THE HINDU

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Community based organisations for improving farmers' lives

M. J. Prabu

SUCCESSFUL: Overcoming poverty in coconutgrowing communities. Photo: Special Arrangement

Women were trained in production of nutritive food items from coconut

Low productivity and lack of remunerative price for commodity make small and marginal farmers struggle to meet both ends.

Price fluctuation of the produce neither provides them gainful employment nor generates sufficient income to sustain their basic needs.

“Though through processing and value addition, one can enhance the farm income. Enough technical support, suitable machineries and equipment for processing and value addition, working capital and marketing strategies are not readily available to them at the village level,” says Dr. George V. Thomas, Director, Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod.

Participatory approach

When these problems faced in the coconut production sector were discussed at the international level, the idea of adoption of integrated coconut based farming system and other subsidiary income generating enterprises by formation of Community Based Organizations (CBO) and implementation of interventions through farmer participatory approach mooted.

“This concept was tested and proven highly successful under the project on ‘Overcoming poverty in coconut-growing communities: Coconut genetic resources for sustainable livelihoods in India’, supported by International fund for agriculture development (IFAD) and Biodiversity International implemented by the Regional Station, Kayamkulam of the CPCRI.,” says Dr.V. Krishnakumar, Senior Scientist of the Insitute.

Three CBOs' were established and registered under Society’s Registration Act in three villages in Kerala. About100 beneficiary members are there in each of the CBOs’ and they served as the ideal vehicle for carrying out the interventions in the project sites.

Proper links

Effective linkages were established with Kerala Agricultural University, Vegetable and fruit promotion council Keralam, Central tuber crops research institute, Krishi vigyan kendras, Kerala state departments of agriculture, Animal husbandry and dairy development, and other credit institutions like banks for the successful implementation of interventions at various stages of the project.

The project allocated a total revolving fund of Rs. 1.5 lakhs to each of the CBO for carrying out the envisaged activities.

The borrowers were charged with an annual interest at 2 per cent to cover the operating costs.

The amount provided as micro credit was completely utilized by all the three CBOs’ and the repaid amount is also being utilized as a revolving fund.

Training programmes on various methods to increase farm outputs were also organized.

The CBO members, especially the women were trained on production of various high value products and nutritive food items from coconut and intercrops.

Marketing

A complete oil mill consisting of copra dryer, cutter, expeller and filter was installed at Pathiyoor. The coconut syrup had high demand during summer months as a health drink. The oil cake, which is the by product from oil production was utilized for local cattle feed production.

Two community coir spinning units were established at Thodiyoor, through which 40 women earned a profit of Rs.90-100 per day.

A copra dryer was also installed in the community and a group is engaged in copra production.

At Devikulangara, two motorized coir spinning units (Ratts) and two automatic double head coir spinning machines were supplied and the outturn of coir from the unit increased by 75 per cent. Other local nutritive food items like baby food branded as 'Poshak' and amla juice have high demand locally.

The coconut oil and cattle feed produced from oil cake are successfully being marketed.

Income

"The income from coconut increased by more than 50 per cent and the area of intercrops doubled over the pre-project period. The project enhanced the income levels from Rs.5,700 to Rs.13,100," says Dr. Krishnakumar.

One of the most significant and noteworthy benefits of the project was the improvement in food and nutritional security of the family members, especially school- going children.

For more details readers can contact Dr.V. Krishnakumar, Senior Scientist(Agronomy), Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Regional Station, Kayamkulam-690 533, phone: 0479-2442160 Extn.233, Mobile: 09447364877.

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Controlling thrips in cardamom

The cardamom thrips, *Sciothrips cardamomi* ranks first among the insect pests of cardamom and is considered to be the most destructive pest in all the cardamom growing tracts.

Complexity of injury

The damage is caused by both nymphs and adults as they colonize and breed in unopened leaves, leaf sheath, panicle, flower buds and capsules. They lacerate the plant tissue and feed on the exuding sap. There is shedding of flowers and immature capsules.

The cardamom pods become shrivelled, undersized , scabby, warty, malformed and lose their characteristic aroma . The seed formation is also affected. The infested capsules are light in weight, inferior in quality and fetch very low market price.

Thrips biology

The adult thrips are tiny yellowish louse-like insects measuring 1.5 -2.0 mm in size with fringed wings . They reproduce parthenogenetically in large numbers especially during post monsoon seasons. Each female lays around 30 eggs.

The incubation and nymphal periods are 8-12 and 10-12 days respectively. Pseudopupal stage takes 5 days. The complete life cycle from egg to adult takes 25-30 days.

Management practices:

— Maintain thrips resistant Malabar types of cardamom clumps.

— Regulation of shade and removal of alternate host plants like *Panicum longipes , Hedychium flavescens* etc. in the vicinity of plantations helps in reducing the build up of this pest.

— The panicle and 1/3 portion of the base of the clumps are to be treated with insecticides.

— Spray 5- 7 rounds of insecticides like quinalphos 0.025 per cent, phosalone 0.07 per cent, chlorpyrifos 0.05 per cent or profenofos 0.05 per cent at 35 days intervals. Approximately 250-500 ml of spray fluid will be required per clump.

— Alternatively dust formulations of quinalphos 1.5 D, carbaryl 10 D or phosalone 4D each at 25kg/ha may also be applied.

— Removal of dried leaf sheaths prior to spraying increases the efficiency of the applied insecticides. It is advisable to go for spraying as dusting is found more harmful for honey bees, the major pollinator of cardamom.

J. JAYARAJ & S. MANISEGARANAgricultural Collegeand Research InstituteMadurai

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Short-changed on wages

Satish G. T.

