

Published: March 25, 2012 12:02 IST | Updated: March 25, 2012 12:03 IST

Bt cotton no marvel

Meena Menon



Bt Cotton being harvested at a farm near Salem in Tamil Nadu. Photo: Shaju John

A new report, which hopes to be a wake-up call for policy makers, points towards drastic depletion of nutrients in the soil due to repeated cultivation of Bt cotton hybrids

A new report by the Coalition for GM Free India says that ten years after Bt cotton officially entered India, its manufacturers and promoters would like the world to believe that it is an unqualified success but the reality is starkly different.

The report put together by the Coalition, a broad network of organizations, scientists, farmer unions and consumer groups says the hype over Bt cotton is typified by recent advertisements by Mahyco-Monsanto claiming “Bollgard boosts Indian cotton farmers' income by over Rs.31,500 crores,” which was pulled up by Advertising Standards Council of India for false information. Underlining the deep crisis in cotton farming after a decade of transgenic seeds, the report says that the spate of farmer suicides in 2011-12 has been particularly severe among Bt cotton farmers.

In Andhra Pradesh, out of 47 lakh acres planted with Bt cotton during Kharif 2011 season, the crop failed in 33.73 lakh acres as per the state government estimates in December 2011. This means two-thirds of cotton area had yield loss of more than 50 per cent. In Maharashtra, the

poor performance of cotton crop has led to lowering production estimates significantly in spite of an increase in the area of cotton cultivation. Last year's crisis propelled the Maharashtra government to announce a bailout of Rs 2000 crores, which included paddy and soyabean.

The report puts together various statistics culled from the Central Institute of Cotton Research (CICR) and other sources and says the data should serve as a wake up call to policy makers and MPs. While Bt cotton was approved in 2002, the initial adoption was slow, and by 2004-05, only 5.6 per cent of the cotton cultivated area was planted with Bt cotton. Data from Cotton Corporation of India⁵ and area under Bt cotton adapted from Dr. K.R. Kranthi, Director of CICR show increasing area under Bt cotton and decreasing yields. Considering the period from 2000-01 as the pre-Bt Cotton expansion period and the phase from 2005-06 to 2011-12 as the Bt cotton period, a different picture of the yield gains emerges.

Rising sharply

Yields were already rising sharply in the pre-Bt cotton era due to non-Bt hybrid seed and other factors. In the 5 year period from 2000-01, yield increased by 69 per cent. In the Bt cotton period starting from 2005-06, an increase in yield is seen for a couple of years, showing a moderate 17 per cent increase over 3 years up to 2007-08 (554 kg/ha (hectare) compared to 470 kg/ha). But the yields show a downward trend since then. Presently, the cotton yields have reached pre-Bt levels – 481 kg/ha compared to 470 kg/ha. In fact, the yield estimate of 481 kg/ha for 2011-12 is only an initial estimate from the Cotton Advisory Board and the actual number is likely to be lower, the report says.

Stagnated gains

This trend is corroborated in Dr Kranthi's paper reviewing the 10 years of Bt Cotton, quoted in the report.

“The main issue that worries stakeholders is the stagnation of productivity at an average of 500 kg lint per ha for the past seven years. The gains have been stagnant and unaffected by the increase in area of Bt cotton from 5.6 per cent in 2004 to 85 per cent in 2010. The yield was 463 kg per hectare when the Bt cotton area was 5.6 per cent in 2004 and reached a mere 506 kg per hectare when the area under Bt cotton increased to 9.4 million hectares at 85 per cent of the total 11.1 million hectares.” The same paper provides numbers which show “progressive problems and stagnation of production and productivity.”

Maximum yield gains were from Gujarat which brought 0.6 to 0.7 million hectares of new land under cotton (previously under groundnut) irrigated by a 100,000 new check dams (Kranthi.K, 2011). In 2000, 40 per cent of cotton area came under hybrids and the rest was under different varieties. By 2009, 85.5 per cent area came under hybrids and the rest were under cotton varieties.

The report says that the use of irrigation facilities, bringing new lands under Bt cotton, low pest activity, well distributed rainfall, the overwhelming shift towards hybrid cotton and introduction of pesticides with novel modes of action are important factors that helped cotton productivity, not just the introduction of the novel Bt gene.

