya refined oil at Rs 755 for July and Rs.760 for August. Sunflower refined oil at Rs 748-753 for July – August respectively. Allana's rate for Palmolein was Rs.625 for 1- 10 August. Mewah's rate was Rs.624. Vaibhavi's rate for Palmolein was Rs.615. In Saurashtra - Rajkot groundnut oil price was Rs.1840 (Rs 1,830) for Telia tin and Rs 1,200 (Rs 1,200) for loose - 10kgs.

Malaysia's crude palm oil August contracts settled lower at MYR 3,069 (MYR 3,126), September at MYR 3,082 (MYR 3,130) and October at MYR 3,087 (MYR 3,136) a tone. On National Board of Trade – Indore, Soya refined oil July-12 futures decline to Rs.776.00 (Rs.780.00) and August at Rs.790.80 (Rs.792.20).

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates were (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 1,180 (1,185), soya refined oil 750 (752), sunflower exp. ref. 700 (685), sunflower ref. 750 (755), rapeseed ref. oil 865 (860), rapeseed expeller ref. 835 (830) cotton ref. oil 720 (722) and palmolein 615 (622).

Poultry feed products prices up on dearer soyameal

Our Correspondent



Karnal, July 11:

Dearer soyameal and other ingredients have led to the prices of poultry feed products rising further on Wednesday.

Due to low rainfall this year, stockists have started to hold the stocks and that has driven prices up, said Mr Satpal Singh, Proprietor, Sarvottam Poultry Feed Supply Centre Pvt Ltd.

“If the monsoon fails to pick up even this week, prices of poultry feed products may increase further in the coming days,” he added.

Higher export of soyameal is also a big reason behind the rally in soyameal prices, said Mr Satpal.

Soyameal has rallied and prices have increased by Rs 850 a quintal in the last three weeks. It may go up further, he said.

On Wednesday, soyameal prices increased by Rs 100 and quoted at around Rs 3,900 a quintal. Similarly, maize prices went up by Rs 95 to Rs 1,270 a quintal. Bajra increased by Rs 70 and settled at Rs 1,100 a quintal, DCP went up by Re 1 and quoted at Rs 36 a kg, while fish oil sold at Rs 82 a litre.

Poultry feed products

Prices of poultry feed products went up by Rs 70 and Rs 200 for a 30-kg and a 50-kg bag respectively. Broiler concentrates feed went up by Rs 200 and quoted at Rs 1,830 for a 50-kg bag. Broiler Starter Mash sold at Rs 1,350 for a 50-kg bag, up Rs 70 from its previous level.

'Broiler Pre-Starter Concentrate 30 per cent' increased by Rs 120 and sold at Rs 1,540 for a 30-kg bag, while layer concentrate went up by Rs 130 and cost Rs 1,390 for a 50-kg bag. Pre-lay mash quoted at Rs 900, up Rs 70 from its previous level while broiler finisher went up by Rs 70 and sold at Rs 1,330 for a 50-kg bag. Meanwhile, after touching a record high earlier this month, egg and broiler prices witnessed correction while chick went further up on Wednesday. Broiler quoted at Rs 95 a kg against Rs 125 last week. The price of an egg went down by 65 paise and cost Rs 2.65, while chick went up by Rs 4 and sold at Rs 22. Buyers' resistance is the prime reason behind the fall in the prices of broiler and egg, said Mr Satpal .

Uptrend in turmeric may be due to low arrivals



Erode, July 12:

Turmeric price is increasing daily and on Wednesday the commodity reached Rs 6,000 a quintal.

“The price of finger variety has touched Rs 6,000 a quintal, without any valid reason. We feel that the prices are appraised due to the low arrival and also buying by the stockists. But considering the situation, the same price will not remain for long but decrease soon,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said till date no exporter has received fresh orders from North India. Further, the price in turmeric futures remains at Rs 4,600 to Rs 4,800 a quintal.

Mr Ravishankar said the arrival of turmeric to the four markets has decreased to 6,100 bags and 90 per cent of the stocks were sold. Almost all the stocks were purchased by the stockists. He is of the opinion that the prices may increase to more than Rs 10,000 in 2014.

Mr Palanisamy, a turmeric farmer, said that he is keeping the quality goods with him and selling the medium variety now for his domestic expenses.

