

Today's Paper

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Yellur farmers wilting under pollution

Ganesh Prabhu

Plantations are withering, cows turn barren



DIFFICULT DAYS AHEAD:Sukumar Rao, a farmer at Yellur, is a worried man as the banana plants are beginning to wither, which is unusual.

Farmers living in the areas surrounding the coal-based thermal plant of Udupi Power Corporation Ltd (UPCL) here are sceptical of political parties solving their problems arising from the alleged pollution of the plant.

Ever since the plant began its work a couple of years ago, the farmers said that saline water used for the boilers of the thermal plant was getting evaporated and causing damage to their crops and cattle. They feel that all political parties, despite their public posture of opposing the thermal plant, were actually supporting it and the byelection to Udupi-Chikmagalur Lok Sabha Constituency would not change that position.

Raghuram Shetty, who grows areca, coconut, chikoo, banana, and maize on his seven-acre field at Nandikur, said that all 1,800 areca trees and banana plantation on one-acre land had been damaged because of the salinity in the atmosphere. The banana, mango, jasmine, chikoo

and jackfruit trees had been damaged. The cows had become barren. The cattle were suffering from skin diseases.

“The BJP candidate Sunil Kumar had said a couple of years ago that he would launch a massive protest against the plant, but was not seen thereafter. The Congress candidate Jayaprakash Hegde supports the plant. The only alternative for us is to become naxals,” he said.

Sukumar Rao, who grows areca, banana, coconut, and vegetables on his five-acre land, said since the well water had been contaminated and had become saline, the health of his family had been affected. His banana and areca plantations were destroyed. He sold his four cows as they suffered miscarriage. “All political parties assure people that they will solve the problems during elections. After elections, they are not to be seen. They promise a lot, but do nothing,” he said.

Jalaja Mulya said that her family used to grow three crops of paddy a year but now it had come down to one crop a year. “Since our well is contaminated, we walk for 2 km to a relative’s house daily and bring drinking water from there twice a day,” she said.

Aithappa Poojary, who has a six-acre farm, said the leaves on the mango trees were withering away. Nearly 300 teakwood trees in his farm had wilted. Tin sheets, three bi-cycles, a motorcycle, three television dish sets in his house had got corroded due to salinity.

UPCL's reaction

Vice-President (Corporate Affairs) of UPCL K. Kishore Alva denied all the charges and emphasised that the UPCL had installed state-of-the-art technology.

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Market intervention scheme fails to help stabilise red gram prices

Special Correspondent

EXIM policy blamed for slump in prices in the wholesale market



little impact: More than 22,200 quintals of red gram has been purchased from farmers at procurement centres so far in three districts.— Photo: Arun Kulkarni

The market intervention by the State government through the Red Gram Development Board (RGDB) to stabilise the prices of red gram in the wholesale market has had little or no impact and the prices of red gram, the main crop in the region, continue to slump showing no signs of recovery.

The model rate of red gram in the wholesale market in the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee yards in Gulbarga and other places in the district was uniform, ranging between Rs. 3,200 and Rs. 3,300 per quintal, while the procurement centres established by the RGDB at 16 places in Gulbarga, Bidar and Yadgir districts offered Rs. 4,000 per quintal. Karnataka Red Gram Growers Association president Basavaraj Ingin told *The Hindu* that the faulty EXIM policy of the Union government was responsible for the slump in the prices of red gram in the wholesale market. He said that when there was no demand and with fresh stock arriving in the market, the Union government had allowed import of 77,000 quintals of red gram from different countries, including Myanmar.

Mr. Ingin said the arrival of imported red gram in the market had reduced the demand for red gram produced in India. Though there was a severe shortfall in production of red gram this year in the Gulbarga region, the prices had not increased, and, in fact, they had come down sharply. This was also one of the reasons why the markets had not responded positively as it had happened in the previous years after the State government decided to intervene.

RGDB Managing Director Aman Shakaib said that more than 22,200 quintals of red gram had been purchased directly from farmers at procurement centres and more than Rs. 8 crore had been paid to them.

