

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:32 IST

MNCs dominating seed market: farmers' forum


The Government has to step in to curb the stranglehold the seed companies have over the choice of seeds, speakers at a round table on 'Protecting Farmers from Seed Crises' said.

Multinational seed companies like Monsanto are dominating the market and not allowing farmers to retain a portion of their crop for seed, K Nageswara Rao of the All-India Kisan Sabha said here on Friday. He demanded that the Government step in to curb black marketing of seeds. There was a need to form a single platform to represent common issues of farmers to the authorities, SV Pantulu of Indian Peasants Forum said. The farmers' leaders decided to constitute Ryotu Sanghala Aikya Vedika for the purpose. Former Minister Vadde Sobhanadreeswara Rao, AP Ryotu Sangham leader K Ramakrishna, former MLA Kodanda Reddy, former registrar of ANGR Agricultural University Dalapathi Rao, Ramanjaneyulu of Centre for Sustainable Development among others, Nama Venkateswara Rao of the Telugu Rythu attended the round table organised by the Indian Peasants Forum.

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:31 IST

Grain output target fixed at 136.55 lakh tonnes

T.V. Sivanandan



Foodgrain production target for 2012-13		
Crop	Coverage (in lakh hectares)	Production
• Paddy	14.35	41.79 lakh tonnes
• Maize	12.25	41.5 lakh tonnes
• Jowar	13.4	17.31 lakh tonnes
• Red gram	8.5	5.74 lakh tonnes
• Bengal gram	9.5	5.7 lakh tonnes
• Oilseeds	21	15.2 lakh tonnes
• Cotton	5.6	11.07 lakh bales
• Sugarcane	4.8	300 lakh tonnes
• Tobacco	1	1 lakh tonnes

The State government has set a foodgrain production target of 136.55 lakh tonnes in 2012-13, covering 81.85 lakh hectares in the kharif, rabi and summer seasons.

This is slightly higher than the target fixed in 2011-12, which was 130 lakh tonnes, covering 82.49 lakh ha.

Area downsized

Official documents available with *The Hindu* show that the 2012-13 target fixed for crop area has been downsized to 114.5 lakh ha against the previous target of 115.35 lakh ha. No reason has been given for reducing the crop area.

With hopes about a bountiful monsoon riding high, the State government has fixed higher targets for cereals and pulses this year.

Cereals

The area to be covered under cereal cultivation is 54.35 lakh ha with a production target of 121.05 lakh tonnes. The area under cultivation of pulses is 27.5 lakh ha with a production target of 15.5 lakh tonnes.

Among cereals, paddy continues to be the major crop with a targeted coverage of 14.35 lakh ha and a production target of 41.79 lakh tonnes, closely followed by maize with a targeted production of 41.5 lakh tonnes covering 12.25 lakh ha. Jowar is expected to be cultivated on 13.4 lakh ha with a production target of 17.31 lakh tonnes.

Pulses

Among pulses, red gram and bengal gram continue to dominate, both in terms of area and production. While red gram is expected to be sown on 8.5 lakh ha with a production target of 5.74 lakh tonnes, bengal gram is expected to be cultivated on 9.5 lakh hectares with a production target of 5.7 lakh tonnes.

The government has fixed the target for oilseed production at 15.2 lakh tonnes, compared to last year's target of 14.87 lakh tonnes. The targeted area under oilseed production has come down slightly from 21.16 lakh ha in 2011-12 to 21 lakh ha this year.

Commercial crops

The government has fixed a target of covering commercial crops on 11.4 lakh ha. Cotton production has been set at 11.07 lakh bales on 5.6 lakh ha. The area under the crop is expected to be high this year, with more farmers cultivating cotton, particularly Bt cotton, owing to the remunerative prices in the market.

The area under sugarcane has been fixed at 4.8 lakh ha, with a production target of 380 lakh tonnes, and tobacco will be cultivated on 1 lakh ha and the production target is 1 lakh tonnes.

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:24 IST

Subsidy-based schemes to boost horticulture

Special Correspondent

The Horticulture Department has taken special efforts to promote horticulture activity during the 'Aadi pattam' season through effective implementation of various subsidy-based schemes, and also for promoting drip irrigation.

Under the Integrated Horticulture Development Programme, high-breed and quality seeds of horticultural crops would be distributed through the offices of the Assistant Director of Horticulture.

Under the National Horticulture Mission, cultivation of high density mango, tissue culture banana, cashew, chillies, turmeric and flowers would be encouraged. Special incentives in the form of subsidy-based agricultural implements and inputs would be distributed to farmers.