The Hindu New Delhi, 15/02/12: (File Photo) Farmers in a paddyfield in Chhattisgarh, Exceeding target, the country is set to harvest a record 250 million tonnes of foodgrains this year, as efforts to push farm growth seem to be paying off, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, said today. “Our farmers have done us proud again this year. …but we still have a long way to go. ...we cannot afford to be complacent since the demand for horticulture and animal products is increasing very rapidly and this will require some shifting of area away from production of foodgrains. “Therefore productivity in foodgrains has to go up handsomely,” he said during a workshop at the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi. Photo: V.V.Krishnan

Despite the law ensuring equal pay, women cultivators continue to receive lower remuneration

Women are nothing short of second grade employees in agricultural fields.

In agricultural fields on the outskirts of Channarayapatna, Karnataka, the daily wage for women is Rs. 100 plus free lunch. Landowners have arrived at this sum because the milk powder making unit of the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) at Shettihalli in Channarayapatna taluk offers the same wage for women labourers. Men get around Rs. 150.

“By and large, the nature of job assigned to men and women is the same. There is a perception among employers that men work more than women,” said Manjula, who works in tobacco fields at Ramanathapura in Arkalgud taluk.

Particularly during paddy cultivation, women have to work through the day standing in the fields. “It is physically strenuous. But in the eyes of landlords, it is no match to what men do,” she said.

Lakhs of women agricultural workers, who fall in the unorganised sector, suffer wage inequality in silence. Landowners tend to call it “soft work” and make it an excuse to pay less. Women in paddy fields, tobacco farms or potato fields get around Rs. 120 a day, while men get around Rs. 150 for the same work.

While organised plantation workers are better off and get equal wages in plantations, those hired on contract basis by coffee planters in Hassan, Chikmagalur and Kodagu districts get unequal wages. While men contract workers at a plantation get between Rs. 200 and Rs. 250, women are paid between Rs. 150 to Rs. 180. This is despite the regulation of Plantations Labour Act, 1951, that says men and women workers must be paid equally.

Savitha, who works in an estate near Ballupet in Sakleshpur taluk, says: “Earlier we were assigned jobs such as breeding, handling and plucking fruits. In recent years, the number of men working in estates has come down. So, employers ask us to do all work that men used to do, such as spraying pesticides, handling sprinklers and digging.”

Maternity benefits

Those who work in a plantation for more than 120 days are entitled to become permanent employees as per the Labour Act. However, many employers do not regularise services of unmarried or newly married women employees to avoid giving maternity leave benefits.

“As per the rule, women should get salary for six weeks before and six weeks after delivery. To avoid this, company owners and planters avoid regularising the services of young women,” said V. Sukumar, general secretary of Karnataka Plantation Workers' Federation.

For permanent workers, the minimum wage fixed is Rs. 130 per day and both men and women are paid on a par. There have been strikes demanding increase in minimum wage, which is yet to be met. Low pay has resulted in men giving up plantation work, which has meant women getting burdened with physically strenuous work for the same minimum wage.

Double shift

“Though we are paid on a par, we feel exploited. A few years ago, there were 100 workers on our estate. Now there are 20, mostly women,” said Sharada, a resident of Arehalli, who works in a coffee estate. She has to work both in the field and at home. Her day starts at 4.30 a.m. with cooking and preparing children for school, followed by eight hours of work on the plantation.

“We have to work at home as well as at the plantation. Men hardly help us with domestic chores,” she said.

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Paddy farmers seek remunerative price

Staff Reporter

Will observe ‘crop holiday' if the government fails to act, they say

After excessive rains last year and prolonged dry spell during kharif and early rabi, now it is the depressed market condition that is worrying peasants in Prakasam district, who have already cut down land under paddy cultivation.

Hoping to offset losses suffered last year due to the ‘Jal' cyclonic storm, farmers pinned their hopes on good southwest monsoon. But the extended drought spell put paid to their hopes. As a result, farmers who take up paddy in over 3.75 lakh acres during rabi under NSP command area and under the Kommamuri canal normally, grew paddy in only 2.75 lakh acres during the rabi season this year, Agriculture officials said.

A group of farmers in Parchur said, “We will have no option but to give up cultivation altogether next year if the Government does not provide remunerative price for our produce.”

“The cost of cultivation has gone up to Rs. 30,000 per acre this year due to rise in cost of farm inputs, including fertilisers and pesticides. Due to adverse climatic conditions, we have a yield of about 25 to 30 bags of 75 kg each. We are offered by traders only Rs. 700 to 750 per kg,” said farmers' leader K. Ramakoteswara Rao while speaking to *The Hindu* .

“The government should ensure a remunerative price of Rs 1,600 per quintal as against Rs. 1,110 per quintal fixed as MSP, taking into consideration huge increase in cost of production, he added.

Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam district general secretary N. Ranga Rao said only four paddy purchase points had opened in the district this year.

A delegation of farmers' leaders would call on district officials on March 27 to press for market intervention by the Food Corporation of India (FCI).

Taking a cue from neighbouring states, the State should offer a bonus of Rs. 200 over and above the MSP of Rs. 1,110 per quintal to bail out the farmers, Mr Rao felt.

The State government should also direct the State Civil Supplies Corporation to enter the market. Though BPT raw rice had touched Rs. 30 per kg from Rs. 25 last year, the increase had not been passed on to ryots, lamented another farmers' leader Ch. Shankar Reddy in the Darsi area.

A section of farmers in Karamchedu who announced ‘crop holiday' during kharif season felt that “growing paddy is no longer remunerative”. The Centre should revise the MSP to Rs. 2,050. Otherwise, more farmers would give up paddy cultivation altogether next year, said Kamamuri canal distributory committee former Chairman Jagarlamudi Anil Babu in Karamchedu.

