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Mushroom cultivation turning out to be profitable

Shankar Bennur



popular: The Horticulture Farm at Kukkarahalli lake in Mysore provides training in growing mushrooms.— File Photo

Mushroom cultivation has become a profitable business with the produce fetching good returns in the market because of the rise in demand for edible mushrooms, particularly oyster mushrooms, owing to their nutritional benefits.

Mushroom farming can be taken up by learning the basic rearing techniques from experts at the Horticulture Department here, which is promoting mushroom cultivation.

The Mushroom Seed Production Centre at the Horticulture Farm, adjacent to Kukkarahalli lake here, has been producing mushroom seeds, commonly called 'spawn', for the last decade. The seeds of the oyster mushroom variety, which are in high demand from the hotel industry, are produced at the centre. Most restaurants offer several recipes using mushrooms of this variety. Each packet of seeds, weighing 200 gm, is sold at a subsidised cost of Rs. 10 at the centre.

At home

By following a simple procedure, mushrooms can be grown at home for commercial purposes or for domestic consumption, officials at the department said.

Assistant Director of Horticulture (State sector) Raju told *The Hindu*: “The Horticulture Farm at Kukkarahalli lake provides training in growing mushrooms. Those interested can approach the authorities at the farm. Mushroom farming is a profitable venture as the returns are good. Oyster mushrooms fetch Rs. 120 to Rs. 150 a kg in the market.”

Besides people in urban areas, farmers are showing interest in growing mushrooms as it can bring them additional income.

Mr. Raju said mushroom spawn was produced at the centre with support from the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Hesarghatta, Bangalore. “The seeds are produced in a span of 30 days. They are packed in polythene packets for distribution. Sprouts can be obtained in about 18 days by following certain steps, which will be explained at the time of buying seeds,” he said.

This year, the centre has set a target of producing 10,000 packets (each weighing 200 gm) of mushroom seeds, he added.

Market link

Unemployed youth, housewives and others approach the centre for training in mushroom cultivation.

“Hotels buy oyster mushrooms at an attractive price. If a market link is established with hotels, restaurants and vendors (including malls and supermarkets), the business will provide good income,” he said.

Mushrooms must be cultivated under controlled conditions, details of which can be had from resource persons at the centre. Training in mushroom cultivation had been arranged at the Horticulture Farm here on July 7 and those interested can make use of the opportunity, he said.

Asked about the demand for mushroom seeds, Mr. Raju said: “The demand is so much that people from other districts, including Dakshina Kannada, come here to buy the seeds. Besides Mysore, mushroom seeds are produced by the department in Bangalore and Gulbarga.”

Mr. Raju said the department had established market linkage and regularly conducted workshops to popularise mushroom farming.

• *They can be grown at home for commercial purposes or domestic consumption: officials*

· *'Demand for seeds is so high that people from other districts come here to buy them'*

Published: June 29, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 29, 2012 04:22 IST

'Weak monsoon has not affected milk procurement'

Shankar Bennur

Mysore Milk Union's daily surplus is 2 lakh litres



Mysore Milk Union's daily procurement now stands at 6.2 lakh litres a day.— File PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM

With the setting in of 'flush season' (when milk procurement normally goes up during monsoon), nearly 2 lakh litres of milk from Mysore Milk Union is being sent every day to Mother Dairy in Bangalore, milk powder plant at Channarayapatna in Hassan district, and the dairy at Asangi in Jamkhandi for production of milk powder.

Surplus milk procured by the milk union here is being converted into milk powder at these dairies and this will continue for the next two months, officials at the milk union said.

Milk procurement was likely to go up further in the coming weeks as the 'flush season' lasts usually from June to September, they added.

The slackening of the monsoon has in no way affected the procurement in Mysore and Chamarajanagar districts, said Suresh Babu, Managing Director of Mysore Milk Union, the fourth largest dairy unit under the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF).

Year-end demand

He told *The Hindu* that milk powder and butter was being made from the surplus milk. They would be stored in deep freezers for about four months as demand for these products increases during the year-end.

“We are expecting a good demand for milk powder following a ban on import of milk products. Once the existing stocks of imported milk products are cleared, the demand for our products will obviously improve,” he said.

Mr. Babu said, “New Delhi and North-eastern States are good markets for our products.”

Last year, Mysore Milk Union was diverting nearly 1.25 lakh litres of surplus milk (out of the 4.75 lakh litres procured) every day for making milk powder. “This year, the surplus has gone up by 75,000 litres (current procurement is 6.2 lakh litres a day). The surplus will be more in the coming months as milk procurement is expected to increase,” he said.

Due to “substantial rise” in milk procurement, the procurement price had been cut by Rs. 1.30 a litre from this month. The union is now paying Rs. 19.50 for a litre. Until May, milk producers were getting Rs. 20.80 for a litre.

Mr. Babu said the union had been supplying cattle feed to all milk producers to ensure that there was no scarcity.

“About 100 tonnes of cattle feed is being supplied every day to producers in the two districts at purchase price. About 3,000 to 3,100 tonnes of cattle feed is procured from the KMF-run cattle feed production unit in Hassan every month,” he said.

The subsidy being given to producers for cattle feed had been stopped since the last two months, he added.

• *‘Surplus milk being used for making milk powder, butter’*

• *Procurement likely to go up further in the coming weeks*

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Farmers protest distribution of red gram seed

Tension prevailed for sometime at Assistant Director (Agriculture) office at Nagarkurnool mandal headquarters following serious arguments between farmers, police personnel and agriculture officials on Thursday.

According to the information, farmers in large number gathered at the A.D. Agriculture office to collect red gram seed packets, which were distributed on 100 per cent subsidy. The seed has to

raised as internal crop in the maize crop. The farmers were told to bring passbook and other documents by the agriculture officials.

Following this demand the irate farmers forcibly entered in the office and argued with the Assistant Director Muniswamy and stated that they were coming to the office for the past three days for the seed but officials never told them to bring those documents.

The police personnel led by Circle Inspector Shankar Raju, rushed to the agriculture office, and tried to pacify the agitating farmers.

However, the farmers argued with policemen also.

After sometime the officials and police were successful in pacifying them and arranged for distribution of seed.

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Agricultural bodies demand higher minimum support price for paddy

Various agricultural bodies have demanded higher minimum support price for paddy. Siva. Suriyan, Trichy district secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangham (affiliated to Communist Party of India), has expressed serious disappointment over the announcement of the Central government fixing Rs. 1,250 per quintal of paddy as the minimum support price, just Rs. 170 more than that of last year's support price.

He wondered how this would suffice in the context of the serious hike in the price of fertilizers and labour shortage.

Considering the total cost of cultivation, he pleaded for at least Rs. 2,000 as the minimum support price per quintal. Besides, he urged the State government to raise the incentive of Rs. 50 per quintal, which it usually offers, to at least Rs.100 per quintal.

Puliyur Nagarajan, State vice president of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (Agriculture wing), has demanded that the Tamil Nadu government extend Rs. 150 more as incentive and thus fix at least Rs. 1,500 per quintal as the procurement price for paddy. Lamenting that the delta farmers would not be able to raise kuruvai crop as the Mettur dam could not be opened for irrigation, he said this had caused a loss of at least Rs. 10,000 crores to them.

“The State government should initiate steps to get adequate water in the Cauvery at least for the samba crop which could be raised in about 20 lakh acres.”

Alleging that giant bore wells were being sunk in the Cauvery to provide drinking water to various locations in the State, he contended that this had resulted in serious drought on either side of the Cauvery affecting the trees and agriculture.

Hence, he requested the government to put up barrages in a number of places. Meanwhile, P.Ayyakkannu, former State general secretary of The Bharathiya Kisan Sangam, has demanded release of 2,000 cusecs of water from Mettur dam to save the annual crops raised in the ayacut of the 17 canal.