'adi pattam'

In a press release issued here on Thursday, Collector Anu George said that under the hi-tech productivity component of the National Agriculture Development Programme, hybrid seeds and horticultural inputs would be distributed the farmers. Further, special schemes for promoting precision farming technique and rain-fed area development programme would be taken up during the 'adi pattam'.

Chlorisa

The Collector also said that under the 'National Mission for Medicinal Plants' horticultural farmers would be encouraged to cultivate chlorisa ('kan vali kizhangu) through a special subsidy.

100 per cent subsidy would be granted to small and marginal farmers to adopt drip irrigation technique in their farm.

Big farmers would get subsidy equivalent to 75 per cent. The Collector has appealed to farmers to insure their crop under the National Agriculture Insurance scheme. Special weather-based insurance scheme was available for banana-growers.

Further details can be had by contacting the following officials: Assistant Director of Horticulture Ariyalur 04329 – 228105; Horticulture Officer, Airylaur and Jayamkondam – 04329 – 295269; Horticulture Officer, Jayamkondam 04331-253620; Horticulture Officer, Andimadam, T. Pazhur and Tirumanur – 97151-89181; Assistant Director of Horticulture, Sendurai – 04329-242042.

-
- *Hybrid seeds and horticultural inputs to be distributed to farmers*
 - *100 per cent subsidy to small, marginal farmers for drip irrigation*
-

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:23 IST

Government intervention sought to increase coconut price

Staff Reporter



Highlighting demands:Coconut farmers in large numbers took part in a demonstration organised by the Kongu Nadu Munnetra Kazhagam in Pollachi on Friday. —Photo: Special Arrangement

Kongunadu Munnetra Kazhagam's Pollachi unit on Friday staged a protest in Thiruvalluvar Thidal, Pollachi, urging the Central and State Governments to initiate measures to increase coconut price.

Led by the party's secretary of the district unit K. Nithyanandam, farmers and members of various organisations said that many coconut farmers were forced to sell lands because of labour shortage, water scarcity, increase in fertilizer price and decrease in coconut price.

Expenditure

The expenditure involved in cultivating coconut worked out to Rs. 10 – Rs. 20 a coconut.

The price at which coconut was bought, however, was only around Rs. 4. Given the poor price, the farmers were left with no option but to sell land and quit agriculture.

The protesters said that when the governments could initiate every possible step to increase the availability of edible oils in the country, they were taking very little steps. This had put farmers, especially coconut farmers, in trouble.

They suggested that the governments replace the distribution of palm oil with coconut oil in the public distribution system and also introduce coconut and jaggery in noon meal. They also want the governments to distribute tender coconut at all official events.

The protesters had also asked for a regional office of the Coconut Development Board in Pollachi, reconstitution of the Coconut Welfare Board and measures to rejuvenate water bodies.

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:23 IST

Conversion of agricultural land has aggravated farmers' problems: Minister

Staff Reporter

Climate change, pollution of air, land and water, and change in globalisation policies are threatening the agricultural economy of the country. In such circumstances, focus should be on alleviating these problems, S. Damodaran, Minister for Agriculture, said here on Friday.

Inaugurating the 23rd meeting of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Regional Committee No. VIII at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, he said that conversion of agricultural land for commercial or residential use has also aggravated the farmers' problems.

“It is in the hands of scientists and researchers to provide food for the 120 crore population of the country. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has led to severe labour shortage in the agricultural sector. In such a scenario, it is necessary to focus more on mechanisation, as this is the only solution to tackle labour shortage,” the Minister said.

S. Ayyappan, Director General of ICAR, said the committee would deliberate on focus areas of the XII Five Year Plan.

“There are specific areas that the Plan will focus on. The issues that are characteristic of this region involve problems related to dry land agriculture, island agriculture, improving disaster management and agri-eco tourism, addressing labour shortage and retaining youth in agriculture.”

It would also focus on policies on higher agricultural education and women, as nearly 40 per cent of girls have taken up agricultural education. He also urged the committee to come up with information technology interface to improve agriculture and agricultural education.

Pointing out that the Coimbatore region was rich in a variety of pulses, rice, oilseeds, spices, plantation crops, vegetables, and fruits, Mr. Ayyappan said this was a rare phenomenon, which farmers of other regions did not enjoy. He, however, cautioned the farmers about the incidence of pests and diseases.