Farmers could make a decent living only when the Union and State governments implemented the recommendations of the National Commission on farmers, headed by noted agriculture scientist M. S. Swaminathan, including provision of 50 per cent profit over and above the cost of cultivation, Telugu Desam Party farmers wing district president K. Venkaiah said.

- *Only four paddy purchase points were opened in the district: Rythu Sangam secretary*
- *State should offer a bonus of Rs. 200 over and above the MSP, he says*

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Farm query

Onion variety

Is there any onion variety that yields well in water shortage regions of Haryana?

Kamal Nath

New Delhi

A farmer from Rajasthan has developed an onion named Rashidpura, that has attained wide popularity in the northern states of Rajasthan, Delhi, Punjab, and Haryana for its distinctive taste and strong smell. The variety yields 40,000 kg bulbs per hectare — than commercially cultivated varieties (25,000-30,000 kg per hectare), even under water-stress and low irrigation conditions.

Contact Mr. Manaram Chowdhary, Village Sanvloda Ladkhana, District Sikar, Rajasthan at 09799237178.

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Crop insurance from April 15

Special Correspondent

All agriculture crops, including rubber, will be brought under the ambit of the crop insurance scheme, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has said.

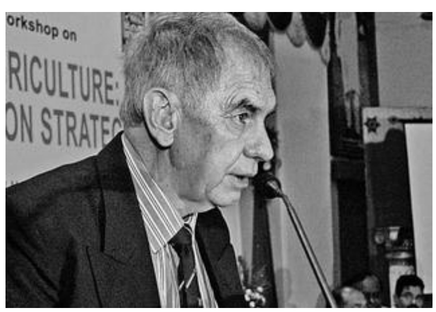
Replying to questions in the Assembly on Wednesday, Mr. Mohanan said the scheme would come into force from April 15.

Draft for a new scheme, 'Varumana Bhadratha' was being drawn up for providing financial support to farmers for sustenance, and also in the event of loss due to price fall and pest attack on crops, he said.

Published: March 22, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 22, 2012 04:26 IST

"Organic farming increases yield"

Staff Reporter



Motivating:Brian Oderive, Director, Foundation for Farming ,Zimbabwe, addressing a workshop held at Gandhigram Rural Institute near Dindigul on Wednesday.— Photo: G. Karthikeyan

: Zero tilling and organic farming will not only eradicate the need for expensive fossil fuel machinery, synthetic fertilizers and crop chemicals but also increase yields substantially and make way for farmers to return to their natural state, said Foundation for Farming, (Zimbabwe) Director Brian Oderive.

He was inaugurating an international workshop on ‘climatic change in agriculture: Adaptation and mitigation strategies,' held at Gandhigram Rural Institute near here on Wednesday.

Variations of temperature, rainfall, sunlight and wind were fundamentally critical factors in agricultural production. Projection of insufficient arable land and the need to feed an ever increasing world population demanded urgent discussion and implementation of strategies for adaptation and mitigation.

Narrating the success story of zero tillage, the Director said that Zimbabwe was the second largest producer of quality tobacco before its independence next to US. “After independence, we stopped tobacco production and found alternate crops for survival. Amid stiff protests, we tried zero tillage which was heard from America in 1980s. To everyone's surprise, we had harvested 20 tonnes of maize in two hectares (national yield was 400 kg per hectare). Later, this annual cropping programme of zero tillage was extended to 3,500 hectares. Our success enabled us to lead the way for 85 per cent of all commercial farmers in Zimbabwe to accept and begin no tillage farming.”

“Simple methodologies and management system developed by us meant for small scale farmers were shared by 28 nations of Africa and in four other continents. This system had made many yield records in Zimbabwe,” he added.

Joint action

India and Zimbabwe can have the courage to face realities and openness to deal with some of the sensitive issues like genetic modification and its effects, he insisted.

In his address, Vice-Chancellor SM. Ramasamy insisted on integrated approach by scientists, environmentalists, chemists, geologists and sociologists to protect nature.

In his felicitation, Faculty of Agricultural Engineering and Environmental Sciences, Higher Institute of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry (ISAE), Dean M. Sankaranarayanan said agriculture production was significantly affected by effective climate change. But agriculture itself was major contributor to increasing methane and nitrous oxide concentrations in earth's atmosphere.

A study cautioned that South Africa could lose more than 30 per cent of its main crop, maize, by 2030 and south Asia including India would lose 10 per cent of staple food crops like rice, millet and maize owing to climate change. Implementation of alternative farming practices, suitable measure in development planning, efficient water management practices and fertilizer management were necessary. Flow of information should be expedited. Adaption and mitigation will require local responses and policy responses must reflect global impact and inter-linkages, he added.

Published: March 22, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 22, 2012 04:26 IST

Zero tilling and organic farming increase yield: expert

Staff Reporter

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Agriculture Department to encourage production of high quality pulses seeds

Staff Reporter

To augment the pulses yield in the district, the Department of Agriculture is all set to encourage production of high quality pulses seeds through an enhanced subsidy disbursal scheme to the farmers.

“We have earmarked Rs. 10.42 lakh towards disbursal of subsidy for procuring seeds from those farmers who are holding seed farms and for distributing it at reduced rates through the Agriculture Extension Centres (AEC) to other farmers,” P. Thangaraju, Joint Director of Agriculture, told *The Hindu.*

The disbursal of subsidy, according to Mr. Thangaraju, will act as incentive to the farmers to produce more seeds and get remunerative prices.