HYDERABAD, June 29, 2012

Rs. 1,000 crore for farm mechanisation

Kiran government reiterates its 'pro-farmer' approach at the launch of 'Prajahitam'

The Congress government in the State, now headed by N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, will be pro-farmer in its overall approach and in framing policies besides rising to the occasion as and when the farmers face difficulties.

Fulfilling promises

Asserting this at the maiden 'Prajahitam', a programme launched here on Thursday to brief the media once a week on the activities of government departments, Agriculture Minister Kanna Lakshminarayana contended that the Congress dispensation had proved its sincerity by fulfilling all the promises it made to farmers during the 2004 elections.

Free power supply was being continued, interest free loans were being extended, the budget for agriculture had been increased from Rs. 346 crore in 2004-05 to Rs. 2,572 crore in 2012-13. The farmers, who were a disheartened lot in 2004, were a confident lot now, he said.

Accompanied by Information Minister D. K. Aruna and Information commissioner R. V. Chandravadan, he announced a Rs. 1,000-crore programme to modernise and mechanise farming in the State this year. A sum of Rs. 500 crore would be spent on providing 50 per cent subsidy on purchase of equipment like threshers.

Under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) which was extended to agricultural activity, Rs. 100 crore could be spent for mechanisation and Rs. 250 crore on System Rice Intensification (SRI) covering 1.22 lakh hectares.

A hundred vermicompost units and 90 hatcheries were being set up at a cost of Rs. 93 crore to turn farmers to organic fertilizer. Acharya NG Ranga Agriculture University would be strengthened with Rs. 100 crore sanctioned by the Centre.

All the 881 vacant posts in the department and an unspecified number in the university would be filled.

He expressed confidence that the target of producing 218 lakh tonnes of foodgrains this year would be achieved a rainfall was normal in the State, except in four districts.

No shortage

Answering questions, he contended that the extension of NREGS to agriculture would not lead to any re-establishment of feudal relations across villages by benefiting the landed gentry at the cost of coolies. He denied that there was shortage seeds and fertilizer in the State.

• *Media to be briefed once a week on the activities of government departments under Prajahitam*

• *Hundred vermicompost units and 90 hatcheries being set up to promote organic farming*

PALAKKAD, June 29, 2012

Food grains rotting in FCI godowns: MP

A huge stockpile of food grains is rotting in the godowns of the Food Corporation of India (FCI), M.B. Rajesh, MP, has said.

Mr. Rajesh was talking to mediapersons after visiting the godowns at Olavakkode, near here, on Thursday. He contested the claim of Union Minister of State for Agriculture K.V. Thomas that the food stock in FCI godowns was clean and safe.

The Olavakkode FCI godown is the largest in the State. "Due to stock in excess of capacity, food grains are rotting in the godown. There is acute shortage of labourers and employees at the godown," he said. The godown was short of at least 93 casual and head load labourers, he added.

“Vacancies of administrative staff are lying vacant. As per norms, there should be five administrative staff per 5,000 tonnes of food grain. However, there is only one staff for 20,000 tonnes of food grain. There had been no recruitment in FCI since 1976. Due to the acute shortage of manpower, the huge stock has become unmanageable,” Mr. Rajesh said.

The casual and head load labourers were extremely under paid. They got Rs.163 as daily wage. They had no other social security benefits, he said.

“It is shocking that while millions of people are starving, stockpiles of food grains are rotting in FCI godowns. This is because of the wrong policies of the government. The government is spending almost Rs.8 per kilogram for keeping food grains in godowns. Still the government is not ready to distribute food grains through the public distribution system and ration shops,” Mr. Rajesh said.

COIMBATORE, June 29, 2012

Eking out a living by making bamboo products

Most active weavers today are already senior citizens or soon getting there



Their life goes on: Basket weavers at Thadagam Road in Coimbatore. —PHOTO: S.SIVA SARAVANAN.

Seated along Thadagam Road, with the dust raised by passing buses in her face, Suguna picked up a long sliver of sliced bamboo and wove it into the basket skeleton she balanced between her feet. She's done so for 50 years. Twenty years ago, her daughter Thilagavathy joined her. Today, as she cradles an 11-month-old in her arms, Thilagavathy swears his destiny would never involve bamboo or baskets.

Suguna works alongside 500 families, approximately 1,500 weavers, seated by the roadsides of Town Hall, Thadagam Road and Poo Market, working from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week. Making a conservative estimate, they say the families had been in this work at this place for at least 90 years.

"I've sat at this very spot for 40 years. I began weaving because my parents were weavers. I will continue with this profession till I die because I don't know how else to make a living," says Karunanidhi a weaver from the Thadagam Road weaving community.

Most active weavers today are either already senior citizens or soon getting there. Their children prefer to be daily wage work to weaving, for its steadier income. Their grandchildren are enrolled in local schools.

"I will give bamboo weaving a maximum of 10 more years — till our lifetime. The next generation hasn't been taught the art," says Ananthan, a mat weaver.

Enter into a conversation with any weaver in Coimbatore and comparisons with their counterparts in Kerala are inevitable. Most weavers even use a sprinkling of Malayalam in their Tamil — a by-product of their exchanges with bamboo dealers from Angamali and Thrissur, from whom they source bamboo. A bundle of 15 bamboo sticks cost over Rs. 350 here, as opposed to Rs. 250 in Kerala.

Also, in Kerala, the Kerala Bamboo Corporation buys finished products from its weavers and distributes it to customers nationwide, giving weavers a minimum support price and a steady supply of work. There is no such facility here say the weavers.

"Our products sell due to our personal contacts. That too, only during the three months of the mango season and in the wedding season," says Mala, a basket weaver in Poo Market. In the off-season, weavers hire themselves out to established shopkeepers who pays them per basket — Rs. 30 for small baskets, Rs. 40 for medium ones and Rs. 80 for large baskets.

The shopkeepers then resell these to buyers from Udhamandalam, Coonoor and even Kerala, for a higher price.

While the craft of bamboo weaving has sustained itself for centuries, the products woven have diversified. “My parents made only baskets and mats. But, in the early 80s, our generation modified the technique to make flower pots, roofing material, door shades and even window blinds,” says Ramasamy, who works out of Mecrikar Road near Poo Market. The women make baskets through the year while the men make the other products, and only on order.

Ramasamy, and his partner Karunanidhi, have been weaving mats and blinds for over 15 years. Between them and a friend, who strips bamboo into slivers, they weave 30 square feet a day; each sells at Rs. 40. Years of securing bamboo strips to mats with twine have hardened and blackened Ramasamy’s palms.

In this time, he’s seen the demand for bamboo baskets decline and that for other bamboo products grow. “There isn’t enough for us to prosper, but we get by. When one order is completed, another inevitably comes,” he says.

“Without the support of the Government and the public, this art will become mechanised. No handicraft can survive in India,” says Suguna. She lives in a single-room house on Thadagam Road which the Government of Tamil Nadu had built for 115 basket-weavers’ families 15 years ago.

However, the community has expanded since. Newer families have set up homes across the road alongside the Kumaraswamy Lake.

Since their homes flood when the waters rise in monsoon, these families use a collective weaving area on higher ground.

Will a bamboo collective help matters? “It would stabilise demand, but I’m afraid that machines would replace us, like in Kerala,” says Ramasamy.

“But I know for sure that no machine can achieve the perfection we create with our hands.”

BANGALORE, June 29, 2012

Farm sector performance 'most alarming'

Agriculture's contribution to State GSDP has declined from 16 p.c. to 12 p.c., says FKCCI paper



K. Shiva Shanmugar, president-elect, FKCCI; B.N. Bache Gowda, Labour Minister; and J.R. Bangera, president, FKCCI, at a meeting in Bangalore on Thursday.— Photo: K. Gopinathan

Terming the performance of the State's agriculture sector as the "most alarming", the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI) has pointed out that the contribution of agriculture to the State's GSDP declined from 16 per cent in 2004-2005 to 12 per cent in 2011-12.