N. Vijayan Nair, Director of Sugarcane Breeding Institute, K.D. Kokate, Deputy Director General (Extension), ICAR, and P. Subbian, Registrar and Vice-Chancellor in-charge of TNAU, spoke.

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:28 IST

Agro project launched to support mentally ill



REHABILITATION:Keshav Desiraju, Special Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi, and Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, interacting with the mentally ill persons at the bakery unit of M. S. Chellamuthu Trust at Alagarkoil on Friday.— Photo: G. Moorthy

In an initiative to support the families of mentally ill persons, an agro project was launched on one acre land at Alagarkoil near here on Friday.

The life supporting psycho-social rehabilitation project was taken up by the M. S. Chellamuthu Trust and Research Foundation at Ayathampatti village on the foothills of Alagarkoil in association with Subitcham, a family fellowship comprising of care givers and family members of mentally challenged persons.

Keshav Desiraju, Special Secretary, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare formally inaugurated the project in the presence of Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary in the Ministry and C. Ramasubramanian, a well-known consultant psychiatrist who has been spearheading mental health activities in the State. Mentally ill persons and those recovering along with their family members/care givers would be involved in this agro project for their welfare. In the one acre land provided by the Trust, crops would be grown as per season and the income would be shared by the participating families.

“Most of the family members feel isolated due to the guilt feeling and stigma attached to the illness. But, through the voluntary fellowship initiative called Subitcham, they have developed confidence and camaraderie among themselves. The agro project will generate income and this is an agro-based rehabilitation for mentally ill persons and families,” says Dr. Ramasubramanian, popularly known as CRS.

While the family members of the mentally challenged persons will manage cultivation, those who have recovered through treatment will work on the field. Income will be shared by them and the Foundation along with agriculture experts and institutions would provide technical/marketing help. To begin with, the agro project will take off with vegetables.

“The money coming from agro project can be used for livelihood and to purchase medicines. Mental health professionals will support them and M. S. Chellamuthu Trust will extend logistics support,” he said.

Addressing the inmates and their families, the Special Secretary Mr. Desiraju, who is the grandson of former President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, said that he has learnt a lot after

meeting the patients and seeing the vocational work being done by them at Alagarkoil- bakery unit, candle unit, cafeteria, special school and so on.

“There are lessons to be learnt from this community. It is nice to see people from different places living together and no one is alone. I got an opportunity to see all of you,” he said referring to the mentally ill patients and their care givers.

Joint Secretary Ms. Sujaya Krishnan said that the agro initiative is a useful step to make the mentally ill persons as productive members in society after their treatment. “The M. S. Chellamuthu Trust is giving life to such people and this community mental health project is a role model project,” she added.

Earlier, they went around the campus and saw the facilities there after which K. S. P. Janardhan Babu, Assistant Director (programmes), made a presentation on the programmes being implemented by the Trust.

R. Rajkumari, Executive Director, M. S. Chellamuthu Trust, Janet Shankar, professor and Head of Department of Psychiatric Social Work in Madurai Institute of Social Sciences, N. M. H. Kalaivani, president, Subitcham and E. Ellappan, project coordinator, Agro Project, were among those who spoke.

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:25 IST

Farmers give thumbs down to MSP hike of Rs. 170 for paddy

Staff Reporter

The marginal increase in the Minimum Support Price for Paddy announced by the Centre has touched a raw nerve here in the delta.

The government had announced a marginal hike of Rs.170 per quintal on Thursday, with the common variety paddy hiked from current Rs.1,080 to Rs.1,250 per quintal, and Grade ‘A’ variety hiked from current Rs.1,110 to Rs.1,280.

Even as the Centre qualified its hike as one announced as per the recommendations of Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP), farmers here in the delta have contested the hike on ground that it was far removed from the actual cost of production.

For the farmers, coming at the backdrop of a two-year-long demand for a MSP of Rs.2000 per quintal, the token hike adds insult to injury.

While costs of all other inputs have doubled or tripled, how was it that the Central government arrived at the figure of Rs.170, asks Kaveri Danapalan of Cauvery Farmers Protection Association.

According to him, prices of fertilizers have skyrocketed up to 200 per cent, while labour costs have gone up by 100 per cent and cost of agricultural machinery have risen by 40 per cent. Diesel component alone come to Rs.750 per acre, says Mr.Danapalan.

