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## Sunflower vanishing from landscape of Erode district

S. Ramesh

*The damage caused by the birds has affected the crop yield*



Sunflowers in full bloom at a field near Erode. —PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

The bright yellowish, large-headed flowers that follow the sun have almost vanished from the landscape of Erode district.

The acreage under sunflower cultivation has declined to 100 hectares in the previous fiscal and the agriculture officials here fear that it may fall below 50 hectares this year. In 2007-08, the district had over 7,600 hectares covered under sunflower. But it fell down to 1,098 hectares in 2008-09. the total acreage under sunflower stood at 116 hectares during the previous fiscal. Agriculture officials and scientists are not sure of the causes for the crop becoming so unpopular among farmers in the district. A few officials here claim that the damage caused by the birds has affected the crop yield, which made the farmers to switch to other crops.

“The farmers find it extremely difficult to protect the crop from the birds. The crop suffered huge damage as the sunflower seeds are favourite food for birds like parrots,” a senior officials in the agriculture department say.

The crop is suitable for almost all types of soil. It gives better yield in the black soil. But one can cultivate the crop in most types of soil. The seeds fetch a good price in the market as the demand for sunflower oil is growing at a faster rate in the country, officials point out.

The department has been encouraging the farmers to take up the crop as it requires less water. “But many farmers in the district are not willing to take up the crop,” the official says.

The department, however, had planned to conduct awareness programmes to encourage farmers to increase the acreage under oilseeds including sunflower.

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### **Support for dairy farmers**

Staff Correspondent

To popularise dairy development on commercial lines and ensure returns for farmers, the Department of Animal Husbandry will extend financial assistance in the form of loans and subsidy to farmers intending to take up dairy development under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Scheme for 2012-13.

Under the scheme, Rs. 6 lakh will be allotted to farmers — Rs. 5 lakh as loan and Rs. 1 lakh as subsidy — for construction of a 1,500-sq ft shed, purchase of ten milch cows/buffaloes (inclusive of insurance premium), 60 days stock of fodder, fodder-cutting equipment and other materials.

Only 21 farmers — three from each taluk — in the district can avail themselves of the benefits of the scheme. Those interested can submit their application with a photograph, along with land documents, caste certificate (if they belong to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes), loan agreement papers, advance receipts in duplicate towards subsidy and other relevant documents to the Assistant Director of Animal Husbandry in their respective taluks. For further details, call 08392-275146.

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## **Courses on farming**

The VC Farm Zonal Agricultural Research Station here is conducting courses on paddy production, animal husbandry, floral and medicinal plants, organic farming, etc., from July 10. Those interested can obtain details from the station.

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## **Integrated vegetable cultivation drive planned**

Special Correspondent

*Target to produce 1,72,368 tonnes of vegetables at Rs.42.5 crore*

The Department of Agriculture is launching an integrated vegetable cultivation development programme with a target of producing 1,72,368 tonnes of vegetables at a cost of Rs.42.5 crore, Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan has said.

It was proposed to begin vegetable cultivation in 14,363 hectares of land in 2,400 selected schools, courtyards of houses, vacant land in government and quasi-government institutions, municipalities and corporations, Mr. Mohanan said on Friday. The motto was to attract the urban population that did not have enough space for vegetable farming.

The programme would be implemented in all municipalities as well as Kollam and Thrissur Corporations. Vegetable seed kits would be provided to attract housewives and other sections to the programme.

Financial assistance will be given to the projects to be submitted by government and other institutions. The allocation in this score is Rs.1.41 crore. A sum of Rs.3 crore has been earmarked for launching the scheme through educational institutions. This includes the Rs.84 lakh for starting farm clubs and vegetable farming in 2,400 schools. A sum of Rs.75 lakh has been allocated for distributing 5 lakh vegetable seed kits.

It has also been decided to distribute 26,500 grow bag units worth Rs.2,000 each at 75 per cent subsidy in Kollam and Thrissur corporations for promoting terrace farming. The grow bags will be distributed by various agencies including the Seed Authority, Kerala State Horticulture

Mission, Kerala Agriculture University and Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council of Kerala. The urban clusters development drive is expected to cost Rs.4 crore.