On Wednesday, the price reached Rs 6,169 a quintal in the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society.

The finger variety price has improved heavily, while root variety decreased.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 2,409 to Rs 5,137 a quintal, root variety Rs 2,366 to Rs 4,711 a quintal.

Salem Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,901 to Rs 6,269 a quintal, root variety Rs 4,106 to Rs 5,136 a quintal. Of the 955 bags of turmeric kept for sales, 520 bags were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,299 to Rs 5,901 a quintal, root variety Rs 5,239 to Rs 5,416 a quintal.

All the 538 bags kept for sales were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, finger variety was sold at Rs 4,299 to Rs 5,869 a quintal, root variety Rs 3,677 to Rs 5,209 a quintal. All the 887 bags kept for sales were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, finger variety was sold at Rs 3,899 to Rs 6,169 a quintal, root variety Rs 3,272 to Rs 5,019 a quintal. All the 49 bags kept for sales were sold.

Crop damage in AP may push up potato futures

Our Bureau



Below-average-rainfall coupled with supply concerns in Andhra Pradesh would now shift the focus to the other two major potato growing regions of Agra and West Bengal.

Mumbai, July 11:

Potato futures on NCDEX may gain on reports of crop damage in Andhra Pradesh and delayed monsoon. Besides, soaring vegetable prices might support the potato price rise in medium term.

On Tuesday, potato for August delivery on NCDEX opened up by more than 2 per cent, but gave away much of the gain to settle with a gain of 0.63 per cent.

Below-average-rainfall coupled with supply concerns in Andhra Pradesh would now shift the focus to the other two major potato growing regions of Agra and West Bengal for meeting the demand.

About 220 lakh tonnes of potato is stored in different cold storage.

Currently, the potato stock in Uttar Pradesh is down 11 per cent at about 89 lakh tonnes compared to 100.42 lakh tonnes stored in the same period last year.

Punjab has an inventory of about 16 lakh tonnes and in Bihar it was 10 lakh tonnes. West Bengal has about 50 lakh tonnes of potato in cold storage.

Sowing in Karnataka was affected by delayed rains, while in Maharashtra sowing for kharif season is yet begin.

Wet cocoa bean price down, dry remains unchanged

A.J. Vinayak



Mangalore, July 11:

High water content in wet cocoa beans has made Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd (Campco) to lower its price to Rs 33 a kg.

Mr M. Suresh Bhandary, Managing Director of Campco, told Business Line that due to the high water content, the cooperative has fixed Rs 33 a kg for wet cocoa beans. Earlier, the price was Rs 40 a kg. He said water content is more in wet cocoa beans after the rains started.

“However, the price of the dry cocoa beans remains at Rs 135-140 a kg. There is no change in that,” he said.

The reduction in the price of wet beans is because of the proportionate decline in its yield. The wet-to-dry beans yield has come down to 24.5 per cent. During summer, it was around 33 per cent.

(This means 100 kg of wet cocoa beans, which yielded 33 kg of dry beans in summer, yielded 24-25 kg of dry beans during the rainy months.)

Stating that the cooperative tried to maintain the price of Rs 40 a kg, he said in recent days it got several lots of wet cocoa beans whose yield was below 25 per cent. “Proportionately we brought down the price by Rs 7 a kg,” he said, adding: “We have not reduced the rates of dry beans. If the growers supply us the dry beans, we give them the price of Rs 135-140 a kg.”

Stating that the arrivals of cocoa beans started early this season, he said that the arrivals were good during April-May months. Then the cooperative procured wet cocoa beans in the price range of Rs 43-48 a kg, Mr Bhandary said

Spices Board plans to link farmers on mobile tele-network

L.N. Revathy

Coimbatore, July 11:

Spices Board is gearing up to link spice farmers in the State on a mobile tele-network for a direct interface with the Board. The Board is aiming to help farmers discover the price for their produce. This is being done in association with ISKL (IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd) of Tamil Nadu to provide opportunities for spice farmers to receive voice messages every day informing them on the schemes, projects, prices of spices and announcements from the Board.

The State Manager of ISKL Mr Jinnah, told *Business Line* that the company has tied up with Airtel and created a server for sharing information with farmers.

“Every member should have an Airtel Sim card to avail the service,” he added.

Besides receiving voice messages about price movement and the Spices Board schemes, farmers will also receive related information such as various aspects of spices cultivation, weather condition, weather forecast, processing, marketing and exports.