The government's scale of finance of Rs.14,500 per acre was based on a ratio of labour component of 60 per cent and fertilizer component of 40 per cent. Even as actual scale of finance was higher than the government benchmark, the marginal hike by Rs.170 would not even meet the standards of government's scale of finance, Mr.Danapalan says.

Further, the hike does not even attempt to meet the recommendations of the National Farmers Commission that had called for a MSP that was at least 50 per cent above the weighted average cost of production. According to Arupathy Kalyanam, secretary, Tamil Nadu Paddy Farmers Consortium, the actual cost of cultivation per quintal of paddy is between Rs.1,200 and Rs.1,350.

Farmers should be given a MSP that supported a minimum margin of 50 per cent above the total cost of production as recommended both by the NCF and the Working Committee on Agriculture, GOI. Under this calculation, the MSP for paddy should be fixed at Rs.1,800 to Rs.2,000, says Mr.Kalyanam.

“The hike has not even considered the rise in fertilizer costs, if not others,” says Giridharan, of Vivasayigal Sangam.

-
- *MSP for common variety paddy hiked from Rs. 1,080 to Rs. 1,250 per quintal*
 - *'Cost of cultivation for a quintal of paddy is between Rs. 1,200 and Rs. 1,350'*
-

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:32 IST

Agriculture workers stage protest demanding full wage payment

Staff Reporter

The All India Agricultural Workers Union staged a protest blockade at the Panchayat Union office at Keezhayur here demanding full wage payment under the MNREGS, on Friday.

Leading the protests, the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-affiliated trade union called for payment in full of the daily wage of Rs.133 announced by the government recently. Alleging irregularities in payments, the cadre also demanded issuance of job cards under MNREGS for those who have still not received it. Further, the party also demanded issuance of health insurance cards under the State government's comprehensive health insurance scheme for the villages that were yet to have them issued. Pointing to severe water scarcity in most villages, CPI (M) They has also urged the administration to provide for drinking water through water tankers.

The CPI(M) affiliated trade union called for payment in full of the daily wage of Rs. 133 announced by the government

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:31 IST

Egg and chicken could become costlier

M.K. Ananth

Egg and chicken could cost more as demand for egg laying birds (layer birds) has led to drastic price hike of layer chicken to reach its highest ever price of Rs. 54 per kg for the second time. Increasing demand for layer birds saw its price increase by Rs. 4 on Friday as it was fixed at Rs. 54 – nearly 23 per cent more than its price in the beginning of June (Rs. 44). According to poultry industry sources, the average weight of layer birds is 1.5 kg taking the price of a layer bird to Rs. 81.

Highest

Increase in broiler chicken prices is cited as the driving force of layer bird prices, despite its rate being maintained after it reached Rs. 76 per kg in the last week of May. The last time price of layer bird reached its highest of Rs. 54 was in June 2011. State President of the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers Association R. Nallathambi told *The Hindu* that production of broiler chicken comes down heavily in the summer and results in demand for layer birds.

“Demand for chicken in Kerala and Karnataka for making ‘briyani’ for the wedding season of Muslims is one of the reasons for good price for the birds. The price was increased by Rs. 2 to Rs. 52 on Friday morning and to Rs. 54 before afternoon as demand was drastically increasing and we (farmers) will not get this price all the time,” he added. President of Namakkal Egg Traders Association R. Anandan noted that the demand for layer birds and eggs had also gone

up as the fishing holiday has begun in Kerala. Meanwhile, wholesale egg rate was increased from Rs. 3.04 on Wednesday to Rs. 3.11 on Thursday as egg rate is increasing in other NECC zones for various reasons.

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:25 IST

Training programme in vermicompost

The Department of Agriculture had recently organised a training programme in 'different methods for production of vermicompost for farmers in Udumalpet, Gudimangalam and Madathukulam blocks.

Value-addition

B. Elangovan, assistant director of horticulture, explained how vermicompost could be prepared using animal wastes like cow dung, goat droppings and crop residues like paddy straw, paddy husk, sugarcane trash and other bio-degradable wastes. "Organic farming methods in every stage of cultivation will give value-addition to the agrarian community," Dr. Elangovan reminded the farmers. Explaining the techniques for vermicompost production by introducing earthworms in waste material, the agriculture officers asked the farmers to maintain humidity level at 40 to 50 per cent. The officials elucidated on how the compost could be protected from direct sunshine and birds. A total of 168 farmers underwent training.

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:32 IST

Training programme on mechanised cotton picking



Critical input: A major share of harvest expenditure goes for labour charge—File Photo

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of Needamangalam in Tiruvarur district conducted one-day training-cum-demonstration programme on mechanised cotton picking at Simili village in Kodavasal block recently.