In the background paper released for the technical session on Agenda-Development Karnataka during its 95th annual general body meeting here on Thursday, the FKCCI has said that the performance of the agriculture sector has been disheartening during the 11th Five Year Plan period — 2007-2012. It pointed out that the growth rate in the agriculture sector witnessed a decline from 2007-2008 with only a rise of 13.3 per cent coming in 2010-2011. The sector showed a negative growth of 2.9 per cent in 2011-2012.

With 60.2 per cent of the workforce still dependent on agriculture in the State, the depleting share of agriculture in GSDP indicated a shortfall in agriculture over the years, the paper said.

It also observed that the misalignment of agriculture output and employment was contributing to stagnant, or in some cases declining, real incomes for a significant portion of a major workforce.

The chamber has also urged for setting up of agro-based industries in rural Karnataka that would help provide employment to the workforce from the agriculture sector.

The technical session was attended by ISEC Director R.S. Deshpande, Tourism Director Sathyavati, Principal Secretary, Department of Industries and Commerce, M.N. Vidyashankar, and Secretary Infrastructure Development Department Rajkumar Khatri.

The FKCCI Journalism Award for 2012 was presented to the Senior Assistant Editor of *The Hindu*, Bangalore, V. Sridhar, for his contribution to business journalism, by Labour Minister B.N. Bache Gowda.

KALPETTA, June 29, 2012

Farmers given tips about tending to pepper vines

P. Jayaraj, Assistant Professor, Pepper Research Station, Panniyur, has said that fungal diseases, nutrient imbalance, high acidity, poor organic matter content and moisture deficit affect pepper vines. Foliar spray of essential nutrients helps rejuvenate them.

He was speaking at an awareness programme on the scientific management of black pepper for sustainable production for farmers in Wayanad district at the Panchayat Community Hall at Ambalavayal on Wednesday.

Sugandhi

Mr. Jayaraj, who presented the findings of "Sugandhi," an integrated pepper development programme for the district, said yellowing of pepper vines in summer was a serious threat to farmers.

Many times, this was attributed to slow wilt disease. Attack of mealy bugs had also been noticed during the time.

Glorious culture

The programme was organised jointly by the Directorate of Areca nut and Spices Development, Kozhikode; Kerala Agricultural University; the Indian Institute of Spices Research (IISR), Kozhikode; the Agriculture Department; and the Spices Board as part of a campaign to revive the glory of pepper cultivation in the district.

A. Devaki, district panchayat vice-president, inaugurated the programme.

Discussions

Homi Cherian, Director, Directorate of Areca nut and Spices Development; Santhosh J. Eapen, Scientist, IISR; and Babu Mathew, Scientist, Centre for Water Resources Development and Management, Kozhikode, led the discussions.

K. Jyothish, Field Officer, explained various development programmes launched by the Spices Board.

V.S. Roy, Deputy Director, Agriculture Department; S. Venkatesh, Assistant Director, Spices Board; M.C. Narayanankutty, Associate Director of Research, Regional Agriculture Research Station, Ambalavayal; and Radhamma Pillai, Professor and Head, Krishi Vijnan Kendra, Ambalavayal; spoke.

KALPETTA, June 29, 2012

Protest against fertilizer price rise

A group of people under the aegis of the Muslim Youth League district committee staged a dharna in front of the telecom office here on Thursday, in protest against the recent hike

in prices of chemical fertilizers. They asked the Centre to bring down the prices and take over the price regulation right from the fertilizer and petroleum companies.

KOCHI, June 29, 2012

Insufficient rain worries farmers

K.A. MARTIN

Water logging is another major problem



Farmers' pride: A view of paddy fields in Pizhala, one of the tiny islands in the Kochi backwaters.— File photo

Virippu, traditionally the leanest of paddy seasons, is a key feature of Kerala's farm cycle highlighting some unique cultural practices like Pokkali and Kaippattu rice on the coastal regions as well as cultivation of the more regular varieties in the eastern reaches of the State.

The onset of the monsoon triggers cultural activities like field preparations and sowing or raising of paddy nurseries to overcome water logging.

The current season has two extremes in the district with some of the areas reporting water logging due to choking of traditional water conduits from land development activities. In other cases, lack of sufficient rain is holding up sowing.

In Piravom panchayat, where Virippu paddy is likely to be sown in less than 10 hectares, water logging has held up sowing.

Lack of sufficient outlets is the key reason, with the traditional outlets being blocked because of land development in the neighbouring areas. The change in topography has drastically cut the means to drain water from the fields.

Farmers, however, have reported availability of seeds.

Mulamthuruthy panchayat too faces the problem of water logging in several hectares. More incentives are now being offered to rice paddy, which is expected to give a boost to planting this season.

In Pampakkuda, Virippu is not too busy a season, as only 40 to 70 hectares come under paddy this season. However, this year there is a big problem with the lack of rains. Some of the field collectives have not been ploughed till this week though it is well past the time when traditional sowing takes place. Farmers here mostly use Jyoti for the Virippu season.

Farmers in Asamannoor are a little worried about the possibility of insufficient rains as the monsoon progresses. Though water logging is a problem, the panchayat expects about 200 hectares to come under Virippu paddy this season.

Farmers here mostly use the red variety Matta, the seeds being sourced mostly from farmers themselves.

Rayamangalam farmers are not worried too much about the poor record of rains so far as the area of around 90 hectares in the panchayat under Virippu paddy are being well irrigated by water from irrigation canals. However, the cost of fertilizers has gone up drastically over the last two weeks. Added to this is the shortage of fertilizer inputs like potash and urea.

Among the panchayats in the district, Rayamangalam has made good progress with sowing in full swing in most of the places.

In Mazhuvannoor sowing has been completed in about 40 hectares. A total of around 70 hectares traditionally come under the Virippu paddy cultivation in the panchayat. The farmers here mostly use the Jyoti variety. Seeds have been distributed to meet the requirement for about 50 hectares.

Virippu paddy cultivation is at a standstill at Ayavana because of the lack of rains. While field preparations are on at several places, no sowing has taken place so far. The panchayat is also likely to see less of Virippu paddy cultivations this season. Of the total available area of around 15 hectares, only around seven to eight hectares are likely to be cultivated this season.

ELURU, June 29, 2012

Farmers jittery over kharif prospects

Uncertainty over the kharif prospects in the Krishna delta under the Krishna-Eluru canal stared the District Review Committee (DRC) in its face. Farmers under the ayacut staged a protest outside the district Collectorate, the venue of the DRC meeting held on Thursday. Dharmana Prasada Rao, district in charge minister, lent a patient hearing to the peasant leaders with a promise to look into their plea for water release from the Srisailam and Nagarjuna Sagar reservoirs for raising seedbeds in the Krishna delta. TDP MLA Chintamaneni Prabhakar from Denduluru raised the issue at the DRC meeting.

The Superintending Engineer of the Krishna division informed the House that the water release from the Nagarjuna Sagar and the Srisailam reservoirs for the Krishna delta was a policy matter to be decided by the higher ups from the Irrigation department. The minister told the agitating

MLAs from the TDP that the government was seized of the issue and would take all the steps to protect the irrigation interests of the farmers. The farmers from the Krishna delta spread over 13 lakh acres, who lost the rabi in view of the crop holiday, were eagerly waiting for water to flow into their fields for the rabi operations. The peasants at the tail-end of the Krishna-Eastern canal with an ayacut of 58,000 acres in Krishna and West Godavari districts were a worried lot, Mr. Prabhakar said.