According to Dr.Kranthi there has been depletion of nutrients in the soil due to repeated cultivation of Bt cotton hybrids, which draw more nutrients and water from the soil. The crop is exhibiting nutrient deficiency especially in rain-fed zones where wilt and leaf-reddening problems are also getting more severe over the years.

Despite Dr Kranthi's and other data from the government itself, Union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar praised Bt cotton in Parliament saying that the use of high quality hybrid cotton seeds had helped farmers make big gains due to reduced use of pesticides. A rethink seems unlikely.

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

Mobile phones turn farmer-friendly

Amutha Kannan

Motor pumpset operation now possible with just a phone call



Mobile solution:M.P. Rajkumar, proprietor of Coimbatore-based company Emral Tune Line Auto Tech Ind. seen with his 'Mobile based Irrigation Scheduling Equipment' fitted next to the starter box of the motor that is operated through a call from a mobile phone.– PHOTO: S. SIVA SARAVANAN

Imagine what it would mean to a farmer if he were given the option of switching on a motor pumpset that is situated in the middle of a farm without having to walk from the house during hot summer days and cold winter nights.

Around 3,000 farmers no longer have to imagine this, because this luxury has become a reality for them, thanks to the 'Mobile based Irrigation Scheduling Equipment'. All that they have to do to switch on their motor pumpsets is to make a call on their mobile phones.

The call activates the mobile-based unit fitted to the starter of the motor. After activation, depending on the digit that is pressed by the user on the mobile, it switches on the motor pumpset, checks the power availability, motor running status, false status if any, or switches off the motor pumpset. Separate digits are earmarked for each function respectively. That they are saved from making unsafe trips across the fields in the night, able to travel anywhere without

having to miss the irrigation time, and having to dole out a mere Rs. 3,500 towards cost of the mobile unit, has made the farmers a happy lot. And, the brain behind this easy-to-use system is M.P. Rajkumar, an electrical and communications engineer, who is providing simple handy solutions to agri-based problems through his Coimbatore-based company Emral Tune Line Auto Tech Ind.

“It all began when a family friend got bitten by a snake when he had to venture out into the fields in the dark to switch on the motor pumpset. Initially the technology was made possible through the landline. Around 600 farmers in and around Madurai became users of this system. With the advent of mobile phones, the unit was redesigned to be compatible for this. Now the mobile users have exceeded 3,000 and are spread throughout the State,” Mr. Rajkumar says.

Message alerts

With the mobile phone came additional uses. The mobile unit on the motor starter was fitted to include message alerts and call back options if one of the four checks did not conform to the customised data. The user will get an emergency call that will give a recorded message stating the problem, or a text message.

The recorded message was incorporated as an after thought for those who could not read text messages.

The only recurrent cost that the user will incur is when he has to recharge the SIM of mobile phone unit on the starter. The unit works on electricity, or solar energy in the case of a shutdown. The 36-Watt unit consumes electricity even less than that of a tube light.

Mr. Rajkumar has extended the uses of the unit to include other purposes also. However, his main focus remains agriculture. He trains those interested on the patented technology to market the same under other brand names.

He is indebted to Tamil Nadu Agricultural University for enabling him obtain the patent for the technology as well as for making him an incubatee in the Directorate of Agri-Business Development of the university. This facilitates him to continue his research and development activities in coming up with more cost-effective and viable solutions.

And, that is how he is envisioning more practical uses for his mobile gadget. His recent attempt with Coimbatore Corporation has helped in the mobile unit being used for switching on and off of street lights in Ramanathapuram and Madhampatty.

Price of dry cocoa beans drop

Raviprasad Kamila

It has come down to Rs. 150 - Rs. 155 per kg in the last two months



The drop in the price of dry cocoa beans is attributed to some chocolate manufacturers using palm kernel oil-based fat as a substitute to cocoa butter.

The price of dry cocoa beans has dropped this year. Sources in the chocolate manufacturing industry attribute this to some chocolate manufacturers who use palm kernel oil-based fat as a substitute to cocoa butter (fat) for preparing low-priced chocolate bars.