Sixty farmers from Simili and other villages in the district practised mechanised cotton picking in the programme. According to T.Senguttuvan, Head and Professor of KVK, Needamangalam, Cotton is the leading fibre and cash crop cultivated mainly during rice fallow season in Tiruvarur district in about 1,250 hectares using the available residual moisture after the harvest of samba/thaladi paddy.

The area under rice fallow cotton is not static but dynamic due to price fluctuation and labour scarcity in Tiruvarur district. The farmers have to spend a major share of expenditure for the harvest of cotton manually. They also face problems due to pointed tips of bract in the ball rots of cotton.

Mechanised cotton picking is the sole solution for the said problems and is the need of the hour. In the training programme, A.Kamaraj, assistant professor, explained the features and operations of cotton picker, which can run continuously for six hours with the help of 12 KV rechargeable battery of 750 gram weight. He also explained that a single labourer can pick 100 to 200 kg of cotton in a day using the picker.

M.Senthilkumar, assistant professor, Entomology, talked about plant protection measures. Farmers could see for themselves the difference in purity of cotton and easiness in operation.

Published: June 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 16, 2012 04:31 IST

Package likely for pokkali rice farming

K. A. Martin

Dr. Swaminathan to meet farmers, scientists in Kochi on Monday



revival path: Women workers prepare a field at Kuzhippally in Ernakulam for pokkali farming under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.— PTI Photo
Pokkali rice farming, hurtling towards extinction in the State, looks set for a revival of fortunes with renowned agricultural scientist M. S. Swaminathan taking the initiative in convening a meeting of pokkali farmers and scientists here on Monday.

Sources in the State Department of Agriculture said that Dr. Swaminathan's initiative was likely to lead to a package for revival of the unique rice variety and farming practice that are part of the heritage and culture of coastal Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts.

Sources said that a plan submitted under 'Niravu' programme in Paravur constituency is likely to form the blueprint for a potential pokkali package. 'Niravu' is a comprehensive plan for tapping funds available for development of agriculture and allied activities in the constituency.

Incentives

Among other things, the package has suggested providing a sense of security, substantial incentives and health insurance cover for harvesters.

A bonus of Rs. 10,000 per hectare for the farmers; funds for building infrastructure and a corpus for marketing pokkali rice are among other suggestions.

Dr. Swaminathan's initiative, sources said, was the result of his interactions with pokkali farmers, who were in New Delhi in May to receive the Plant Genome Saviour Community Award instituted by Protection of Plant Variety and Farmers' Rights Authority of India.

The award, comprising Rs. 10 lakh and a citation, was received by a group of farmers under the aegis of Varappuzha-Kadamakkudy Jaiva Pokkali Society.

Kerala Agricultural University nominated the group for the award, given to rural communities instrumental in preserving and improving genetic resources.

Once spread over nearly 10,000 hectares, acreage under the salt-resistant and tall pokkali has sunk to about 1,000 hectares.

Severe shortage of workers across the farming areas, especially for harvesting, has forced hundreds of farmers to abandon their fields.

Low yield

Lack of mechanisation and relatively low yield from the traditional varieties of pokkali are other reasons.

Besides, the money-spinning business of conversion of fields has lured many farmers, especially in Ernakulam district, to sell off their holdings.

Pokkali gene has played a significant role in researches on evolving varieties that will survive under conditions created by climate change.

It is important that the variety is preserved and improved upon, said C. R. Elsie, a professor at Kerala Agricultural University, who coordinated the work to get GI registration for pokkali in 2009.

Business Standard

Monday, Jun 18, 2012

MSP rise not lifting Bengal's paddy gloom

Namrata Acharya / Kolkata June 16, 2012, 0:18 IST

This year's 16 per cent rise in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy is unlikely to cheer farmers in West Bengal, one of the biggest rice producing states. Output is likely to come down by at least 10-15 per cent this year, on account of an ongoing dry spell and a distress sale last season.

Yesterday, the government raised the MSP for paddy from Rs 1,080 per quintal last year to Rs 1,250 per quintal for 2012-13.

Eastern India is yet to receive monsoon rains due to persistence of a large mass of dry air over the western Bay of Bengal. The monsoon generally arrives by the first week of June in the state, which triggers the paddy sowing season.