It has been proposed to promote district clusters for Rs.2.7 crore and set up agro service centres in 152 blocks, 60 municipalities and the two corporations for providing training and information to the farmers.

Kudumbashree units, NSS volunteers, residents associations, Green Cadet Core, Lions and Rotary Clubs, YMCA, Literacy Mission Nehru Yuva Kendra and other organisations will be utilised for conducting the training and campaign programmes. Chief Minister Oommen Chandy will launch the programme at a function to be held at Holy Angels Convent School, Vanchiyoor, at 3.30 p.m. on July 9. Mr. Mohanan will preside.

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- *Vegetable cultivation in 14,363 ha proposed*
  - *In all municipalities and two Corporations*
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### **Rs. 10,000 cr. sought for oilpalm cultivation**

The government has sought the Planning Commission to sanction a huge Rs. 10,000-crore budget to the State to develop oilpalm cultivation in a big way. Disclosing this at a function here on Thursday night, Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy said any large scale development of oilpalm cultivation would earn revenues for the State, foreign exchange for the country besides meeting the local needs.

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### **Medak biggest loser in micro irrigation projects**

Staff Reporter

Despite having three Ministers – Deputy Chief Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha, Major Industries Minister J. Geeta Reddy and V. Sunitha Lakshma Reddy - from the district, Medak has been failing to get its due share in the implementation of micro irrigation projects.

## **Dependent on rainfall**

This is even after policy makers are aware that the district is completely dependent on rainfall instead of any irrigation sources, except for about 25,000 acres out of about four lakh hectares that will be cultivated during the farming season.

## **Increase in demand**

In 2011-12, the government sanctioned micro irrigation project (MIP) for 5,698 hectares at a cost of Rs.50 crore.

In addition, scores of farmers submitted applications to the authorities demanding that micro irrigation drips be supplied for about 1,000 hectares. This year the demand has increased by another 2,000 hectares, according to sources.

However, in the present financial year, sanction has been given only for 3,057 hectares with a budget allocation of Rs.28.27 crore. Medak is located next to Ranga Reddy district, which got a lower budget allocation compared to any other district in the Telangana region, and officials admit that this is 'nothing but stepmotherly treatment'.

With Ranga Reddy getting urbanised quickly and left with little land for cultivation, Medak stands on the top as the loser in implementing the project.

"The allocation for about 3,000 hectares in the district is only in the first phase. Higher officials have promised to increase the allocation once we complete the present target," K.

Ramalakshim, project director, APMIP told *The Hindu* .

MUMBAI, July 7, 2012

## **Poor rains could hit pulses output, says Pawar**

Deficit rainfall in June in western and central India could affect pulses output, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar told reporters on Friday on the sidelines of a conference here.

Mr. Pawar acknowledged that the late monsoon had had a crippling effect in Maharashtra, Karnataka and the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh.

As part of efforts to remedy the situation additional cultivation area for pulses was being sought out in Punjab and Haryana and financial concessions to farmers were being worked out. The

Minister said he had convened a meeting of top agriculture scientists in the next 10 days to ponder the issue.

He, however, said production of rice and paddy was “unlikely to be affected.”

“There is a deficit of 31 per cent that would be made up by rainfall in July and August,” Mr. Pawar said adding rainfall would be 96 per cent for the remainder of the monsoon and that the situation, as of now, was not worrisome.

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### **Government to give full subsidy for micro-irrigation programme**

: As much as 5,000 acres in this district would benefit by the micro-irrigation programme for which the government would give cent per cent subsidy, Collector Darez Ahmed said here on Thursday.

According to an official release, he was speaking at a meeting with farmers of Veppur panchayat union regarding farming operations, bank loan and adopting various agri-allied activities.

Mr. Ahmed pointed out that rain-fed crops played a major role in this district. Of those, small onion was the most important.