Suresh Bhandary, General Manager, Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd. (CAMPCO), told *The Hindu* that the prices of dry cocoa beans hovered between Rs. 165 and Rs. 175 a kg in the domestic market for three years till last year. The prices have now dropped to Rs. 150 to Rs. 155 since two months.

Mr. Bhandary said it was the result of different small chocolate manufactures in the country preferring palm kernel oil fat as a substitute to cocoa butter. The palm kernel oil-based substitute costs less compared to cocoa butter.

He said that though the trend of some chocolate manufacturers using the substitute to cocoa butter began two years ago, its effect on the domestic cocoa dry beans market has been felt for the first time this year.

He said that the palm kernel oil-based substitute cost Rs. 140 a kg while the cost of cocoa butter stood at Rs. 270 to Rs. 280 a kg.

Mr. Bhandary said the taste of pure chocolates made out of cocoa butter and compound chocolates differed. Compound chocolates were those prepared using fat of vegetable oil or palm kernel oil. Pure chocolates melted in the mouth faster than compound chocolates.

Mr. Bhandary hoped that this trend might not continue for long as chocolate manufactures would lose the market if they compromised on taste by refraining from using cocoa butter.

Meanwhile, farmers in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts who had been cultivating cocoa for long have now got an opportunity to cultivate oil palm after the government included the two districts for its cultivation under a Centrally-sponsored scheme early this year. The Government issued an order to this effect on January 4.

The Government has appointed Godrej Agrovet Ltd., Belgaum, for promoting its cultivation in the two districts. S. Nanda, Deputy Director, Department of Horticulture, Dakshina Kannada, said the company officials had now begun the process of identifying farmers interested in oil palm cultivation.

According to a field assistant in the company, 80 farmers in Sullia and Bantwal taluks had evinced interest in growing oil palm covering around 130 acres of land. The farmers were mainly areca growers whose plantations were hit by yellow leaf disease. A majority of them were from Todikana, Aranathodu, and Sampaje villages in Sullia taluk, he said.

At the same time, the Union Government in its 2012-13 Budget has announced setting up an oil palm mission for promoting oil palm cultivation in the country. According to the Economic Survey for 2011-12, the country still imports around 50 per cent of its requirement of edible oil.

Published: March 26, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 26, 2012 04:25 IST

Steps on to boost milk production

Special Correspondent

Dairy Development Minister K.C. Joseph said that the government would adopt measures to ensure that dairy farmers get prices linked to the cost of production. He was inaugurating the State-level distribution of aid under the cattle feed subsidy scheme of the Union government at Muvattupuzha on Sunday.

Steps were being taken for achieving self-sufficiency in milk production in the State during the 12th Five Year plan. The State has registered a 25 per cent increase in milk production

since the prices were increased by Rs.5 per litre. The prices were increased after conducting a detailed study on the subject and the government had decided not to appeal against the court verdict that Milma had the right to determine the price of milk.

The government is of the opinion that dairy farmers should get remunerative prices for the produce so as to prevent them from leaving the sector.

The Minister said the State was bringing about 8 lakh litres of milk daily from neighbouring States. The quality of the milk being brought from other States was also a matter of concern.

The government had sought extension of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to the dairy sector also.

The Union government had given partial approval to the demand. The State government would pursue the matter to get the demand accepted in full.

The government was aiming at self-sufficiency in dairy and poultry segments during the 12th Plan.

He said the government has taken note of the problems being faced by the pineapple growers in the State and measures would be initiated to mitigate them.

Joseph Vazhakkam, MLA, presided over the function. K.T. Sarojini, Dairy Development Department director; T.U. Kuruvila, MLA; Eldhose Kunnappillil, District Panchayat President; M.T. Jayan, chairman of Ernakulam region of Milma; were among those who spoke.

Published: March 26, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 26, 2012 04:21 IST

Over 100 fish varieties for expo

Staff Reporter

'O Fish Expo,' a mega aqua show scheduled to commence in the district on March 30, will feature over 100 varieties of ornamental and *vasthu* fish at 50 stalls .

Adding charm to the 30-day expo, organised by the Theera Desa Raksha Social Welfare Society and the National Agriculture Society, will be a display of over 50 varieties of doves and birds.

According to office-bearers of Prizm Events, which coordinates the show, the exhibition will bring pet breeders and aquarium entrepreneurs to a common platform. This will be a meeting point for all potential players in the trade offering products at affordable prices, they say.