Under the scheme, the department would give Rs 15 for every kg of seed procured from the seed farms in addition to the market value and the premium of Rs 2 a kg already been given to the farmers by the government.

“While selling the seeds through the AECs, a subsidy of Rs. 8 a kg will be passed on to the farmers meaning that they could get seeds at reduced prices,” Mr. Thangaraju said.

It was planned to complete procurement of 62 tonnes of seeds of pulses like red gram, black gram, lablab, cowpea, green gram, horse gram and Bengal gram before the end of the current financial year.

The procurement would be carried out at the rate of five tonne each from seeds farms in Avinashi, Dharapuram, Gudimangalam, Kangayam, Kundadam, Madathukulam, Moolanur, Palladam, Pongalur and Tirupur blocks and at the rate of four tonne each from Udumalpet, Uthukuli and Vellakoil blocks.

- *Department earmarks Rs. 10.42 lakh towards disbursal of subsidy*
- *The disbursal of subsidy will act as incentive to farmers*

Published: March 22, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 22, 2012 04:21 IST

Seven copra procurement centres opened

R. Vimal Kumar

As many as seven copra processing and trading centres will be in operation in the district for the current season to streamline copra procurement and for ensuring attractive support prices for the farmers.

P. Thangaraju, joint director of Agriculture, told *The Hindu* that the farmers should register themselves with the seven centres situated at Udumalpet, Modakkupatty, Palladam, Nilaligoundempalayam, Vavipalayam, Pongalur and Alangium for trade.

Identity cards

“The issuance of identity cards to registered farmers is carried out by the agriculture department while procurement of copra is done by the National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED) through Tamil Nadu Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited (TANFED),” he said.

Permission

The new farmers as well as those who have registered prior to 2009 will have to register afresh while those who had registered with various procurement centres during 2009, 2010 and 2011 seasons can renew their registration for the same quantity of yield for which they had obtained the permission for trade.

Mr. Thangaraju said that ‘bald copra' would be procured at the rate of Rs. 53.50 per kg while ‘broken copra' variety would be collected from the farmers at the rate of Rs. 51 per kg.

Official sources said that the procurement centre at Udumalpet would function on Monday, Tuesday and Friday every week till further orders.

Following is the schedule of other centres-

Palladam- Monday, Tuesday and Friday;

Modakkupatty- Wednesday and Thursday;

Pongalur- Wednesday and Friday;

Dharapuram- Tuesday and Friday;

Nilalaigoundampalayam- Wednesday; and Vavalipalayam- Wednesday.

Published: March 22, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 22, 2012 04:25 IST

Training in mushroom farming

Special Correspondent

Under a scheme to promote mushroom farming, 60 women in Perumanna panchayat are being given training for commercial cultivation of mushroom.

District panchayat president Kananthil Jameela inaugurated the programme at the women's industries centre in Perumanpura on Wednesday.

Under the scheme, 20 groups, each having three women, would be given training. The beneficiaries would get financial support from the district panchayat. The scheme would be extended to cover the entire district next year.

Mushroom seedlings would be produced by the trained woman-farmers. Only at Palakkad and Kalpetta mushroom seedling are now produced. Skill Development Centre director K. Sreedharan, district panchayat member Dinesh Perumanna, and Perumanna grama panchayat vice-president Sameera Vadakkeparambil, and district panchayat member P.C. Abdul Karim spoke.

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Fish farming training

The Ornamental Fish Farmers' Development Association will organise a three-day training camp in ornamental fish farming from April 2. The camp, to be organised at the Agriculture marketing office at Vengeri, will explain in detail the methods adopted by foreign countries in the field. For registration, contact: 99618 54642.

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hindustantimes

Thu,22 Mar 2012

weather

INDIAN CITIES | INTERNATIONAL CITIES

Delhi

Delhi - INDIA

Today's Weather

Sunny

Thursday, Mar 22

Max	Min
26.3°	13.5°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs
Humidity: 51%
Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 7:14
Sunset: 17:48
Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast

Sunny

Friday, Mar 23

Max	Min
32°	13°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Mar 24	Mar 25	Mar 26	Mar 27	Mar 28

34º | 14º	34º | 12º	36º | 14º	38º | 18º	39º | 19º
Sunny	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy

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the pioneer

Punjab Mandi Board issues directions for wheat procurement

WEDNESDAY, 21 MARCH 2012 22:06

Punjab Mandi Board chairman Ajmer Singh Lakhowal on Wednesday said that directions have been issued to all the deputy commissioners in the State to complete procurement arrangements for wheat crop starting April 1.

Lakhowal on Wednesday held meeting with the Mandi Board officials of Moga, Firozepur and Faridkot districts and reviewed the arrangements of lighting, drinking water facilities for the farmers. The Chairman said that 1,769 procurement centres would be set up for the procurement of wheat and if required, more such centres could also be established.

Lakhowal also said that Punjab Government had asked the Centre for movement of 68 lakh tonne of wheat stocked in the State to other States and Railway authorities had also been urged to provide more rakes.

Lakhowal further informed that a sum of `90 crore has been earmarked for repair and construction of new link roads of the rural areas in next fiscal.

Business Standard

Thursday, Mar 22, 2012

Lower rabi crop to push up edible oil prices

Despite huge idle capacities in refineries, imports remain attractive, sparking calls for protecting domestic units

Rutam Vora / Ahmedabad March 22, 2012, 0:41 IST

India's edible oil production in the current oil year (November 2011-October 2012) is estimated to fall by 4.6 per cent against last year, raising concern of a further price rise in the retail market.