Mr. Yerneni Nagendranath and Mr. Sitarama Swamy of AP Raitanga Samakhya, in a petition submitted to the in charge minister, wanted the government to release water from the two reservoirs upstream Krishna river for raising seedbeds in the Krishna delta at the rate of 3,000 cusecs for a period of one month at least. Mr. Sitarama Swamy accused the government of preferring to draw water for drinking in Hyderabad from the Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir by maintaining the levels beyond the requirement at the cost of delta farmers. "Water could be drawn for drinking even after maintaining the level at 496ft. The Irrigation officials are hesitant to release water for the delta for the khariff operations even as the level is recorded at 512ft," he observed.

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- *Y. Nagendranath and Sitarama Swamy of AP Raitanga Samakhya submit petition*
 - *Paddy transplanted will be go beyond August, says Yerneni*
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hindustantimes

■ Fri, 29 Jun 2012

water

INDIAN CITIES

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Chennai

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Today's Weather



Cloudy

Friday, Jun 29

Max Min

Tomorrow's Forecast








Rainy

Saturday, Jun 30

Max Min

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| | 37.1° 24.8° | 35° 28° |
| Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs | Sunrise: 5:45 | |
| Humidity: 79% | Sunset: 18:39 | |
| Wind: Normal | Barometer: 993 | |

Extended Forecast for a week

| Sunday Jul 1 | Monday Jul 2 | Tuesday Jul 3 | Wednesday Jul 4 | Thursday Jul 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 31° 28° | 31° 27° | 34° 26° | 32° 27° | 32° 27° |
| Rainy | Rainy | Rainy | Rainy | Rainy |

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

28 JUN, 2012, 08.27PM IST, PK KRISHNAKUMAR,ET BUREAU

Indian spices exports cross \$2 billion

Indian spices exports rose 43 % in value and nine per cent in quantity for 2011-12 totalling 5,75,270 tonnes valued at Rs 9783.42 crore. In dollar terms, the exports touched \$2037.76 million. Last year the exports stood at 5,25,750 tonnes valued at Rs 6840.70 crore (\$1502.85 million).

The number of countries buying Indian spices went up to 143 from 137 with UAE, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the USA topping the list. Indian continues to be the largest spice exporting country in the world and is closing in on the \$3 billion target set for 2017," said A Jayathilak, chairman of Spices Board.

Small cardamom was the biggest gainer with 296 % increase in volume and 175 % increase in value. The country exported a record 4650 tonnes of cardamom valued Rs 363 crore compared with 1175 tonnes valued at Rs 132 crore in the previous year.

Chilli had largest volumes with 2.41 lakh tonnes valued at Rs 2144 crore. While the increase in quantity was marginal, the value went up by 40 %. Pepper showed 42 % increase in quantity and 129 % rise in value at 26,700 tonnes valued at Rs 878 crore. In terms of quantity turmeric showed 61 % rise at 79,500 tonnes valued at Rs 734.34 crore. Jeera export touched 45,500 tonnes worth Rs 644 crore, showing 40 % increase in quantity and 63 % rise in value. In terms of value mint products topped the list of spices with 14,750 tonnes worth Rs 2224 crore. Spice oils and oleoresins export stood at 7265 tonnes valued at Rs 1304 crore. Value added spice products curry powder and paste shipments came to 17,000 tonnes valued at Rs 252 crore.



Govt should purchase wheat till the last grain available: BJP

THURSDAY, 28 JUNE 2012 21:31

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE | LUCKNOW

Spokesman of the Bharatiya Janata Party said here on Thursday that the state government should not close wheat purchase centres in Uttar Pradesh till it purchases the last grain from the farmers.

Party spokesman Vijay Bahadur Pathak said that farmers were forced to set their wheat on fire because of the apathetic attitude of the officials manning these centres. "During the Assembly election campaign the Samajwadi Party had projected itself as a pro-farmer party. The time has come to prove that the Samajwadi Party government works in favour of farmers," Pathak said.

He said that farmers in Banda, Hathras and Ramabai Nagar had set their wheat on fire because the government agencies refused to purchase their wheat. "The government should issue fresh orders asking centres to purchase wheat till the last grain was available with the farmers," he said.

Talking about large-scale bungling in purchase of wheat he said Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav had himself seen how farmers were being cheated in these purchase centres. The Chief

Minister had issued orders and these were followed up by the Chief Secretary. Despite these orders the farmers were forced to torch their produce because centres had refused to take their grains, he said.

Meanwhile, addressing party workers in Maharajganj party's national vice-president Kalraj Mishra said that neither the government nor the State Election Commission (SEC) had taken the urban bodies elections seriously. "It is no longer a free and fair poll," he said. In another decision the BJP has declared Mukesh Gautam and Bhagwat Prasad Ruhela as candidates for the chairmen's posts in Vrindavan and Kosikala Nagar Palika Parishad.

THE HINDU Business Line

Soyabean futures jump on hopes of lower output

Suresh P. Iyengar



Business Line The below normal rainfall and drop in area under soyabean cultivation may impact production this year.

Mumbai, June 29:

Soyabean futures on the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange Ltd (NCDEX) gained 1.6 per cent to Rs 3,928 per quintal on expectations of lower output in this kharif season.

The below normal rainfall and drop in area under soyabean cultivation may impact production this year. Besides, the dry weather prevailing in the US may hit the crop yield.

Sowing of kharif oilseeds has begun, however, the pace is much slower due to weak monsoon progress.

Area covered under oilseeds is about 3.13 lakh hectares, down 32 per cent as of June 21. Area covered under soyabean stood at 13,600 hectares compared with 50,000 ha last year.

The minimum support price for soyabean was hiked by 30 per cent to Rs 2,200 a quintal in 2012-13. Higher MSP may lead to increase in acreage, but the crop output will depend on the progress of monsoon.

As per the Solvent Extractors' Association of India, the domestic export of oil meal in May increased 8.60 per cent to 351,791 tonnes from 323,907 tonnes logged in the same period last year.

However, the total export of oil meal between April-May was down 10 per cent to 752,218 tonnes.

CBOT Soyabean settled 0.34 per cent lower on Thursday on reports that the acreage has risen by 2.2 per cent in the US. The US Department of Agriculture reduced the crop condition ratings for corn and soyabean to the lowest since 1988.

Sugar rules flat on tepid demand



Mumbai, June 28:

Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market ruled almost steady for the third consecutive day on Thursday. Spot prices for the fine variety increased by Rs 5 a quintal, while that of the normal quality decreased by Rs 5. Naka and mill tender rates were unchanged because of

lower-than-expected local demand and need-based month- end offtake. Few mills offered tenders, indicating they are not under pressure. Mr Jagdish Rawal, a wholesaler, said that everyone is now waiting for announcement of the September quota. Currently, the demand is subdued and millers are selling based on the market trend. With Ramadan starting in July and other festivals to follow, demand is sure to improve during the second quarter.

Producers, he said, are not willing to sell at lower rates on expectation of higher demand. The world market is also seen moving up this week due to fresh demand from China and tight shipments from Brazil. The weakening rupee will provide an opportunity for sugar exporters. According to the the sugar industry, till June 21.72 lakh tonnes of sugar were exported. The future price trend market will depend upon the announcement of a new free-sale quota for July-September.

Delayed monsoon across the country is raising fears about crop output. Sugar production in the 2012-13 season is estimated at 260-265 lakh tonnes, but this will depend on the progress of the monsoon and yield, said sources.

In the international markets, sugar futures closed higher for the third consecutive day on concerns about supplies in Brazil and talk of Chinese buying.

In the Vashi market, 49-50 truckloads arrived and local dispatches accounted for 47-48 truckloads.

A total of some 90-100 truckloads are lying in the market as inventory, traders said.