About the fund position, Mr. Shakaib said that the RGDB had Rs. 3 crore for procurement of red gram. The State government had promised to release further funds to continue procurement operations till the prices stabilised.

Mr. Shakaib said that the RGDB had established procurement centres in Gulbarga, Afzalpur, Aland, Jewargi, Chittapur, Chincholi and Sedam in Gulbarga district; Yadgir, Shahapur, Surpur and Gurmitkal in Yadgir district, and Bidar, Bhalki, Basavakalyan, Humnabad and Aurad in Bidar district.

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Training in new methods of rearing vegetable nurseries

Special Correspondent

A day-long training programme on new methods of rearing vegetable nurseries was organised at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at Vamban village near here on Thursday.

The programme aimed at exposing vegetable growers to the advantages of a method 'pro-tray nursery production technique' which has several advantages over the conventional 'flat-bed' strategy.

K. Dhanalakshmi, assistant professor in horticulture, said the major advantage of the pro-tray nurseries, raised in trays using coir pith as the bio-manure, was that the roots of the nurseries totally escaped the biological 'shock' on being transplanted from the trays to the fields.

"In the conventional method, the roots of the nurseries, on being plucked and transplanted, undergo a shock and it takes more time for re-establishing the roots," she said. The 'transplantation shock' is so severe that every nursery withered away completely, before recovering its growth.

On the other hand, the new method eliminated the shock and obviously, the roots got established immediately after being transplanted. Growth of the species was also immediate, she explained.

She said that all plants would develop uniform growth throughout the season.

The yield would also be higher than the conventional method.

A question hour session was held during which S.K. Natarajan, assistant professor of agronomy, clarified farmers' doubts. The pro-tray method avoided delay both in raising and transplanting the nurseries.

Cost-effective

It was also both cost-effective and less labour-intensive.

Every crop required a specific number of trays for raising the nurseries. For example, for vegetables like brinjal and chillies, number of trays per hectare was about 70; for tomato, it would be about 80 trays a hectare.

Training on sugarcane

Mr. Natarajan said the KVK would organise a training on 'sustainable sugarcane initiative' for sugarcane cultivators of the district from 10 a.m. on Friday.

The latest techniques would be explained to farmers, he said and appealed to them to participate in it.

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Training on 'sustainable sugarcane initiative'

Special Correspondent



Technical support:K.P. Krishnan, MLA, handing over sanction letter to a beneficiary at Vamban near Pudukottai on Friday.

A day-long training on 'sustainable sugarcane initiative' organised by the Agriculture Department was held at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Vamban village near here on Friday. The

sugarcane cultivators underwent training on raising pro-tray nurseries and adopting precision farming techniques.

K.P. Krishnan, MLA, appealed to farmers to take advantage of the training being organised by the Agriculture Department for achieving higher productivity. In this context, he explained the priority being attached to agriculture and allied projects by the State government.

On the training being given to farmers, he advised the farmers to adopt precision farming technique for optimum use of available irrigational water. P. Emperumal, Joint Director of Agriculture, spoke on the advantages of the sustainable sugarcane initiative scheme in increasing productivity. Apart from sugarcane growers, farmers raising pulses also underwent training on the use of mobile sprinkler and rain gun, which are important for using water economically.

V.C. Ramaiah, district panchayat chairman and Geetha, professor and head of KVK, offered felicitations.

R. Raghuraman, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Tiruvarangulam, said that agricultural implements, fertilizers, biocides and agricultural pump sets were being distributed to the farmers. Mobile sprinkler sets, rain gun were being distributed to pulses growers under subsidy-based scheme.

Earlier, Mr. Krishnan distributed agricultural implements to 116 beneficiaries in all worth Rs.6.50 lakh.

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Women to be trained in agro-business

Special Correspondent

The Agriculture Department would promote about 10 groups of farm women and train them in agro-business enterprises and allied ventures in the district during the current year under the National Agricultural Development Programme.

Each of the groups, christened Tamil Nadu Women in Agri Business and Entrepreneurship (TANWABE) farm groups, would be provided entrepreneurship training and provided back-ended subsidy. Each group would have a minimum of 15 members and they would be encouraged to start agro-business ventures on completion of training.