According to the latest estimates of the Central Organisation for Oil Industry & Trade (COOIT), the overall rabi (November-March) oilseed crop for 2011-12 is estimated to fall to 8.79 million tonnes from 9.87 mt last year, with a drop in sown area from 9.72 million hectares last year to 9.07 mha this time. The drop is mainly in rape seed and mustard seed. The kharif crop came to the market at the outset of the current oil year. The two together are estimated to see a drop of the estimate noted earlier.

This is likely to squeeze vegetable oil availability by 400,000 tonnes, at 8.12 mt against 8.52 mt last year. "Domestic oilseed production is likely to fall making oil availability tight in the domestic market. This will cause increased dependence on imported oils. Our edible oil imports are likely to touch a total 10 mt this year, significantly higher from last year," said Ashok Sethia, vice-president of COOIT.

According to COOIT estimates, the import of vegetable oil during 2011-12 is likely to be 9.1-9.4 mt from the 8.67 mt reported in 2010-11.

About two-thirds of the country’s oil refining capacities are already idle — imports remain attractive due to higher costs here. With extra export incentives by Malaysia, edible oil companies are said to be considering increasing the import of refined oil.

“There is about 30 mt of refining capacities and only nine to 10 mt is being utilised,” said Angshu Mallick, chief operating officer, Adani Wilmar. “As the government has not imposed duty on imported refined oils, these imports are likely to increase further, resulting in a further decline in capacity utilisation of refineries.”

Data compiled by the Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) for February 2012 show import of vegetable oils soared from 550,901 tonnes in February 2011 to 875,649 tonnes (872,293 tonnes of edible oils and 3,356 tonnes of non-edible oils), a rise of 59 per cent. Import of RBD Palmolein shot up to a little over 300,000 tonnes from an average of 110,000 tonnes in the earlier three months, noted SEA. Crude palm oil, degummed soybean oil, crude sunflower oil and canola rape oil are among the other imported edible oils.

Praveen Khandelwal, vice-president of corporate strategy at Gokul Refoils & Solvents Ltd, maintained that with a lower production estimate and reduced availability of edible oils, the latter's retail prices were likely to rise by Rs 2-3 per litre. He also expressed concern at the two per cent increase in the excise duty proposed in Union Budget 2012-13, feared to add to the cost and price burden.

Chana up 2.6% on better spot demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi March 21, 2012, 13:31 IST

Chana prices rose by Rs 99 to Rs 3,898 per quintal in futures trade today, as speculators enlarged their positions on good spot demand.

Restricted arrivals in the physical market also influenced the chana prices at futures trade.

At the National Commodity Derivatives Exchange, the April contract rose by Rs 99, or 2,14%, to Rs 3,898 per quintal, with an open interest of 1,03,550 lots.

The May delivery gained Rs 84, or 2,14%, to Rs 4,009 per quintal, with an open interest of 2,09,040 lots.Analysts said increased buying by speculators on good demand in the spot market mainly led to the rise in chana prices in futures trade.
They said strong demand from millers and wholesale dealers and on fall in output this year, which outweighed arrival pressure in spot markets.

Betel leaves' prices rise 400% on low output

Siddharth Kalhans / Lucknow March 21, 2012, 0:06 IST

Poor output and high demand has made hundreds of betel traders in Uttar Pradesh a hapless lot. In the past year, prices of betel leaves have increased fourfold. Short supply from Bangladesh is adding to their woes.

Betel traders are getting half their daily need of leaves from the wholesale market as the production from Uttar Pradesh has already been consumed.

According to Chotelal Chaurasia, secretary general of the All-India Chaurasia Mahasabha, a body of betel traders and farmers, “The crisis will continue till the second week of June, when the fresh crop arrives in the market.” He said betel leaves of UP, largely cultivated in Jalesar of Etah district and Mahoba district, have been sold out and importing from Bangladesh was the only option.A bundle of betel leaves, known as desi paan, is now quoted at Rs 100 per 200 pieces, which was Rs 15-20 earlier. He said the Maghai variety of leaves, brought from Gaya in Bihar to UP, is selling at Rs 1,000 per bundle of 200 leaves. Earlier, this variety was sold at Rs 200-300 per bundle. Betel leaves from Bangladesh, known as Desi Bangla, sell at Rs 400 per bundle instead of the Rs 100 per bundle earlier.

Hari Kishan Rathore, a trader in Lucknow, said the turnover of betel leaves in UP every year is Rs 3,000 crore and almost 90 per cent of it is imported. He said that due to cold waves in December and January, the betel output in UP, as well as other states, was hit. He further said the crop had not been good in Bangladesh, making imports costlier.

THE HINDU Business Line

PR rice varieties surge on buying interest

Karnal, March 21:

PR varieties remained in demand and prices increased by Rs 50-150 a quintal on Wednesday, while all other aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties remained unchanged.

Buying interest from bulk buyers lifted PR prices, said market sources. Traders expect some correction in near future as rice prices have increased by Rs 50-500 a quintal over the last week, sources said.

In the physical market, prices of Permal (sela) and Permal (raw) increased by Rs 50 each and sold at Rs 1,850-2,050 a quintal and Rs 1,900-2,060, respectively.

PR-11 (sela) went up by Rs 150 and was at Rs 2,200-2,400, while PR-11 (raw) went for Rs 2,000-2,300, Rs 100 up.

Aromatic varieties continued to rule firm after witnessing a rally last week. Pusa-1121 (steam) quoted at Rs 4,200-4,500 while Pusa-1121 (sela) sold at Rs 3,800-4,000.

Pure basmati (raw) sold at Rs 4,650 while pure basmati (sela) was at Rs 4,150. Duplicate basmati sold at Rs 3,600-3,800.