The effort is aimed at bridging the gap between farmers, traders and exporters, more so by linking the processing facilities with the farmer, particularly when the demand for quality spices is high across the globe, he added.

Dr A. Jayathilak, Chairman Spices Board, rolled out the programme at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University here.

“This initiative would have a positive impact as the reach of the mobile phones in India is much higher than toilets! A member who opts for this service will receive voice message and at the start of the day,” he told this correspondent.

“Farmers would now have to shift to responsible farming practices to sustain, grow and improve their living standards.

We want to tell the farmers that if they follow our instructions prudently, they will not have to be at the mercy of the buyer/exporter. We will help them identify markets,” he said.

Since farmers were at the mercy of the middlemen for marketing the produce, they invariably did not get a fair deal. “We want to break this ice,” he said.

The roll-out marked the launch of a community of spices farmers called the “Tamil Nadu Spices Community”. Farmers queued up at the registration desk, seeking both – an Airtel Sim and community membership.

Sources said that the TN Spices Community would start functioning with around 1,000 farmers initially.

The venture is expected to benefit spices growers in the Western Ghats, lower Palani Hills, Meghamalai Hills, Shevoro Hills, Sirumalai Hills, Ramnadu, Kolli Hills, Valparai, Cuddalore, Ooty, Nagercoil, Virudhunagar, Erode, Salem, Pollachi and Coimbatore where pepper, cardamom, chillies, nutmeg, curry leaf, turmeric, tamarind and herbs are raised in a big way.

The Board is eventually planning to extend the service to other spice-producing states such as Kerala, Karnataka, Sikkim, North Eastern states, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

IKSL is planning to issue green cards to members of the spices communities for free.

Food grain storage losses down by 99% in 5 years

Our Bureau

Ahmedabad, July 11:

Initiatives undertaken by the Government have reduced damages to and loss of food grains in India from 2.5 per cent to just 0.006 per cent of total production during the past five years, Prof K V Thomas, Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said on Wednesday.

Damages and losses now account for less than one lakh tonnes of the total food grain production of 8.20 crore tons, he said at an ASSOCHAM event in New Delhi, the industry body said here. He was inaugurating the "Fourth Global Summit on the Second Green Revolution".

Prof Thomas added that this reduction in wastage is a major achievement for the Food Corporation of India, one of the largest storing agencies in the country. He added that the development of a strong food processing industry together with infrastructure for storage, transportation and processing of agro-produce is essential to minimise wastage.

The Government is providing assistance to food processing industries under various schemes, supporting R&D activities and working towards human resource development to meet the growing demand for skilled manpower and promoting entrepreneurship.

Dr. U. Venkateswarlu, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Food Processing, stressed the need to enhance productivity in dry-land farming areas in the Second Green Revolution. Area under dry-land agriculture in India is over 50 per cent of the total cultivable area in the country.

Sugar exports may gain on tight global supplies

Vishwanath Kulkarni



New Delhi, July 11:

The rebound in global white sugar futures on concerns over delay in Brazilian harvest has augured well for Indian exporters.

“Exports are happening at a good pace with demand coming from West Asia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka,” said Mr Abinash Verma, Director-General, Indian Sugar Mills Association.

Sugar futures on both London and New York terminals rebounded over the past fortnight on concerns of rains delaying harvest in Brazil and Australia. The concern over cane diversion in Brazil to produce ethanol amid shortfall in corn supplies is also seen as aiding the sugar price trend.

White sugar futures for August delivery gained \$3.90 on the London terminal to close at \$650 a tonne on Tuesday. Since June 28, the futures for August delivery on the London terminal have gained about 8.5 per cent. The ICE raw sugar futures have also entered a bull phase in recent days and are hovering around 22.5 cents a pound.

More demand

“There is more demand for raw sugar compared with white or refined sugar. But the white sugar exports are also happening,” said Mr Vinay Kumar, Managing Director, National Federation of Co-operative Sugar Factories (NFCSF).

Most of the importers, especially in West Asia, prefer to import raw sugar and refine it in their own refinery, Mr Kumar said. Raw sugar exports are mainly taking place from States such as Tamil Nadu, where crushing is going on.

Exports pick up

Indian exports have picked up ahead of Ramzan and realisations for millers, aided by a weaker rupee, are expected to be better.