On Wednesday, only 4-5 tenders were offered and 8,000-10,000 bags were sold at Rs 2,880-2,930 (Rs 2,880-2,930) for S-grade, and Rs 2,960-3,030 (Rs 2,960-3,030) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade, Rs 2,986-3,022 (Rs 2,982 -3,026); and M-grade, Rs 3,041- 3,181 (Rs 3,041- 3,181).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade, Rs 2,945 -3,000 (Rs 2,945 -3,000); and M-grade, Rs 3,040-3,110 (Rs 3,040-3,110).

Turmeric brightens on quality arrivals



Erode, June 28:

Spot turmeric prices increased by Rs 100 a quintal on Thursday. Exporters and stockists purchased 65 per cent of stocks that arrived, hoping prices will go up, especially for quality turmeric. Only 60 per cent of the stocks was sold. "Almost all the 10,560 bags of turmeric which arrived for sales were fine variety turmeric", said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said for the past two days all the four markets in Erode have been receiving fine variety turmeric, so prices increased .

Till now, no new orders have been received form North India, but local traders are getting orders from turmeric powdering units. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 2,293-3,919 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 2,409-3611.

Salem Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 3,709-4,559 and the root variety at Rs 3,459-3,994 . Of 1,412 bags of turmeric kept for sales, 849 were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,589-4,141 and the root variety at Rs 3,551-3,989.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,189-4,459 and the root variety at Rs 3,076-3,861 a quintal.

Mustardseed gains on delay in monsoon



Indore, June 28:

Prices of mustardseed have increased by Rs 200 a quintal in the past week due to delay in monsoon.

In Indore *mandis*, mustardseed was quoted at Rs 3,900-3,925 a quintal against Rs 3,700-3,750 a week ago.

However, prices in the physical market are lower by Rs 200 a quintal compared with the futures market. Mustardseed futures traded lower on the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) on weak buying support with July and August contracts closing at Rs 3,968 a quintal (down Rs 20) and Rs 4,022 (down Rs 23).

Plant deliveries in mustardseed also ruled higher on improved buying support. Plant deliveries for Jaipur line were quoted at Rs 3,970-3,990 a quintal. Arrival of mustard seeds in the country on Thursday was recorded at 87,000 bags with around 55,000 bags being offloaded in Rajasthan alone. Mustard oil ruled stable in *mandis* across Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat on slack demand and weak buying interest.

In Indore and Morena, mustard oil ruled flat at Rs 760, while it was Rs 755 in Neemuch.

Despite slack demand, any decline in mustard oil from the current price level appears unlikely, said Mr Vijay Kumar Jain, a Jawad-based mustard oil trader. He said that demand in mustard oil in all likelihood would pick up as soon as the region gets its first monsoon shower.

Demand may perk up egg, chicken further

Gayathri G.



Chennai, June 28:

The price of an egg increased to a new record of Rs 3.33 on rise in demand following the onset of South-West monsoon.

The price is expected to go up further in the next few days, though marginally, according to the Chairman of NECC, Namakkal Zone, Mr P. Selvaraj.

Sources in the poultry industry expect even chicken prices to rise further in coming days. "Of our average production of 2.75 crore eggs (in Namakkal), we used to send 30 lakh eggs to Kerala. Now, it has almost doubled owing to a ban on fishing in that State," said a poultry-unit owner in Namakkal.

Since last week, the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), Namakkal zone, has hiked the price by 11 paise from Rs 3.22.

Mr P. Selvaraj said that the increase in egg price was due to continued demand.

From May 26 to June 28, the wholesale price of egg has been raised 15 times from Rs 2.75 to Rs 3.33 (an overall increase of 19 per cent).

A host of factors such as rise in consumption, spiralling input costs, pricey vegetables, ban on fishing in the neighbouring Kerala and Karnataka have catapulted egg prices.

Also soaring cost of soyameal – a key ingredient in poultry feed is also one of the reasons. Soyameal at Indore ruled at Rs 33,330-33,600 on Thursday against Rs 17,300 - 17,400 during the corresponding date a year ago. Feed costs account for two-thirds of production cost at a poultry unit.

On the export front, the industry is pinning hopes on neighbouring Bangladesh that has opened its gates to imports to meet Ramadan demand. Exports hit a 10-year low of 240.88 lakh eggs in May this year against 330.62 lakh eggs in May 2011. However, prices of layer birds have been cut to Rs 48/kg (Rs 54), while the Broiler Coordination Committee has slashed chicken prices to Rs 60/kg from last week's record Rs 76.

Industry sources said that the price of layer birds had come down as the production of broiler chicken – that dropped in the summer – had started picking up with the onset of the monsoon. This has led to drop in the prices as layer bird prices are based on the demand and price of broiler chicken.

Pepper slips further

G. K. Nair

Kochi, June 28:

The pepper market on Thursday dropped on bearish sentiments amid limited activities. All the active contracts fell on liquidation in July.

There was no selling pressure neither in Kerala nor Karnataka and thus activities on the spot were also limited. Only 10 tonnes of fresh pepper arrived and that was traded at Rs 386-390 a kg, depending upon the quality, grade and area of production. As there were rains almost every growing region in Kerala since last night the moisture content was reportedly higher, market sources told *Business Line*.

July contract on the NCDEX decreased by Rs 415 to the last traded price of Rs 40,700 a quintal. August and September dropped by Rs 430 and Rs 285 respectively to the LTP of Rs 41,110 and Rs 41,465 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover moved up by 26 tonnes to 1,709 tonnes. Total open interest fell by 197 tonnes to 5,038 tonnes showing good liquidation.

July open interest decreased by 268 tonnes to 2,989 tonnes while August and Sep increased by 64 tonnes and 6 tonnes showing switching over.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend dropped by Rs 200 to close at Rs 38,600 (ungarbled) and Rs 40,100 (garbled) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$7,450 a tonne (c&f) Europe and \$7,750 a tonne (c&f) USA. The fall in the futures market price was offset by the strengthening of the rupee against the dollar, the trade said.

Seminar on commodity price risk management at Kottayam on Friday

Thrissur, June 28:

A stakeholder awareness and educational seminar on agribusiness and commodities price risk management will be held at Hotel Windsor Castle, Kodimatha, Kottayam, on Friday at 5.00 p.m.

The seminar is part of a series of events organised by *The Hindu Business Line* jointly with Forward Markets Commission (FMC), the country's commodity futures market regulator under the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs and National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), India's largest agri-commodity futures exchange.

The seminar seeks to bring together agribusiness stakeholders including producers, processors, industrial consumers, trading houses, importers, exporters and related others operating in the physical market with a view to creating awareness about the need to manage commodity price risks arising out of volatile market conditions.

The meeting will be addressed by Mr V. C. Chaturvedi, Director, FMC; Mr V.V. Ganesan, Vice-President, NCDEX; Mr Akshay Agarwal, managing director, Acumen Commodities (India) Ltd; and Mr G. Chandrashekhar, *The Hindu Business Line*.

Expert presentations will include commodities as critical drivers of India's economic growth and need for price risk management, benefits of commodity futures trading and exchange functions, regulator's perspective, and the role of brokers in commodity trading. There will be an open-house discussion where the experts will respond to queries from the participants.

Participation is by prior registration. Please contact: Shifa Sulaiman on 9447695936

New export enquiries boost jeera

Rajkot, June 28:

Spot prices of jeera were unchanged on usual buying, while futures moved up on buying support. However, exporters, hedgers as well as upcountry buying is prevailed in the market.

According to Kedia Commodity report, lack of rains in Gujarat , the leading producer, may also support the sentiment. Spot traders reported fresh export enquiries for Indian-origin jeera from buyers in Singapore and Dubai.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), July contracts gained Rs 32.50 to Rs 13,735 a quintal with an open interest of 11,517 lots. NCDEX August contracts moved up Rs 40 to Rs 14,235 for 100 kg, with an open interest of 16,350 lots.