“There is already a delay in sowing. Also, the area under cultivation has come down from around 1.5 million hectares to 900,000 hectares,” said Pranab Chatterjee, director of farms, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya.

Farmers were discouraged after the price of paddy in the domestic market had crashed to Rs 850-900 per quintal, against the MSP of Rs 1,080 per quintal, due to a bumper crop. Earlier this year, better quality rice from the neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Bihar had flooded the markets, leading to a price crash.

In addition, fertiliser prices had doubled over the past year, and the cost of paddy production has risen to Rs 1,000 per quintal.

The state produces about 14.5 million tonnes of paddy every year in three seasons — aus, aman and boro. Rice production during the boro or winter is about 4.5 mt.

The other two are cultivated in the summer or kharif season, and the total area under cultivation normally comes to 5.9 mha. West Bengal contributes 14-16 per cent of India's rice production.

Critics are rapping the procurement policy. The government had recently announced it would transfer the support price directly to farmers' through account payee cheques.

The idea was to eliminate the intervention of middlemen in lifting paddy and forcing farmers to open bank accounts. However, this also means farmers have to bear the cost of transportation of paddy and handle delays in getting payment.

Sugarcane acreage rises to 51.76 lakh hectares this year

Groundnut sown in 88,700 hectares, sesamum in 52,400 hectares, Sunflower in 20,400 hectares as of today

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi June 15, 2012, 19:06 IST

Area under sugarcane crop has increased marginally to 51.76 lakh hectares (LH) in 2012-13 crop year so far.

"Sugarcane has been planted in 51.76 lakh hectares as against 49.47 lakh hectares on this date last year," the Agriculture Ministry said in a release today.

In northern states, sugarcane planting has almost been completed. While the first round of planting of cane undertook between September and November last year, the second round of planting ended last month, an agriculture scientist said.

Giving sowing details of kharif (summer) crops, the ministry said planting of oilseeds is in progress. Farmers have sown oilseeds in 1.72 lakh hectares so far.

Groundnut has been sown in 88,700 hectares, sesamum in 52,400 hectares and Sunflower in 20,400 hectares as of today.

Andhra Pradesh has reported sowing of groundnut in 36,000 hectares and Tamil Nadu in 21,800 hectares. In Karnataka, 25,000 hectares have been reported under sesamum cultivation.

Sowing of summer (kharif) crops begins with the onset of monsoon season from June.

Oil gains for second day on stimulus speculation

Bloomberg / Melbourne/ London June 16, 2012, 0:18 IST

Oil rose in New York, heading for a second week of gains, on speculation that the US Federal Reserve may take more steps to stimulate the economy and on the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (Opec) call for members to cut production in excess of quotas.

Futures climbed as much as 1.1 per cent, a consecutive advance. Reports yesterday showed US jobless claims unexpectedly increased and the cost of living fell the most in three years.

Opec needs to reduce output by 1.6 million barrels a day to comply with its targeted ceiling, Secretary-General Abdalla El-Badri said.

“There are more supportive factors now for oil than there are negative,” Jonathan Barratt, chief executive officer of Barratt’s Bulletin, a commodity-markets newsletter in Sydney, said in a telephone interview. “The whole purpose of the cartel is to provide guidelines to production. Compliance is just a word. If the price slips below \$80 a barrel then quotas will change and give prices a big bump.”

Oil for July delivery rose as much as 89 cents to \$84.80 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange, and was at \$84.68 at 2:54 pm Singapore time. The contract increased 1.6 per cent yesterday to \$83.91, the highest settlement since June 8. Prices are 0.7 per cent higher this week and down 14 per cent in 2012.

Brent crude for August settlement on the London-based ICE Futures Europe exchange climbed as much as 93 cents, or 1 percent, to \$98.10 a barrel. The European benchmark contract was at a premium of \$13.10 to New York crude. The gap was \$13.12 yesterday, the narrowest close since May 2.

Bullish Chart

Oil in New York is extending gains after yesterday's rebound created a so-called bullish engulfing pattern on the daily candlestick chart, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Crude has long-term technical support along its 200- week moving average, around \$80.81 a barrel. Buy orders tend to be clustered near chart-support levels.

OPEC kept its output limit at 30 million barrels a day at a meeting in Vienna yesterday as concern global growth is shrinking outweighed calls by some members for supply cuts to stem sliding prices. Increased production from Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, has been blamed for the drop in prices by members including Iran, whose own exports will probably be curbed by a European Union embargo scheduled to start July 1. OPEC's 12 members pump about 40 percent of the world's crude.