“We have physically exported about 25.5 lakh tonnes so far, while another 2-3 lakh tonne is in various stages of being shipped out,” Mr Verma said.

Indian millers have so far exported 28 lakh tonnes in the current 2011-12 season beginning October. “We expect to ship out another 7-8 lakh tonnes,” he added.

The delay in harvest in Australia and Brazil due to heavy rains may help Indian exporters grab a larger pie of the Indonesian market, where demand is seen strong, agency reports from Jakarta said.

Output forecast

ISMA has forecast an output of 25 million tonnes for 2012-13 season starting October. This is one million tonne lower than the 26 m.t projected by the industry body for the current year.

The lower forecast, despite higher cane acreage, is mainly on account of inadequate rains impacting yields and recovery in the key growing States of Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Coonoor tea auction volume slides

Our Bureau



Coonoor, July 11:

For the second consecutive week, the offer for Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions has fallen. A volume of 20.82 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No: 28 to be held on Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of brokers' listing.

This is 9,000 kg less than last week's offer. It is as much as 3.64 lakh kg more than the offer this time last year.

Of the 20.82 lakh kg on offer, 15.29 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 5.53 lakh kg to the dust grades. As much as 19.26 lakh kg belongs to the CTC variety and only 1.56 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 0.92 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 14.37 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.64 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 4.89 lakh kg, CTC.

The substantial portion of this volume comprises fresh teas totalling 17.54 lakh kg. About 3.28 lakh kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions. The floods in Russia are impacting the movement of tea and, concomitantly, the purchases here.

Domestic buying is depressurised in the absence of stiff export competition. Last week, in the leaf tea auctions, Hindustan Unilever Ltd and Godfrey Philips India Ltd bought good medium varieties while Tata Global Beverages and Duncans Tea Ltd were selective. In the dust tea auctions, HUL, Tata Global and Godfrey were selective while Duncans did not operate.

Research body, Oz varsity to explore emission cuts in agriculture

New Delhi, July 11:

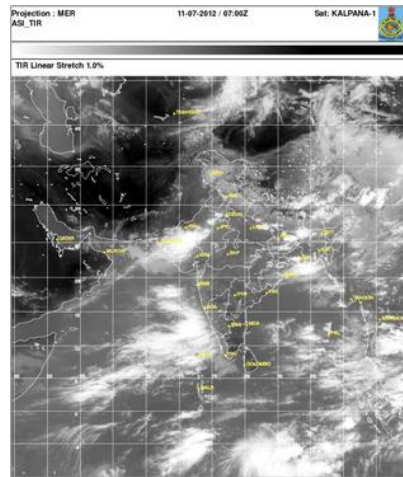
The National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and IDFC, in collaboration with Monash University of Australia, will explore the potential for greenhouse gas (GHG) offsets in Indian agriculture. The International Food Policy Research Institute will also participate in the study that will be funded by the Australian Government and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

The parameters of the project, including the framework, would be defined over the next six months, said Ms Jyoti Gujral of IDFC Foundation. The study will be conducted over the next 2.5 years. It will help address the contemporary policy challenge of national emission reduction. It will also offer strategic opportunity to assist in re-focussing farm level assistance towards incentive payments which will encourage less emission intensive farming practices.

Agriculture accounts for about 17 per cent of India's GHG emissions. Mr Scott Davenport, Executive Director, New South Wales Trade and Investment said that Australia would share its experiences from the recently launched Carbon Farming Initiative that allows farmers and land managers to earn carbon credits by storing carbon or reducing GHG emissions.

Monsoon sweep complete but heads into a lull

Vinson Kurian



Thiruvananthapuram, July 11:

Monsoon has covered the entire country four days ahead of schedule on Wednesday.

This came about after a prevailing weather system over northwest India led the rain charge in the region.

LULL PHASE

It also signalled the beginning of yet another lull phase over large parts of the country except the west coast, Himalayan foothills and parts of east India. Global weather models do not see another significant rain wave until Thursday next (July 19) when rains may break out over north peninsular India. These models are not sure if they can sustain for long, since factors facilitating their onset are not seen dropping anchor. As is normal during this phase, east and northeast India and parts of southeast coast (Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu) may come under varying amounts of rain. Rains in the foothills bristle with the threat of mudslides and avalanches along the vulnerable stretches of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

RAINS MIGRATING

An India Meteorological Department (IMD) outlook too agreed that the wet weather is about to migrate to the foothills once the ongoing session over northwest rains out. A weather warning said that heavy rainfall would occur at one or two places over Rajasthan and Gujarat on Thursday.