Jeera medium quoted at Rs 2,050-2,150 for a *maund* of 20 kg, NCDEX quality raw jeera quoted at Rs 2,475-2,575 at Unjha market of Gujarat. Arrivals stood at 8,000-9,000 bags and traded around 11,000-12,000 bags.

In the international market, cumin seed one per cent June ready shipment quoted at \$2,525 a tonne (c&f) Singapore. Meanwhile, Syria is offering for June ready shipment at \$3,000.

According to a market analyst, domestic futures rose on fresh export enquiries amid slack domestic supplies and on the slow progress of monsoon.

Steady trend in spot rubber

Kottayam, June 28:

Physical rubber prices ruled steady on Thursday. Sellers stayed away following widespread rain in major plantation areas but the market failed to improve lacking quantity buyers for any grade. Volumes were dull.

Sheet rubber finished unchanged at Rs 186 a kg, according to traders. The grade improved to Rs 186.50 (186) a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, according to Rubber Board.

RSS 4 slipped at its July series to Rs 185.40 (185.58) and August to Rs 182.34 (182.51) while the September series improved to Rs 180.89 (180.82) and November to Rs 182.50 (181.34) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) inched up to Rs 185.93 (185.82) a kg at Bangkok. The July futures firmed up to ₹236.2 (Rs 169.63) from ₹233.5 during the day session but then weakened to ₹231.2 (Rs 166.02) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 186 (186); RSS-5: 180 (180); ungraded: 174 (174); ISNR 20: 180 (180) and latex 60 per cent: 133 (133).

Cotton prices gain as spinners compete for stocks

Erode, June 28:

Cotton prices increased at the weekly auction being conducted at the Bhoopady Regulated Marketing Committee yard on Wednesday.

Spinning mills again competed for the produce put up on sale and quoted higher prices.

As a result, Bt cotton sold at Rs 4,000-4,700 a quintal, which was Rs 510 higher than last week's price. Similarly, the Surabi variety fetched Rs 4,600-5,000.

Farmers from across Erode and neighbouring districts 6,500 bags of cotton (weighing 227 tonnes) to the auction. But only 210 tonnes were put up for sale.

Bulk buyers from Krishnagiri, Uthangarai, Coimbatore, Annur and Perundurai purchased the entire 210 tonnes. Buyers said that they need cotton in huge quantities as they haven't received any stock from North India yet.

Mr Palanisamy, a cotton farmer from Puliampatty, said that " We are finally making a profit this week. Till now, we had sold cotton at low prices. Now, demand is picking up among spinners".

The cotton auction at the Anthiyur Regulated Marketing Society began on Monday. A total of 5,000 bags of cotton (weighing 175 tonnes) arrived for sale, all of which were of the MCU 5 variety. All the bags sold at Rs 4,100-4,610 a quintal.

Board withdraws notice to recover tea subsidy

P. S. Sundar

Coonoor, June 28:

The Tea Board has withdrawn its notice to select factories seeking recovery of quality upgradation subsidy availed by them. It has also withdrawn the notice to cancel licences issued under the Tea (Marketing) Control order to manufacture and sell tea.

“The Board had issued notices to some factories in South India whose teas fetched prices lower than the South Indian auction price or private sale average price in 2011. Contending that lower price meant that the subsidy did not achieve the value for the money and needed recovery, the Board had sought explanation if they wanted to protect their licence,” the Tea Board Member, Dr S. Ramu, told *Business Line*.

Dr Ramu said that representations had been made for reviving the pruning subsidy scheme abandoned recently, as there is scope to prune at least 10,000 hectares annually in the Nilgiris.

Tobacco auctions gather steam in A.P.

Ch. R. S. Sarma



Guntur, June 28:

Tobacco auctions in Andhra Pradesh have gathered momentum in the past 2-3 weeks and so far 103 million kg of the crop has been sold in the State at an average price of Rs 98.99 a kg.

According to Mr V. Kannaiah, Manager (auctions), the performance is comparatively better than last year when it took 124 days to market a similar quantity. He said that the average price was, however, slightly higher last year at Rs 101.50 a kg.

He said exports orders had been received by the trade and therefore, auctions had picked up momentum of late. "We are confident of completing the auction process in Andhra Pradesh by August 15 this year. Last year, the last auction day was October 13," he said.

He said the Tobacco Board had authorised a crop size of 162 mkg in Andhra Pradesh, but the actual crop may be 164 mkg. The surplus in the State was negligible. He said in Karnataka, where currently tobacco plantation was going on, the board had authorised a crop size of 98 million kgs, but the progress of plantation was not fast, as the monsoon was not encouraging. Mr Kannaiah said that the tobacco grown in West Godavari district in the northern light soils (NLS) was fetching a maximum of Rs 131 a kg, the highest in the State.

The average price so far was Rs 115.25 a kg in the NLS against last year's Rs 118.69. Against a target of 49 mkg, NLS farmers had grown 55 mkg.

"The auctions are on an even keel now and we are sure there will not be any problem," he said.

Govt inertia pushing wheat prices down

Vishwanath Kulkarni

| PRICES IN SELECT MARKETS | | | (in Rs/quintal) |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| Markets | Min | Max | Modal price |
| UTTAR PRADESH | | | |
| Etawah | 1,030 | 1,070 | 1,050 |
| Jhansi | 1,010 | 1,125 | 1,060 |
| Raibareilly | 1,100 | 1,115 | 1,100 |
| RAJASTHAN | | | |
| Deoli | 1,090 | 1,225 | 1,158 |
| MADHYA PRADESH | | | |
| Khandwa | 1,126 | 1,262 | 1,126 |
| Manawar | 1,120 | 1,035 | 1,130 |

New Delhi, June 28:

Wheat prices are ruling below the minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 1,285 a quintal in several markets across North India, despite the Government procuring more than 40 per cent of the 2011-12 crop.

Inadequate procurement infrastructure in States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, coupled with the Government's recent moves to sell about three million tonnes at a subsidised price of Rs 1,170 a quintal to bulk users, has kept buyers away from the markets.

"When the Government is selling at a lower price, there is no question of prices going up in the market," said Mr Adi Narayan Gupta, President, Roller Flour Millers Federation of India. Millers expect the Government to sell more at lower prices as it grapples with storage issues. The Centre has procured over 37 million tonnes from the latest crop estimated to be a record of over 90 million tonnes. High taxes in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have kept private sector buyers away from *mandis*. A bonus of Rs 100 a quintal offered by M.P. and Rajasthan prompted farmers to sell their produce to Government agencies in these States.

"The Government should have allowed exports when the procurement was going on," said Mr Ajay Jhakar, Chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj.

When faced with an unexpected gain in output and procurement touching a record high this year, the Government is struggling to handle the situation, said Dr Ashok Gulati, Chairman, Commission for Agriculture Cost and Prices (CACP).

Potato prices hot up, but no gains for farmers who cut area

Shobha Roy



Kolkata, June 28:

Forty-three-old Lufthar Rahman of Abhirampur village in Hooghly, 90 km from Kolkata, is rueing his decision to cut the area under potato by almost half this crop year that began in December.

With potato prices at record high, Lufthar could have made a killing had he sowed the Jyoti variety of the tuber on all his 10 bighas (around 3.3 acres of land).

“Last year, the prices had plunged so low that I did not lift my stocks from the cold storage. This year, I cultivated potato only on five bighas; on the rest I went for mustard cultivation,” he rues.

Prices rise

After plunging to record lows last year, potato prices have been spiralling up since February, thanks to an estimated 25 per cent dip in production.

The production is estimated to be around 32 million tonne against the initial estimate of 43 million tonne this year, market sources said.

The wholesale price of the tuber (Jyoti variety) has jumped to Rs 1,260 a quintal from Rs 200-250 in end-December.