'One lakh visitors'

Over a lakh people are expected to visit the expo.

To spice up the expo, competitions will be held in nine segments. Entrepreneurs who present the best aquarium tank, fish, pheasants, chicken, birds, pigeon, and the best stall will be given prizes.

Special stalls will be arranged at the venue for those who like to showcase their pets, especially ornamental fish varieties. No charge will be levied on amateur participants.

"The main aim of the expo is to open the opportunities in ornamental fish trading to new farmers. Visitors to the show will get ample opportunities to see and purchase varieties of their choice," says V.P. Prinson, coordinator of the show.

He said entrepreneurs from Tamil Nadu and Kerala would participate in the show. As many as 13 ornamental fish farmers from Kozhikode will display their collections at the event.

Published: March 26, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 26, 2012 04:27 IST

Farmers ransack power sub-stations

Staff Reporter

Incensed over the erratic power supply, irate farmers raided an electricity sub-station and damaged furniture near Maddukuru village in Chandrugonda mandal on Sunday.

The agitated farmers took out a rally in protest against the alleged callous attitude of the officials concerned. They staged a 'rasta roko' in front of the sub-station and raised slogans against the 'indiscriminate power cuts'. Leaders of all-party mandal committees extended their support to the stir. Some protesters forced their way into the sub-station and picked up an argument with the staff.

After heated arguments, they ransacked the furniture and detained the staff for some time. They relented only after the officials concerned assured them that their grievances would be referred to the higher authorities for suitable action.

Furniture damaged

Nizamabad Staff Reporter writes: Farmers detained electricity staff at the sub-station at Darpally mandal headquarters for two hours on Sunday evening, protesting the interruptions in power supply to the farm sector.

The detained staff members were identified as linemen Sainath, Samiuddin, Tirupati and another person. The farmers, all of a sudden in good numbers, attacked the sub-station and damaged furniture before detaining the staff present at that time.

Later, they staged 'rasta roko' on the Darpally-Sirikonda-Bheemgal road.

Published: March 26, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 26, 2012 04:24 IST

Vegetables at reduced price

The government will intervene in the market immediately to check the price rise of vegetables, and to make available vegetables at reasonable rates to the public, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has said. As part of the initiative, the stalls of HortiCorp will sell vegetables at prices lower than the market rates from Monday, an official release said here.

March 26, 2012

Show farmers the way to protect plant varieties: Horatti

Hubli: The former Primary and Secondary Education Minister Basavaraj Horatti has said awareness should be created on the protection of plant varieties and the farmers' rights among the farming community.

He was speaking after inaugurating a training programme aimed creating awareness on 'Plant Variety Protection and Farmers' Rights Act' organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) in Dharwad recently. Mr. Horatti said that at a time when the farmers were facing several problems and were being forced to migrate to cities in search of work and forced to commit suicide, it was essential to educate the farmers on several issues concerning them.

He said that if farmers were sensitised on plant varieties, their rights and food security, it would help them in finding ways of livelihood apart from contributing to the food security of the country.

The former Minister advised the farmers against selling their land for non-agricultural purposes as it would lead to non-availability of land for farming for the next generation. Mr. Horatti handed over farm equipment to farmers belonging to the tribal communities.

Vice-Chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University Baldev Singh Dhillon released a booklet on plant variety protection and farmers' rights. The former Director of the National Seed Project of ICAR, R.K. Choudhury, and Vice-Chancellor of UAS .R. Hanchinal were present.

SHIMLA, March 26, 2012

'Himachal farmers hit hard by prices'

Various farmers' organisations like the Himachal Kissan Sabha and Apple Growers' Association have decried the State government's 'insensitivity' towards the ongoing agrarian distress in the hill State.

Addressing a joint press conference, president of Kissan Sabha Kuldip Tanwar and Apple Growers' Association president Rakesh Singha said that many farmers were committing suicide in the State.

According to the leaders, a Dalit farmer Mohar Singh committed suicide a few days back in Bhoranj Tehsil of Hamirpur district. Frustrated after the failure of successive crops, Singh had taken up carpentry to support his family of five. He had taken a loan of Rs 30,000 from a bank and was receiving regular notices for non-payment.