Korea Imports

South Korea's crude imports from Iran in May fell 40 percent from a year earlier, the customs service said on Friday. The world's fifth-largest oil importer purchased 550,714 metric tons, or about 17,765 tons a day, from Iran last month, compared with 911,889 tons a year earlier, according to the service's website.

Claims for unemployment insurance payments in the U.S. unexpectedly climbed by 6,000 to 386,000 in the week ended June 9, Labor Department figures showed yesterday. Economists surveyed by Bloomberg News projected claims would fall to 375,000. The cost of living in the world's largest oil-consuming nation declined 0.3 percent in May.

Oil in New York may fall next week on speculation Europe's debt crisis will spread after the downgrade of Spain's credit rating and weekend elections in Greece, a Bloomberg News survey showed. Seventeen of 39 analysts and traders, or 44 percent, forecast crude will decline through June 22. Fifteen respondents, or 38 percent, predicted futures will increase and seven said there will be little change.

China is hoarding crude at the fastest rate since the Beijing Olympics four years ago as oil's slump prompts the country to import unprecedented volumes, even as refining slows.

The world's second-biggest oil consumer built a surplus of about 90 million barrels of crude in the first five months of the year, government data show. The excess, the highest since the run-up to the 2008 games, is probably being kept at emergency and commercial storage centers, according to the International Energy Agency.

Turmeric up 2.24% on spot demand

Restricted supplies from producing belts influenced prices

Press Trust of India / New Delhi June 15, 2012, 14:09 IST



Turmeric futures prices rose by Rs 82 to Rs 3,748 per quintal in futures trading today as participants enlarged their positions amid a firming trend at spot market on rising demand.

Also, restricted supplies from producing belts also influenced turmeric futures here.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, turmeric for delivery in July rose by Rs 82, or 2.24%, to Rs 3,748 per quintal, with an open interest of 38,170 lots.

The June contract up by Rs 72, or 2.03%, to Rs 3,626 per quintal, with an open interest of 1,575 lots.

Analysts said the rise in turmeric futures was mainly due to pick-up in demand in the spot markets amid fall in arrivals from producing regions.

THE HINDU Business Line

Madhya Pradesh farmers to get interest-free loans

PTI

Bhopal, June 16:

The Madhya Pradesh Government today announced that farmers in the state will get interest-free loans.

“This zero per cent rate of interest would be applicable for loans given to farmers since April 1 this year”, the Chief Minister, Mr Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said after ending his 24-hour fast, undertaken to protest the hike in fertiliser prices over the last one year.

Mr Chouhan said, “When the Congress was in power, farmers got loans at 12 per cent, which had been gradually reduced to 3 per cent by the BJP Government and now no interest will be charged from agriculturists.

“The BJP Government in Madhya Pradesh wanted to make agriculture a profitable venture for farmers but the Congress-led ruling coalition at the Centre, through its polices, was only increasing the financial burden on them,” Mr Chouhan asserted.

The Chief Minister said, “Prices of fertilisers in the country were raised two to three times in the last one year and this imposed a heavy burden on farmers. There should be a clear-cut fertiliser policy under which prices of the key farm input are fixed by the Government from time to time. If fertiliser prices are determined by market forces, as being contemplated by the Centre, their rates will change every month. The Centre should fix fertiliser prices in each season as it does in case of agricultural produce”.

Mr Chouhan said there was no point in asking the states to reduce taxes imposed by the Centre on various farm-related items. “I find it strange that on the one hand the Centre goes on increasing prices and on the other we are expected to bring them down.”

Before breaking the fast, Mr Chouhan announced that a Mahapanchayat (grand gathering) of farmers would be held in Bhopal on July 15 to discuss agriculture-related issues.

“At least two lakh farmers from all over Madhya Pradesh would take part in the Mahapanchayat”, he said.

The Centre must be made to realise that putting financial burden on farmers was not going to serve any purpose, the Chief Minister added.

Hot weather, poor rains hit tea crop in Assam, Bengal

Our Bureau



The scene inside a tea plantation.

Kolkata, June 16:

Deficient rainfall and severe heat have dealt a double blow for the tea crop in Assam and West Bengal this year.

According to a crop summary from various districts of Assam and West Bengal for May 2012 provided by the Indian Tea Association, the crop is coming forward slower than usual.

The tea crop in upper, central and lower Assam has been hit by excessive heat and dry weather. The ongoing drought conditions reflect weak prospects for the crop this month, the crop summary said.