As directed by the Chief Minister, raising nursery and transplanting the same with government subsidy had helped farmers immensely.

In order to maintain water economy drip irrigation had been implemented in 3,008 acres for which Rs. 13.17 crore had been sanctioned.

The Collector said cooperative institutions would extend a crop loan of Rs. 120 crore this financial year.

Of that so far 1,439 farmers had been disbursed Rs. 6.78 crore interest-free crop loan.

In Veppur union, 260 farmers had been disbursed Rs. 1.83 crore as crop loan.

He was happy to note that Veppur union had been contributing substantially towards milk procurement as well. About 30,000 litres of milk had been procured from 44 milk producers’

cooperative societies. By selling the produce immediately and directly, farmers were able to get only a marginal profit, he said.

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## **Vivasayigal Sangam puts forth demands to boost agriculture**

Staff Reporter

The key demand of farmers who took part in the Farmers Day Rally – here on Thursday evening – was to involve villagers who are employed under the 100 days compulsory employment of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) to be employed in agricultural activities. It was among their 21 other demands to the State and Union Governments.

Hundreds of farmers participated in the rally organised by the Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam (TVS) that was flagged off at the Government South School and concluded at the Bus Stand.

The association's founder Dr. M.R. Sivasamy presided over the General Body meeting that was held after the rally.

During the meeting, Dr. Sivasamy noted that 15,582 farmers across the country ended their lives as they were not able to repay their debts.

“The Governments should waive all agriculture loans borrowed by farmers from nationalised and co-operative banks, put an end to seizure of the defaulting farmer's properties such as tractors and also withdraw cases against them from court,” he said.

They also made an appeal to forest department officials to stop entry of elephants into agricultural lands, give a compensation of Rs. 5 lakh to families of farmers killed by elephants and to fix compensation at Rs. 30,000 per acre that was damaged by elephants.

Farmers also resolved to urge the government to ensure that farmers and agricultural lands are not affected by the gas pipeline in the fields – and to lay them alongside the National Highways.

They felt that the Union Government should nationalise rivers to end the river water crisis faced by Tamil Nadu due to disputes faced by the State from its nearby States.

They also urged the government to fix the minimum rate of agricultural produce as follows: One tonne of Tapioca – Rs. 9,000; a quintal of turmeric – Rs. 10,000, one tonne of sugarcane – Rs. 3,000; rice – Rs. 2,000 per tonne; one litre of cow milk – Rs. 25 and the same quantity of buffalo milk – Rs. 35; a kilogram of peeled coconut – Rs. 20 and price of an egg – Rs. 5.

Their other main demands included providing free electricity for poultry farms, a flat 30 percent subsidy on the production cost of all agricultural produce, ban on tanneries in Vellore District that are dumping the effluents without treating them, and a monthly pension of Rs. 5,000 for farmers who are aged more than 55 years.

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## Training on herbal plants farming

Special Correspondent

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Vamban, will conduct a special programme to impart training to farmers on herbal plants farming techniques on its premises on July 10.

Herbal plants have been raised in about 5,000 hectares in Dindigul, Madurai, Virudhunagar, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin district. Some plants have a good commercial value and have been raised in abundance. To create awareness of herbal plants farming techniques, the KVK has planned the training programme. Interested farmers can call 04322-290321 for further details, a press release from Collector, V. Kalaiarasi issued here on Friday said.



'6.5-7% economic growth possible'

Agencies Posted online: Sat Jul 07 2012, 20:00 hrs

**Chandigarh** : A 6.5-7 per cent economic growth for India this fiscal is a possibility and would be a good performance going by the adverse global conditions, Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said today.

".. with a bit of luck, we can meet the growth somewhere between 6.5-7 per cent, which would be a very good performance in a situation where the whole global economy is badly hit," he said.

Ahluwalia was speaking during the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research (PGIMER) here.



He said initially the GDP growth was expected to be around 7-7.5 per cent for current fiscal, when the budget was being finalised.