Heavy rains may also break out over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and Bihar during the next two days.

Elsewhere, thundershowers have been forecast over the west coast, east and northeast India, Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

A number of places over the western Himalayan region and Uttar Pradesh also may witness rains.

EXTENDED OUTLOOK

A similar outlook is valid for many places over Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi during next two days and at a few places thereafter. An extended outlook valid until Wednesday (July 18) said that rains would continue to lash the west coast and the Northeastern States. The western Himalayan region, parts of the Indo-Gangetic plains and the rest of east India and at a few places over central India too may benefit from localised rains.

Rainfall improves, but still 23% short

Vishwanath Kulkarni



There will be no impact on planting of paddy and sowing of crops such as groundnut and soyabean will pick up, says the IMD chief.

New Delhi, July 11:

While the monsoon deficit has shrunk, worries still loom large on the agriculture front.

Rainfall has improved over the past 10 days helping in the planting of paddy, groundnut and soyabean, the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, said on Thursday.

Deficit down

The rain deficit has come down to 23 per cent from 31 per cent 10 days ago, with Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh receiving rains in the past few days.

But the “situation is worrisome” in Karnataka and parts of Maharashtra — especially Madhya Maharashtra and Marathawada, Mr Pawar said. These States, which got scanty winter rain last year, have so far had a deficit monsoon.

“There is a cause for concern about coarse cereals production and drinking water supply in these two States,” Mr Pawar added.

Latest data from the India Metrological Department show that north interior Karnataka, which is facing a drought-like situation, had 47 per cent rain deficit, while south interior Karnataka had a shortfall of over 51 per cent. In Madhya Maharashtra and Marathawada, the deficit is 33 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively.

Sowing affected

Poor rain has affected sowing of jowar, bajra, maize and millets, while planting of paddy has picked up and should not cause worry, Mr Pawar said.

Rains in the past two days in Saurashtra and Madhya Pradesh should help the sowing of oilseeds such as groundnut and soyabean.

Planting of cash crops such as cotton and sugarcane has also been good, the Agriculture Minister said.

Earlier, the IMD Director-General, Dr L.S. Rathore, said the monsoon covered the entire country on Wednesday but the deficit of 23 per cent was likely to remain till the end of this week.

Dr Rathore said that El Nino, a warmer condition in Pacific Ocean that affects rainfall in countries such as India, may set in some time in August, by which time kharif sowing would be complete.

World farm meet brings together corporate sector involved in food

KOLKATA, JULY 11:

The two-day World Sustainable Agriculture Congress got under way in Singapore on Wednesday.

The conference is designed to bring together the global corporate sector involved in the food value chain, including agribusiness, academics, and policymakers to discuss the solutions needed to achieve sustainable agriculture for future food security, according to the organisers.

Among the speakers, some have India as their research and working base. Mr Partha R. Das Gupta, Principal Advisor, Agronomy, Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture of India, has been working in the country for a long time.

Since 2005, he has been running a number of projects aimed at strengthening the livelihood security of small farmers through the transfer of appropriate technologies. Several of the models and approaches first tried out with the projects in India were later adopted by other Syngenta Foundation projects in Africa and Asia. He is active in agricultural research and extension to ago-biotech regulatory policy, biodiversity and IPR.

Dr Etienne Duveiller, currently the Principal Scientist at CIMMYT of Mexico, is scheduled to return to India later this year in order to lead the research activities at the newly established Borlaug Institute for South Asia (BISA).

Mr Gaurav Sood, Head of Crop Solutions at New Holland Fiat India, is an agricultural engineer from the Punjab Agricultural University. He worked for the mechanisation of Indian agriculture and dairy farms. He also worked for introducing combine harvesting technology in the country for several crops. The other speakers include Mr Bruce Blakeman of Cargill, Mr Harvey L. Glick of Monsanto, Mr Puvan Jegeraj Selvanathan, Special Advisor, United Nations Global Compact on Food & Sustainable Agriculture, Malaysia and Mr Rukshan Gunatilaka of British American Tobacco.