Among the brokens of Pusa-1121, Tibar sold at Rs 2,900-3,400, Dubar quoted at Rs 2,650-2,850 and Mongra at Rs 1,900-2,150.

Sharbati (steam) was at Rs 2,900-3,000 while Sharbati (sela) sold at Rs 2,700-2,800.

Sugandha (steam) went for Rs 3,200-3,450 while PR-14 (steam) sold at Rs 2,350.

Pepper heads south on liquidation

G. K. Nair

Kochi, March 21:

Pepper continued to head south on Wednesday on liquidation and bearish sentiments created by reports of selling pressure in Karnataka.

Some of the dealers were liquidating because of the hike in tax from 4 per cent to 5 per cent. Sellers in Chikamagalur and Sakleshpur in Karnataka were selling at Rs 380-385 delivered anywhere in India, while those in Kodagu were reportedly offering at Rs 390-395 a kg delivered anywhere in the country. Some selling pressure was reported in Wayanad also . These factors aided the market to fall, market sources told *Business Line*.

They said there was no selling pressure on the spot. Some 20-22 tonnes of farm grade pepper from the primary markets were traded at Rs 395-405 and Rs 410 a kg depending on quality and area .

Arrivals at the terminal market continued to remain thin. Tamil Nadu-based dealers continued to buy from the high ranges on a cash-and-carry basis and that is said to be one of the main reasons for the thin arrivals, they claimed.

The exchange has allocated 576 tonnes for delivery in March and of this 254 tonnes were allocated for delivery between March 9 and March 19, while 322 tonnes were on maturity of the contract on March 20.

Activities on the exchange were limited as is evident from the decline in total turn over.

April contract on the NCDEX dropped by Rs 560 to end at the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 42,125. May and June decreased by Rs 625 and Rs 565, respectively, to the LTP of Rs 42,990 and Rs 43,645 a quintal.

Total turnover

Total turnover fell by 520 tonnes to close at 8,155 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 365 tonnes to 9,546 tonnes showing liquidation and switching over.

April open interest fell by 458 tonnes to close at 6,901 tonnes. May open interest increased by 93 tonnes to 2,216 tonnes, while that of June moved up by just One tonne to 306 tonnes.

Lack of nuts keeps groundnut oil high

Our Correspondent

Rajkot, March 21:

Groundnut oil continues to rule high despite weak retail demand as there is a paucity of nuts for crushing, said millers. High prices have pulled down retail demand, said an edible oils trader here.

Loose groundnut oil on Wednesday was traded at Rs 1,150 for 10 kg, a 15-kg *telia* tin at Rs 1,766-1,767, a 15-kg new tin at Rs 1,925-1,930 and a 15-kg labelled tin at Rs 1,905-1,910. About 50-60 tonnes groundnut oil were traded at oil mills in Saurashtra.

Cotton oil was unchanged. Cotton oil (wash) was traded at Rs 637-640 for 10 kg, while a 15-kg new tin ruled at Rs 1,090-1,100. About 500-600 tonnes of cotton oil were traded.

Area under groundnuts fell by 11 per cent to 5.19 million hectares in 2011-12 crop year due to unfavourable weather, lack of marketing infrastructure and price fluctuations, Parliament was informed on Tuesday. It was 5.85 million hectares in 2010-11 crop year (July-June), the Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

Sugar dips on weak demand

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, March 21:

Spot sugar on the Vashi wholesale market declined by Rs 10 a quintal, while *naka* rates dropped by Rs 10-20 a quintal on Wednesday as local demand due was need-based. Prices are currently ruling below production cost, hence, millers are hesitating to sell. Next month's free-sale quota announcement is also due, so the market sentiment remains cautious, said traders.

Sources said that in the physical market, retail demand was thin due to month-end. Arrivals were slightly higher than local despatches this week, resulting in a build-up of stocks.

Therehas been no new bulk buying as most wholesalers and stockists are busy with the financial year ending. Retailers demand is also low.

Meanwhile, the country's production has increased by 14 per cent to 211.6 lakh tonnes (lt) till March 15, compared with 185.7 lt in the year-ago period, Indian Sugar Mills Association said recently. The association still maintains that 260 lt will be produced in the current season, while the Food Ministry has pegged output at about 252 lt for 2011-12 season year (October-September).

Arrivals in Vashi were about 51-52 truckloads and despatches about 49-50 truckloads. On Tuesday evening, about 14-15 mills offered tenders and sold about 35,000-36,000 bags at Rs 2,700-2,765 (Rs 2,710-2,780) for S-grade and at Rs 2,790-2,870 (Rs 2,800-2,880) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 2,862-2,935 (Rs 2,862-2,946) and M-grade Rs 2,951-3,042 (Rs 2,951-3,042).

Naka **delivery rates:** S-grade Rs 2,790-2,850 (Rs 2,800-2,850) and M-grade Rs 2,910-2,980 (Rs 2,930-3,000).

Volumes at Coonoor tea sale touch 3-week high

Our Correspondent

Coonoor, March 21:

A volume of 10.60 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No: 12 of the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association to be held on Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of listing by brokers.

It is the highest volume in three weeks. It is about 92,000 kg more than last week's offer but about 66,000 kg less than the offer this time last year.

Of the 10.60 lakh kg on offer, 7.64 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 2.96 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 9.79 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.81 lakh kg, orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and the dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 0.38 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 7.26 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.43 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 2.53 lakh kg, CTC.