The drop in production is mainly on account of blight in certain potato-producing States such as UP and lower-than-anticipated rains in Karnataka, said Ms Vedika Narveker, Senior Research Analyst at Angel Broking.

According to Mr Patit Paban De, member, West Bengal Cold Storage Association, a number of farmers have, like Lufthar, scaled down their cultivation this year.

There has been 8-10 per cent decline in the area under potato in Bengal this year.

Holding stock

Farmers have been holding onto their stock in anticipation of higher prices.

This has created a demand-supply mismatch, thereby pushing prices up further.

“The release from cold storage is lower by 3-4 per cent as farmers and traders are holding onto their stock,” Mr De said.

The ensuing rains will spur demand, pushing up prices further, said Mr Mahendra Swarup, President, Federation of Cold Storage Association.

Chana farmers hold back stocks hoping for a price spin

Latha Venkatraman

Bikaner (Rajasthan), June 27:

In the villages of western Rajasthan farmers are now asking one question: If prices of guar seed have risen so spectacularly in the last one year on lower output why cannot prices of other farm produce move up similarly?

This question has prompted farmers in the villages of Bikaner district to hold back stocks of chana and wait for an appropriate price when they can sell. That “appropriate” price at this juncture is Rs 5,000 per 100 kg.

Chana prices in the *mandis* of Bikaner are ruling at Rs 3,800-4,000 per 100 kg.

Lower output

The country’s chana output in 2011-12 was lower by 8.2 lakh tonnes at 74 lakh tonnes. In Bikaner, a major chana trading centre, arrivals after the initial bout declined to a trickle as farmers held on to stocks hoping for further rise in prices.

So far in this season, chana arrivals in Nokhamandi in Bikaner district have not risen above 500 bags (1 bag = 100 kg) as against 2,500-3,500 bags in the same time last year.

Are farmers in Bikaner imprudent to hold on to chana stocks when monsoon is just round the corner? Some believe the risk of holding on to stocks could pay off but Rs 4,000 per 100 kg is a good price to start offloading the stocks.

“Guar has changed the mindset of people here,” said Mr Om PrakashMundhra of Nokha Commodity Services.

The stupendous gains in guar prices over the last one year, particularly in the early part of this year, have changed the fortunes of most guar farmers and traders.

Chana at Rs 4,000 per 100 kg is a good bargain as prices last year were Rs 2,400-2,500 per 100 kg.

Most farmers in this region grow guar along with other crop such as moth beans, mustard, chana, jeera, fenugreek and bajra.

Prices 'quite good'

"Chana prices right now are quite good. They are neither too low nor too high," said Mr Rajesh Saraswat, Managing Director, LTC Commercial Company (P) Ltd, a warehousing company.

At the Bikaner *mandi*, Saturday's post-noon auctions of chana stocks saw prices at Rs 3,872-4,051 per 100 kg. The four lots that came up for auction were bought by Bhagwati Trading Company.

Mr Jagdish Prasad, the owner of the trading company, is hoping that prices move up so that he is able to make some profit. He plans to offload his stocks shortly.

Chana stocks can be held on as deterioration of the produce is minimal unlike many other crop, traders and farmers said.

"Today, farmers have the financial capacity to hold chana because they have made money in guar," said Mr Radheshyam Kapadia, a trader at Nokhamandi.

M.P. irrigation project extended

New Delhi, June 28:

The Planning Commission on Thursday approved the extension of time for completion of the Singhpur barrage irrigation project of Madhya Pradesh.

The Government of Madhya Pradesh had requested for extension for two-year time period without any cost overrun in the project for which investment clearance was accorded earlier.

Now, on the request of the State Government, the time period has been extended by two years, a Plan panel release said.

The scheme will have to be executed as per the approved outlays in the State Plan. The State Finance Department has been asked to restrict the expenditure to the approved cost.

"No additional expenditure beyond the approved cost may be permitted unless the revised estimate is approved," it added.

'Indonesian rainforests under threat from palm tree cultivation'

Mumbai, June 28:

A scathing report put together by Greenpeace India on the Indonesian palm oil industry could hold important lessons for Indian policy makers on commercial exploitation of forest land.

The report, titled *Frying the Forest*, shines light on the devastating impact of the palm oil industry on Indonesia's rainforests, particularly the flagging palm oil major Duta Palma as a case study in bad practices.



The report said Duta Palma is flouting environmental norms, threatening local residents and government officials. The company has been in conflict with local communities over land issues, which led to massive protests in November 2011.

Greenpeace India's forest campaigner, Mr Nandikesh Sivalingam, said they are pushing for a time-bound 'zero deforestation policy' in Indonesia.

India is the world's largest palm oil importer with Indonesia being its primary source of supply. It imported about 19 per cent of the global palm oil produce, which was 45.75 million tonnes in 2010.

"Indian companies don't know where their produce comes from. They buy from different suppliers," said Mr Sivalingam.

He said Indian companies should stop trading with Duta Palma and other Indonesian palm oil companies if they refuse to implement sustainable policies on conservation of forests.

The report said Duta Palma supplies palm oil to companies like Adani-Wilmar, Ruchi Soya, and Emami among others. ITC, Britannia Industries, Parle, PepsiCo India and KFC India use palm oil for processing their products, Mr Sivalingam said.

Indonesia's tropical forests are cleared and illegally burnt down for cultivating palm oil trees. Clearing the forest using slash-and-burn techniques burns the carbon in the forest soil to form carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas.

These environmentally-unsound techniques caused the 1997 haze over Indonesia which led to the diversion of international flights and affected the economies of neighbouring Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Brunei.

Critically endangered species like the Sumatran tiger and the orang-utan depend heavily on these rainforests, which are now under serious threat.

National vegetable initiative may be extended to Coimbatore

Coimbatore, June 27:

The Tamil Nadu Government has embarked on a 'National Vegetable Initiative'. Titled 'Peri Metro', the project is to ensure that the people living in the targeted city have access to quality vegetables at reasonable rates.

The project was unveiled in Chennai last year and the Government is looking to replicate the same in Coimbatore this year.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 78th Scientific Workers' Conference, at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University here, the Commissioner of Horticulture, TN Government, Dr Santosh Babu, told *Business Line* that the department is in the process of getting the horticultural produce from the farmers in Chennai city.

"Around 8,000 farmers from five districts in and around Chennai have been grouped. They will, in turn, form a producer society or company. This group formation is on. A market aggregator will take care of this society/company. This aggregator will sort the produce, grade and arrive at a price (*mandi* price) and market it through kiosks, set up for the purpose," the Horticulture Commissioner explained.

While stating that the kiosks would be run by franchisees, Dr Babu said that 200 kiosks were ready for launch in Chennai. "We have set up a kiosk at the Secretariat. The State Chief Minister, Ms J. Jayalalithaa, would inaugurate this very soon."

He said the idea behind establishing such outlets is to bridge the gap on the marketing front and to ensure that farmers get a reasonable rate and the people have access to quality vegetables at reasonable rate.

Deficient monsoon likely to hit coffee crop quality

Anil Urs



Bangalore, June 28:

Deficit monsoon is likely to impact the quality of the upcoming coffee crop for the new season beginning November.

Since the beginning of monsoon (June 1), coffee-growing areas of Kodagu, Hassan and Chikmagalur in Karnataka, Gudalur, Yercaud and Palani hills in Tamil Nadu and Wayanad in Kerala are experiencing dry weather.

Rainfall has been half the normal quantity this year during June. The dry conditions are likely to impact the quality of coffee and pepper plants. Besides, they could lead to a spurt in pest menace.

Crucial stage

“This is a crucial phase we (plantation belt) are passing through. Rains are required for development of coffee berry, flowering of pepper as well as to contain the pest menace,” said Mr Bose Mandana, former Vice-Chairman, Coffee Board and a senior coffee planter from Kodagu.