The women would be trained in various agriculture related activities such as cattle rearing, poultry farming and modern agricultural techniques such as the system of rice intensification. The first three-day training programme for a group from Keezha Kalkandarkottai began here on Wednesday.

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Kerafed to procure 10,000 tonnes of copra from farmers

Staff Reporter

69 cooperative units to be involved in the process

Kerafed targets to procure 10,000 tonnes of copra from the district this year, its Regional Manager V.V. Hamsa said during a meeting held at the collectorate conference hall here.

The Kerafed's move, bringing cheer to the crisis-hit coconut farmers in the district by ensuring them competitive market for the produce, comes amidst reports that the copra produced in the district enjoyed higher quality and could be stored for long without the quality being affected, he said.

The Kerafed had procured 4,000 tonnes of copra from the district the previous year. This year, 69 cooperative units would be involved in the procurement process, he said. It would be made at the rate of Rs.5,100 a quintal, on a par with the support price announced by the Centre earlier this year.

Kerafed is the State-level agency of Nafed and has been entrusted to procure copra in seven districts from Kasaragod up to Palakkad. The copra could also be procured by coconut growers units, clusters under the State Agriculture Department, and 'Kudumbasree' and 'Janasree' units equipped with facilities to dry raw coconuts.

The procurement agencies would be selected by a district committee chaired by the Collector, with Joint Registrar of Cooperative Department as convener, official sources here said.

The coconut cultivation in the district that enjoyed the highest yield in the State was spread in over 58,000 ha. and the productivity was much higher than that of other districts, Principal Agriculture Officer S. Shiva Prasad said.

- *Copra to be bought at Rs.5,100 a quintal*
 - *Agency procured 4,000 tonnes last year*
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Centre likely to lift ban imposed on cotton export

The government may lift ban on export of cotton imposed by commerce ministry on March 5 with farmer protests against the decision starting in Vidarbha region of Congress ruled Maharashtra.

State chief minister Prithviraj Chavan met Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday even as BJP workers and farmer groups disrupted traffic in Viradbha to protest against the ban and sought immediate lifting of it.

Chavan, who had a scheduled meeting with the Congress president, is said to have discussed political implications of the ban on export of cotton. He was apparently of the view that the state government was not consulted before the ban was imposed.

The Maharashtra CM had also met agriculture minister Sharad Pawar, who has already expressed his anguish over the ban saying that the decision will hurt economic interest of cotton farmers.

He has the support of state chief ministers such as Gujarat's Narendra Modi, who had written a letter to Prime Minister, terming the ban as a ill-conceived idea. With political pressure increasing on the UPA government to lift the ban, the government sources said a group of ministers, whose meeting remained inconclusive on Friday, is expected to meet again on Monday to decide on lifting the ban.

PTI quoted commerce secretary Rahul Khullar to say that the government may lift the ban. "The government is "contemplating lifting the ban on cotton exports," the commerce secretary had said on Friday.

The commerce ministry on March 5 had banned exports of cotton fearing shortfall in the domestic market and hoarding in warehouses because of rise in international prices. But, the farmer organisations claimed the ban would deprive the farmers from getting economic benefits of high international prices.

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Business Standard

Saturday, Mar 10, 2012

Govt may soon lift ban on cotton exports

Press Trust of India / New Delhi March 10, 2012, 20:29 IST

The government may soon lift the ban on cotton exports in the wake of widespread resentment against the move, Congress sources said today.

Party sources said an announcement on lifting the ban may be made after by-polls in states like Maharashtra are completed.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan today met UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and it is believed that the issue of cotton export ban too may have figured during the deliberations.

He had earlier met Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, who had opposed the move saying he was not consulted before the prohibition was imposed by the Commerce Ministry.

Following protests, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had asked a Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee to review the decision.

The first meeting of the GoM on Friday was inconclusive even though Commerce Secretary Rahul Khullar had indicated that the government was moving towards lifting of the ban.

Khullar yesterday said that the government is "contemplating lifting the ban on cotton exports".