"But I think the growth rate has slowed down, not only in India, but everywhere. I don't expect that kind of growth this year", Ahluwalia said.

On monsoon, he said: "It is true that the monsoon is weak so far..delay in monsoon does not by itself mean that it will not recover. A lot depends on what happens in the next three months, I would not reach any adverse conclusion from what you have seen so far".

The cumulative rainfall in the month of June had been about 30 per cent lower than normal.

Even global financial services major, Citigroup, has expressed fear that Indian economy could see a slower growth at 5.6-6 per cent during the current fiscal if monsoon remains poor.

Ahluwalia also said there was a dire need to increase government spending on health care.

"The government (both Centre and States) should be playing an active role in the health sector..we cannot leave health to the mercy of the markets.

"Government has an important role to play and we are doing what should be done to give a boost to the health sector," Ahluwalia said.

He said as against USA, which inspite of the economic downturn, continues to spend over 15 per cent of the GDP on health, in India the spending on health sector is just four per cent of GDP.

This includes a three per cent contribution from the private sector and one per cent government contribution, he said.

The 12th Plan will see the largest growth in government expenditure in this sector, he said here.

He, however, pointed out that merely increasing the outlay would not serve the purpose.

Ahluwalia said the problem of human resource, both at the level of doctors as well the nurses, should be addressed.

He said there was large regional variation in the medical facilities available in the country with North India lagging behind South India.

This was possibly due to much greater presence of private medical colleges in the South, he added.

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## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

7 JUL, 2012, 03.37PM IST, PTI

### **Palmolein, coconut oils rise on retailers demand**

NEW DELHI: Prices of palmolein and coconut oils strengthened by up to Rs 100 in the wholesale oils and oilseeds market today on increased demand from retailers.

However, other edible and non-edible oils continued to move in a narrow range in limited deals and settled around previous levels.

Traders said increased demand from retailers mainly led to a rise in palmolein and coconut oil prices.

In the national capital, palmolein (kandla) oil rose by Rs 100 to Rs 7,750 per quintal, while coconut oil traded higher by Rs 25 to Rs 1,375-1,425 per tin.

7 JUL, 2012, 03.21PM IST, PTI

### **Gur prices steady on small buying**

NEW DELHI: There was no change in the pattern of trading in the wholesale jaggery market at national capital today as prices continued to hover around last closing levels in the absence of any worthwhile moving factors.

Muzaffarnagar and Muradnagar gur market also settled without any changes in thin trade.

Marketmen said sufficient stocks position compared to demand mainly held gur prices around overnight levels.

The following are today's quotations per quintal: Gur chakku 3,150-3,250, pedi 3,400-3,500, dhayya 3,450-3,500 and shakkar 3,400-3,500.

Muzaffarnagar: Raskat 2,825-2,925, chakku 2,900-3,000 and khurpa N.T.

Muradnagar: Pedi 3,100-3,200 and dhayya 3,200-3,250.

7 JUL, 2012, 01.46PM IST, PTI

#### **Firm trend prevails in Chennai wholesale foodgrains market**

CHENNAI: A firm trend was seen in the wholesale foodgrain market here during the week under review with prices of most of the foodgrains moving upward.

Prices of tur dal, urad dal, moong dal, gram dal and sugar went up, while those of other commodities remained unchanged.

Tur dal and urad dal opened at Rs 7,200 and Rs 5,600, respectively, on Monday, an increase of Rs 100 per quintal each from their previous close, and maintained the gain to close at the same price.

Moong dal was costlier by Rs 300 to Rs 6,500 per quintal from last week's closing rate of Rs 6,200.

Gram dal opened the week at Rs 5,500 per quintal and closed at Rs 5,700, showing a net gain of Rs 200.

Sugar price increased by Rs 150 per quintal to 3,200 over the previous week's closing rate of Rs 3,050.

Prices of wheat (Rs 1,850), maida 90 kg (Rs 1,750) and sooji 90 kg (Rs 1,950) remained unaltered throughout the week.