In the 10.60 lakh kg, fresh teas account for 9.23 lakh kg. As much as 1.37 lakh kg comprises teas that were unsold in previous auctions. Last week, in the leaf market, HUL bought good medium grades and Tata Global Beverages was selective. Godfrey Philips India and Duncans Tea Ltd did not operate. In the dust market, HUL and Godfrey Philips were selective. Tata Global Beverages did not operate. Generally, the market was dependent on domestic buyers as export support was limited.

Quality arrivals lend colour to turmeric

Our Correspondent

Erode, March 21:

Spot turmeric increased by Rs 150-200 a quintal as quality varieties arrived on Wednesday.

“Local traders purchased more than 10,000 bags at higher prices due to the arrival of quality goods. Also, traders purchased to fulfil orders from local spices firms. Further futures rose by 2 per cent, so traders increased quotations,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants' Association.

He said prices will fall from the next week once arrivals go up. So exporters are reluctant to buy currently. Farmers said markets will remain closed for on Friday, Saturday and Sunday due to Telugu new year festivities. After that, markets will be closed from March 31 to April 8 for *Erode Periya*, *Chinna* and *Vaikkal Mariamman* festivals. So they brought more than 20,000 bags to the markets to avoid building stocks. Of the 21,000 bags that arrived for sales, 60 per cent was sold.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety fetched Rs 2,519-3,729 a quintal and the root variety Rs 2,406-3,286.

Salem crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 3,117-4,357 a quintal and the root variety Rs 2,864-3,467. Out of the 5,482 bags that arrived, 2,398 were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,373-3,799 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 3,072-3,439. Of the 1,766 bags that arrived, 1,719 were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,109-3,979 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 2,669-3,469. All the 971 bags that arrived were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,199-3,900 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 2,619-3,439. All the 426 bags that arrived were sold.

'Bumper wheat crop likely in M.P. this year'

PTI
Indore, March 22:

Madhya Pradesh is expecting bumper production of wheat this year due to favourable weather conditions, an Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) official has said.

“Madhya Pradesh will be forging for massive wheat production to the tune of 11 mt to 12 mt this year against 8 mt to 9 mt last year. With better monsoon, followed by extended winter up to March, the bumper production at 11 mt to 12 mt is expected now,” Dr A.N. Mishra, Head of Indian Agricultural Research Institute (Regional station), told reporters on the eve of institute’s Diamond Jubilee year celebrations yesterday.

Informing that wheat was sown in 4.5 million hectares in the State, Mr Mishra said the production would also include rust and heat-resistant crop developed by IARI, besides high-yielding variety of wheat, known as “Malvi”, named after Malwa region comprising Indore, Dhar, Ujjain.

Ten percent of the crop would be of Malvi variety, he said while seeking at least Rs 100 per quintal as incentive to farmers by the state in addition to the Minimum Support Price of wheat fixed by the Central government.

EU must seek ‘equivalence' treatment to export organic products to India

M R Subramani
Chennai, March 21:

The organic products sector is looking forward to the Centre introducing laws to allow imports from other countries. The European Union is one of the exporting groups that is looking for access to the Indian market.

“The way the domestic market is emerging; there is scope for products from other countries to be sold in India. However, rules need to be changed for imports,” said a retailer. The issue also figured at the ‘Biofach 2012' that was held in Germany last month.

According to industry sources, imports of organic food are not allowed unless they are approved by a government body.

This is seen as a contradiction by those in the European Union, where many countries allow the import of Indian organic products if they are certified by the National Accreditation Committee. This is because the NAC's certification is treated as equivalent to the one issued by the European Union.

The European Union, too, has a certification body with a process as strict as that of India. But India has not reciprocated Europe's move.

Last month, the European Union and the US signed a trade agreement for reciprocity. But the agreement excludes apple and pear exports from the US and livestock product shipments from the EU.

Reciprocity

During the event, when asked about such an agreement with India, officials of the European Union said they were hopeful of signing a deal in course of time.

The organic products industry sees a potential to tap 300 million people belonging to the middle class in the country. Of this, at least 10 per cent at the higher end can be targeted by international groups. According to Dr P.V.S.M. Gouri, advisor, National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP), import of organic product is allowed for re-export. This means an organic product can be brought into the country from the European Union only if it is to be used as an ingredient in a product meant for exports.

The NPOP is recognised as the national accreditation body for organic products in the country and is under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority (Apeda).

“Despite the import of an ingredient, the final product can be claimed to have originated from India,” she said.

Asked about allowing organic products to be imported for sales in India, Dr Gouri said the European Union would have to seek “equivalence” treatment.

Industry sources say the problem in allowing equivalence lies in the country not having a domestic standard for organic products. Currently, any organic product manufacturer can voluntarily seek certification for the domestic market from the national accreditation body.

Domestic standard

When asked, Dr Gouri said that rules applied for domestic certification are the same that are applied under the National Programme for Organic Production.

About 30 modern retail outlets sell organic products and have an annual business worth Rs 39 crore. These outlets are witnessing a growth of 500 per cent annually, according to statistics.

The domestic organic products market in India is worth Rs 2,650 crore and the sale of organic products through general trade outlets is estimated at around Rs 65 crore with a growth of 400 per cent annually.

Allow registration for cotton exports: CAI chief

Our Bureau

Mumbai, March 21:

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) has urged the Government to allow fresh registration for cotton exports.

In a letter written to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, Mr Dhiren N. Sheth, President, CAI, said though the ban on cotton exports was revoked, registration for fresh exports are not accepted. This amounts to the ban on cotton exports continuing, he added.

The development will lead to several international disputes and arbitration along with huge claims to be faced by those exporters who have contracted for substantial quantities, but not registered them with the Director General of Foreign Trade. Some of the exporters are already facing such claims because of a similar even last year, he said.