June-July rains are crucial for coffee plants as they need water for fruit berry growth and to maintain its green foliage.

Rains are also crucial for pepper plants. The catkin setting phase and flowering in pepper plants take place during monsoon.

“This year flowering of pepper is affected due to lack of moisture in the soil. This is likely to give rise to pest in pepper plants,” said Mr Nishant Gurjer, Managing Partner, Sethuraman Estates, Chikmagalur.

Mr Sahadev Balakrishna, Partner of Netraconda estate, Koppa in Chikmagalur, said:

“Insufficient rains are causing us lot of anxiety and affecting the environment and eco-system in the plantation belt. Annual rains rejuvenate streams, rivers and maintain the water table.”

Pest troubles

Good rain is required to contain pests in the growing region. Incidents of white stem borer (WSB) and mealy bugs are being reported in major tracks. In WSB attack, the larvae bores into the stem causing death of young plants whereas the mealy bug damages coffee plants by sucking the sap from the tender parts.

Mr Gurjer said: “Due to lack of moisture, pest menace is prominent in Arabica plantations this year. But Robusta area has been affected right from April (blossom phase).”

“Due to lack of rains in the plantation areas, WSB menace has spread and we have issued advisory to growers to take precautionary measures,” said Mr Jawaid Akhtar, Chairman, Coffee Board.

“As for the monsoon rain, it is too early to forecast the crop. Since full two more months of rains is left, we need to wait and watch,” he said.

However, Mr Marvin Rodrigues, Chairman, Karnataka Planters Association, said: “Lack of rains in June does not make any difference to the coming coffee crop (2012-13). But it is the pest menace and irrigation for the next crop cycle is what the planters are worried about.”

Four new varieties of pulses released for cultivation

Chandigarh, June 28:

Four new high-yielding and insect-resistant varieties of pulses have been released for cultivation in different agro-climate conditions. The new varieties have been developed at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University in Hisar.

The University's Vice-Chancellor, Prof K. S. Khokhar, said apart from giving higher yields, these varieties were resistant to various diseases and other biotic and abiotic stresses.

The varieties include MH-421 of moong, UH 04-06 (Haryana Urd-1) of black gram (urad) , HFP-529 of green peas and Haryana Kabuli Chana-4 (HK-4) of chickpea (gram).

Whereas moong and urad varieties had been released for cultivation in Haryana state, the varieties of chickpea and green peas have been released for use in north-east and north-west plain zones, respectively, he said.

Prof Khokhar said that in view of the low productivity and ever increasing prices, the varsity scientists had worked hard to meet these challenges and developed improved varieties of pulse crops suitable for different agro-climatic conditions.

The HAU Director of Research, Dr R. P. Narwal, said the HK-4 variety of chickpea has good cooking quality. These qualities would fetch a higher market price for farmers.

Besides, it was high yielding and resistant to wilt — the major disease of gram — and was highly suitable for cultivation in Haryana also.

Likewise, moong variety MH-421 was also high-yielding and resistant to the yellow mosaic virus. Being early maturing (60 days), this variety was suitable under rice-wheat rotation, he said.

The farmers would harvest an average yield of 10-12 quintals per hectare under this cropping system, he said.

Dr Narwal said HFP-529 variety of green peas was a high-yielding, early-maturing dwarf variety with wide adaptability.

It was tolerant to powdery mildew and showed better resistance to rust and Ascochyta blight diseases. UH-04-06 variety of urad was high yielding, early maturing and resistant to yellow mosaic virus, he added.

USDA estimates 2012-13 coffee output at 148 million bags

PTI



A view of a coffee plantation.

New Delhi, June 28:

Global coffee production is expected to rise by 7 per cent to record 148 million bags in 2012-13 coffee year, beginning October 2012, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said in its latest report.

The production is estimated at 138 million bags (of 60 kg each) in 2011-12 coffee year (October-September).

“World coffee production for 2012-13 is forecast at a record 148 million bags, up 10 million from the previous year,” USDA said.

Half the gain is attributed to Brazil’s Arabica crop entering the on-year of the biennial production cycle, while record Robusta harvests in Brazil and Vietnam are also expected to contribute to the growth, it added.

According to the International Coffee Organisation (ICO), the production prospects for 2012-13 crop year are considered to be good with significant production increases expected in Brazil in accordance with the biennial cycle for Arabica.

Production estimates

The USDA has pegged production in Brazil at a record 55.9 million bags, up 6.7 million primarily to the Arabica trees entering the on-year of the biennial production cycle.

Vietnam's production is expected at a record 22.4 million bags, based on a combination of favourable growing conditions and an increase in fruit-bearing area, while the output in Colombia is forecasted at 7.5 million bags.

Coffee production in India is pegged at 5.1 million bags and in Indonesia it is forecasted at 9.7 million bags, USDA said.

In the other major growing areas, production in Central America is expected at 14 million bags and in sub-Saharan Africa it is pegged to rise by nearly 1 million bags to 17.2 million, with half the gains attributed to Cote d'Ivoire and Ethiopia, it added.

N-E States to get Rs 100 cr under food security mission for rice

New Delhi, June 28:

The North Eastern states will get Rs 100 crore this year from the Agriculture Ministry to promote cultivation of rice under the National Food Security Mission (NFSM).

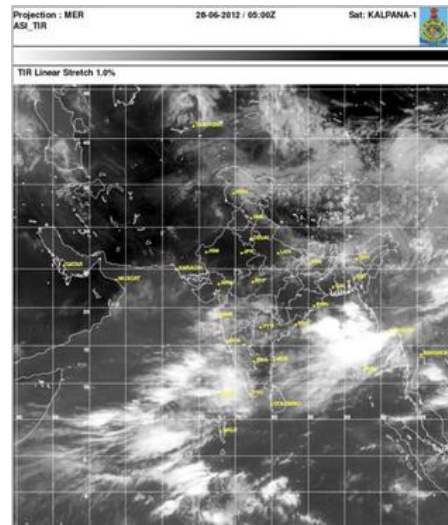
All eight NE States, including Sikkim, are being covered under NFSM for cultivation of rice this year. Till last year, only Assam was covered under NFSM for rice, an Agriculture Ministry statement said.

NFSM is a centrally sponsored scheme in operation in 480 districts of 18 important rice, wheat and pulses growing States. Under NFSM-rice, States would be given assistance for a large number of activities including seed distribution, soil management, pest control, machines and tools, training and field demonstrations.

The interventions planned under NFSM are likely to improve the rice yield, which is low in the NE States. It will also help these States in becoming self-sufficient in rice production, it said. Of the Rs 100 crore, Assam will get about Rs 31 crore, followed by Tripura at around Rs 22 crore. Manipur and Nagaland will get over Rs 11 crore each.

'Doksuri' drags monsoon flows along west coast

Vinson Kurian



Thiruvananthapuram, June 28:

The southwesterly flows dragged in afresh by tropical storm 'Doksuri' in the northwest Pacific have started lashing the west coast yet again.

Some of the flows are being directed into Bay of Bengal as well, but there has been no progress in the movement of the northern limit of the monsoon.

The offshore trough extended this morning from Konkan to Kerala, which is causing the flows to drop most of its moisture along the west coast, but hardly any in adjoining interior.

Global forecasts indicate that 'Doksuri' would make a landfall on the southeast coast of China within the next two days.

They also indicate the possibility of formation of low-pressure areas both over the Bay of Bengal and northeast Arabian Sea (close to Gujarat coast).

Between them, they would set up a wet session across the peninsula and adjoining central India into the first week of July. But the forecasts do not suggest if the rains would march into the plains of east India and northwest India.

Eastern Maharashtra and adjoining Andhra Pradesh are the expected gainers from the emerging brief rally of monsoon flows. But they are most likely to run out of steam after three to four days, if the above forecasts are anything to go by.