The GoM meeting, which was also attended by Pawar and Commerce Minister Anand Sharma, failed to come to a conclusion.

The Commerce Ministry on March 5 banned cotton exports to boost domestic availability.

Flip-flops mark cotton export policy

Hurts credibility and leads to disputes, says industry govt seen to be prone to hurried and ill-thought decisions

Rajesh Bhayani / Mumbai March 10, 2012, 0:56 IST

Today's concession on the recent and much-criticised ban on cotton export is the latest of frequent changes in this regard in the past two years.

Exports were restricted in May 2010, allowed again from October 2010, then had their registration permissions shifted from the textile commissioner's office to the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), leading to quotas, and so on.

Dhiren Sheth, president of the Cotton Association of India, said, "Frequent changes in export policy hurts India's credibility in overseas markets and leads to disputes. Consistency and clarity are always preferred."

He said disputes arise when exporters enter into arrangements with ginners for providing cotton meant for export and then do not lift the quantity. Today, for instance, after ordering a total ban, the government allowed exports for which orders had been issued by the DGFT till March 4. This is expected to release an additional 600,000-700,000 bales (a bale is 170 kg) for exports. Around 9.5 million bales have already been shipped this year.

However, a total of 12.5 million bales have been registered till now. Of this, export of around

two million bales may not happen, said an exporter. This much was understood to have come for registration in the two days prior to the ban. DGFT allows registration only when letters of credit (LCs) have already been opened or money received by exporters.

When an LC is opened or buyers have remitted money to Indian exporters and after that if exports are not completed, disputes arise. Shirish Shah, partner, Bhaidas Kursondas & Co, said, "In 2010, when cotton export was banned, similar disputes arose and some of these are still under arbitration." Some settlements were inked at 50 per cent of the loss amount, an industry source said. This means both parties shared the losses equally.

According to an industry veteran, the government panicked this time when there was a sudden rush for export registration. This followed China stocking up cotton to build up reserves. According to a research report from Barclays Capital, "China's imports of Indian cotton have risen sharply, especially through the second half of 2011 and into early 2012. Indeed, an analysis of China Customs trade data reveals that in 2011, China imported one million tonnes only from India, 17 per cent of its total 3.36 mt of cotton imports, with India overtaking the US as the biggest source of China's cotton imports."

India's cotton yarn policy has been equally inconsistent. Several changes were made in the past two years. An industry leader said, "Rather than reacting in panic, government should have first suspended registration. Even now, export duty or such other measures could have been considered."



China, Bangladesh react

Agencies add: China's cotton industry association has criticised India's decision to ban cotton exports, saying it was "irresponsible" and would disrupt the global market. India, the world's second-largest cotton producer, said on Monday it had stopped exports with

immediate effect to ensure supplies for domestic mills, fuelling speculation main consumer China would have to turn to other sources.

The China Cotton Association urged a review of the decision.

“As a member of the international trading family, we hope the Indian government will rectify this market-disrupting and mistaken policy in a timely fashion and comply with global trade rules,” the statement said.

It said a previous Indian attempt in 2010 to ban cotton exports had resulted in “heavy losses” for Chinese textile producers and had also hurt local Indian producers.

India has already exported about 9.5 million bales in the current cotton year beginning October 1, higher than the projected export surplus quota of 8.4 million bales set in January, due to strong demand from China.

Bangladesh also today termed India’s ban on export as “unfortunate”, saying the move is against the norms of international trade. Its commerce ministry said the repeated ban on cotton trade by India was threatening Bangladesh’s textile industry. “India imposed a ban on the export of main raw material, leaving aside trade rules and regulations. We think it (ban) is against the norms of international trade,” commerce secretary M Ghulam Hossain told reporters.

Also, Morgan Stanley lowered its cotton price forecast to 90 cents per pound from \$1 for the 2011-12 marketing year, saying global demand would remain weak. It also said it was recommending a short position in the July 12 contract, currently trading at \$0.91 cents per pound, on expectation the removal of the minimum support price would prompt Chinese, as well as global, prices to fall.