In certain districts of Assam, including Cachar and Karimganj, however, the crop has been good due to seasonable weather. Rainfall has also been much above normal, improving the prospects for a good crop.

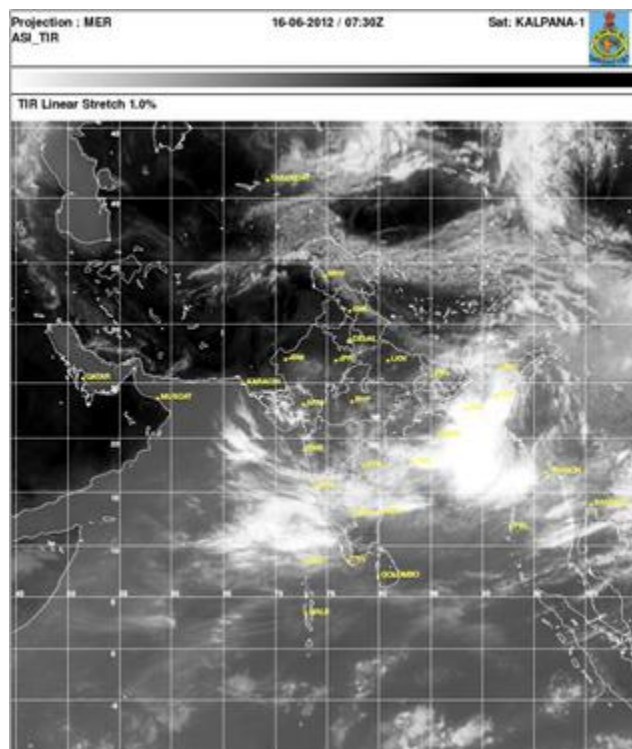
In West Bengal, while there were no reports available from the Central Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling districts, the crop has been poor in eastern and western Dooars.

“The weather has been unseasonable and rainfall deficient so far in Kalchini in the Eastern Dooars. Crop prospects look bad,” the summary said.

In Western Dooars, the tea crop will be lower by 10-20 per cent this year as compared with last year.

Monsoon breaks free from deadlock, again

Vinson Kurian



Thiruvananthapuram, June 16:

The monsoon has managed to break out of the latest brief deadlock, the second after it made a delayed onset.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in an update just this afternoon that the western end of the northern limit stayed pinned down to Harnai.

Progress to East

The line of coverage has since made some progress towards the east of the peninsula, bringing more parts of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh under its footprint.

Thus, the monsoon advanced into more parts of Madhya Maharashtra; most parts of Karnataka and Rayalaseema; parts of Telangana and entire Tamil Nadu.

Some parts of coastal Andhra Pradesh, most parts of west central Bay of Bengal and some more parts of northwest Bay of Bengal too have been brought under coverage.

The northern limit passed through Harnai, Bidar, Mehbubnagar, Bapatla and Gangtok.

The IMD said conditions are also favourable for its further advance into remaining parts of central Arabian Sea, Konkan and interior Karnataka during the next three days.

More parts of Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa and entire Bay of Bengal would also see monsoon set in during this period.

Super typhoon

During the 24 hours ending this morning, the monsoon has been vigorous over sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim and active over Assam, Meghalaya and Kerala.

Meanwhile, Typhoon Guchol, the latest monsoon tormentor raging in the northwest Pacific, is now expected to intensify as a super typhoon as early as tomorrow.

It has already ratcheted up to category-3 strength on the Saffir-Simpson scale that classifies storms to a class-topping category-5 in terms of intensity.

All forecast models now agree that 'Guchol' would peak to category-4 strength (super typhoon) by tomorrow.

It is headed for central Japan with capital Tokyo in its line of sight, but would have weakened into category-2 by Monday when it strikes the metropolis or neighbourhood, forecasts suggest.

'Guchol's' peaking intensity and power means incremental moisture that would normally go to feed the Indian monsoon would be spirited away across the equator into the typhoon.

Bay silenced

The sweep of the flows generated by Guchol's brute strength would not allow any intervening circulations to drop anchor in the Bay of Bengal and steer the monsoon flows towards east India.

Such a system could hopefully develop only on weakening of the typhoon; in fact one such is expected to shape early next week.

And that is the earliest window of opportunity for the monsoon to entrench presence in the northwest Bay of Bengal and onward into the east and east-central regions of India.

Till such time, the monsoon is expected to be present along the west coast and the northeast of India where it has already made its onset.