7 JUL, 2012, 01.25PM IST, PTI

### **Edible oils up on increased buying, deficient rains**

NEW DELHI: Edible oils rose at the wholesale oils and oilseeds market during the week on increased buying by vanaspati millers and retailers to meet the coming festive season demand amid deficient monsoon and a firm global trend.

A few oils in the non-edible section also showed strength on increased demand from consuming industries.

Marketmen said increased buying by vanaspati millers and retailers for the festival season amid a firming global trend mainly led to a rise in wholesale edible oil prices.

They added deficient monsoon in producing regions also gave push to a rising trend in edible oil prices.

Meanwhile, palm oil gained 3.6 per cent this week on the Malaysia Derivatives Exchange.

In the national capital, groundnut mill delivery oil (Gujarat) rose by Rs 100 to Rs 11,750 per quintal on day-to-day buying activity, while groundnut solvent refined remained steady at Rs 1,850-1,900 per tin on scattered deals.

Mustard expeller oil (Dadri) found buying support from local parties and shot up by Rs 150 to Rs 8,000 per quintal. Mustard pakki and kachi ghani oils followed suit and traded higher by Rs 10 each to Rs 1,185-1,325 and Rs 1,340-1,440 per tin.

Sesame and cottonseed mill delivery (Haryana) oils also attracted fresh buying support from vanaspati millers and moved up by Rs 50 each to Rs 8,150 and Rs 6,350 per quintal, respectively.

Tracking a firming global trend, soyabean refined mill delivery (Indore) and soyabean degum

(Kandla) oils shot up by Rs 150 each to Rs 8,000 and Rs 7,550, respectively. Crude palm oil (ex-kandla) oil traded higher by Rs 100 to Rs 7,500 per quintal.

Palmolein (rbd) and palmolein (Kandla) oils too traded in positive zone with a rise of Rs 150 and Rs 50 to Rs 8,200 and Rs 7,750 per quintal, respectively.

In line with a general firming trend, coconut oil which held steady for the major part of week, found buying support at the fag-end and strengthened by Rs 25 to Rs 1,375-1,425 per tin.

In the non-edible section, linseed oil spurted by Rs 100 to Rs 5,400 per quintal on fresh inquiries from paint units.

Castor oil jumped up by Rs 200 to Rs 8,550-8,650 per quintal on increased industrial offtake.

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## Business Standard

Tuesday, Jul 07, 2012

### Mamata asks PM to take steps to make fertilisers affordable

Particularly for small and marginal farmers who constitute 95% of cultivable land in West Bengal

Press Trust of India / Kolkata July 07, 2012, 16:50 IST

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has asked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to look into the fertiliser pricing policy to keep prices of the plant nutrients at affordable levels and protect farmers' interests.

"I strongly believe that the Government of India can do more in controlling fertiliser prices in the interest of farmers..." Banerjee said in a letter to the Prime Minister.

This is particularly for the small and marginal farmers who constitute 95% of cultivable land in West Bengal, she said.

Drawing his attention to the steep increase in fertiliser prices over the last two years, Banerjee said the rate of escalation in prices, except in case of urea, was very high and varied from 116 per cent to 277%

"During the last six months, the price of Murate of Potash (MOP) has increased by about 50%, the price of Single Super Phosphate (SSP) has increased by about 30% while that of Boronated SSP has increased by 25%," she said.

The chief minister said, "you will agree that fertiliser being critical input for agriculture production, such steep increase in fertiliser prices will increase the cost of production sharply which may make the agriculture production unremunerative.

"This will affect not only the livelihood of farmers, but also encourage unbalanced use of nutrients, thereby affecting the agricultural production as a whole," the letter said.

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## THE HINDU Business Line

### **Seminar on designer rice to be held in Hyderabad**

Hyderabad, July 7:

Directorate of Rice Research and Acharya N G Ranga Agricultural University will hold an international seminar on 'Dialogue on Designer Rice' on July 9 and 10.

To be held at International Crops Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics, the event would see 10 experts from six countries and top Indian scientists discussing the topic.