A copy of the letter was marked to Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Finance Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, Minister for Agriculture, Consumer Affairs and Food and Public Distribution and Mr Anand Sharma, Minister for Commerce and Industry and Textiles.

FARMERS HIT

Cotton prices have fallen to minimum support price in Andhra Pradesh immediately after the export ban was announced. However, it recovered after the Government allowed shipment against the registration certificate already issued.

"If exports of further quantities are not allowed soon, prices will start falling again. Although Indian farmers are protected by MSP, they should not be deprived from realising higher value for his produce," he said.

Farmers have an inventory of one crore bales valued at about Rs 20,000 crore. They have incurred a loss of Rs 2,000 crore due to fall in prices after export ban. The ginners may also resort to distress sale as they hold 15-20 lakh bales, said Mr Sheth.

The registration for fresh exports should be allowed with immediate effect considering the interest of entire cotton value chain, he said.

FREQUENT POLICY CHANGES

The recent changes in the policy governing cotton exports are despite repeated assurances from the Government for free and consistent export policy at the beginning of the season. Such frequent changes in the policy have led to erosion of confidence among the international trade, he said.

Spot rubber rules firm

Our Correspondent

Kottayam, March 21:

Spot rubber finished firm on Wednesday. The commodity seemed to be gaining further on speculative buying and short covering as it suffered from acute short supplies. According to sources, major manufacturers were inactive probably owing to the closing of the current financial year. The transactions continued to be dull.

Natural rubber in the international market showed a mixed trend amidst persistent worries over the demand from China, the top consumer. However the Thai rubber intervention plan and the lean production season in major producing countries are likely to provide firm support at lower levels.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs 197.50 (196) a kg according to traders. The grade increased to Rs 198 (196) a kg as quoted by the Rubber Board.

The April series firmed up marginally to Rs 200.82 (200.32), May to Rs 205.50 (204.99), June to Rs 208.50 (208.40), July to Rs 208.95 (207.54), August to Rs 207.97 (205.98) and September to Rs 206 (204) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs 199.45 (200.52) a kg at Bangkok. The March futures for the grade dropped to ¥314 (Rs 189.06) from ¥315.4 a kg during the day session but then bounced back to ¥316 (Rs 190.25) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 197.50 (196); RSS-5: 196 (194); ungraded: 191 (189); ISNR 20: 194.50 (193) and latex 60 per cent: 131 (131).

Karnataka Budget fails to enthuse arecanut growers

Our Bureau
Mangalore, March 21:

Arecanut growers feel that the Karnataka Budget 2012-13 could have done more for the sector.

The Karnataka Budget for 2012-13 has promised to extend subsidy for arecanut farmers affected by yellow lead disease.

In his Budget speech, Mr D.V. Sadananda Gowda, Karnataka Chief Minister, said arecanut is being grown in 2.13 lakh hectares in Karnataka. Yellow leaf disease in 10,400 hectares of land has affected farmers growing arecanut in those areas.

During 2011-12, Rs 5.7 crore of subsidies was provided to farmers under Areca Rejuvenation Programme. “This scheme will be continued during this year also,” he said.

Mr Ramesh Kaintaje, an arecanut grower from Bantwal taluk, said arecanut sector had lot more expectations from the Chief Minister. Though the Chief Minster had promised to extend subsidy scheme to farmers affected yellow leaf disease of arecanut, there was no mention on those plantations affected by fruit rot disease.

The Chief Minister should also have taken this point into consideration in his Budget, he said.

Mr M. Srinivasa Achar, President of All-India Areca Growers' Association, said the Chief Minister has prepared this Budget under tremendous pressure. He hoped that Mr Gowda would make more allocations to arecanut sector in the days to come.

The Karnataka Budget has also included arecanut among 11 commodities for e-tender system in APMC (agriculture produce marketing committee) markets in the State.

According to the Budget, e-tender system will be adopted in 50 APMC markets for selling 11 important produces during 2012-13.

Karnataka earmarks Rs 215 crore for fisheries development

Our Bureau

Blue revolution: The State Budget aims to provide Rs 10 crore for upgrading fish production centres.

Mangalore, March 21:

The Karnataka Budget for 2012-13 has earmarked Rs 215 crore for fisheries sector in the State.

This includes funds for construction of houses for fishermen, to increase fish ling production, and for the second stage work of fisheries harbour in Udupi district.

Presenting the Budget on Wednesday, Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr D.V. Sadananda Gowda, said that Rs 24 crore will be provided during 2012-13 for construction of 4,000 houses for fishermen without houses.

As there is demand for diesel used by mechanised fishing boats, the quantity of tax-free diesel will be increased to 1.25 lakh kilo litres during 2012-13.

It may be mentioned here that this figure was 1 lakh kilo litres in the 2011-12 Budget. However, it was increased by 15,000 kilo litres during the year, taking the total to 1.15 lakh kilo litres during 2011-12.

Stating that there is demand for fish lings in the State, he said Rs 10 crore will be provided for upgrading fish production centres.

Of the 80 crore demand for fish lings in the State, only 40 crore is being produced now. There was an increase of 35 per cent in fish ling production during 2011-12.

Mr Gowda said that Rs 26 crore will be provided for the second stage of Hejmadi Kodi harbour in Udupi district during 2012-13. This requires a total investment of Rs 60 crore.

He said that Rs 4.5 crore will be provided for supply of life jackets costing Rs 1,500 each to 30,000 fishermen. Insulated boxes costing Rs 4,000 each will be supplied to 6,000 fisher women in the State, he said.

Mr Gowda said that an oceanarium of international standards will be constructed at KRS Brindavana and at Pilikula in Mangalore under public private partnership.