The leaders criticised the government for increasing the price of fertilizers; not initiating any irrigation schemes; and not constructing any link roads in the rural areas.

About 90 percent of people are living in rural areas and more than 70 percent are directly dependent on agriculture. The contribution of agriculture to the Gross State Domestic Product has come down to 15.81 percent from about 26 percent in 1991.

First Published: 01:02 IST(26/3/2012)

Last Updated: 01:03 IST(26/3/2012)

Farmers need increased bounty for ailing sector

For the state's distressed farmers, struggling with drought, erratic weather, and negative growth, a lot rides on Monday's state budget. Topping their wish list is increased financial aid from the government, with focus on increasing increasing food security. Speaking to **HT** on the eve of the state budget, Kishor Tiwari, president of the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti, said that finance minister Ajit Pawar should look at the reasons, other than poor rainfall, for the state's negative growth in farming. As per state economic survey, agriculture and allied activities has shown a negative growth of 5.1 per cent against a growth of 15.6 per cent in 2010-11.

Highlighting the uneven growth pattern, he said: "While some districts in western Maharashtra have registered a growth rate of more than 10%, districts in Marathwada and Vidarbha have slipped to minus 15%. The minister must explain this," said Tiwari, adding that wrong policies and corruption were at the the root of the agrarian crisis.

While the sector is vying for increased attention from the centre and the state, activists claim corruption and malpractices ensure that the benefit from schemes in place doesn't always reach the intended beneficiaries.

In Vidarbha, which made national headlines with a spate of farmer suicides, Marathwada and Khandesh, irrigation has been a major concern. The ratio of the gross irrigated area to the gross cropped area (total land under cultivation) in the state is one third of the national ratio of 45.3.

Tiwari alleged that money granted for irrigation, along with other farmers' packages, did not suffice.

“On paper, the state started irrigation works worth Rs 50,000 cr, but it doesn’t have money to push these projects through. The money granted does not reach the beneficiaries because of rampant corruption,” he said.

Last week, the Opposition slammed the government, claiming that the Rs2,000 crore project for the special package for bad crop assistance, promised in December 2011, had not been provided.

Farm activist Vijay Jawandhia said that subsidies or assistance should go directly to farmers. “It’s high time the state did away with agencies and helped farmers directly.”

Pratap Hogade, who fights for farmers’ cause in the power sector, said that the state must give uninterrupted power to farmers.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/830807.aspx>

weather

Delhi - INDIA

<p>Today's Weather</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: right;"> <p style="color: #c00000; font-weight: bold;">Monday, Mar 26</p> <p style="color: #c00000; font-weight: bold;">Max Min</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;">33.4° 18.2°</p> </div> </div> <p>Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs Sunrise: 7:14</p> <p>Humidity: 27% Sunset: 17:48</p> <p>Wind: Normal Barometer: 1013</p>	<p>Tomorrow's Forecast</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: right;"> <p style="color: #c00000; font-weight: bold;">Tuesday, Mar 27</p> <p style="color: #c00000; font-weight: bold;">Max Min</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;">35° 18°</p> </div> </div>
--	---

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Mar 28	Mar 29	Mar 30	Mar 31	Apr 1

35° 18° Partly Cloudy	36° 19° Partly Cloudy	36° 18° Sunny	37° 18° Sunny	38° 20° Sunny
----------------------------	----------------------------	--------------------	--------------------	--------------------

© Copyright © 2011 HT Media Limited. All Rights Reserved.



'Duty hike may push up inflation'

Agencies Posted online: Sun Mar 25 2012, 14:59 hrs



New Delhi : The government's decision to raise excise and service tax will have marginal impact on prices and may push up inflation by 0.25 to 0.50 percentage points, Chief Economic Adviser Kaushik Basu has said.

"There will be some increase in prices due to increase in excise and service tax...25 to 50 basis points a one time rise in prices," Basu, who also heads a Prime Minister appointed panel on inflation, said.

Faced with rising fiscal deficit, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee increased both excise duty and service tax rate to 12 per cent from 10 per cent to generate an additional revenue of Rs 45,940 crore.

Justifying Mukherjee's decision to hike tax rate, Basu, said that in the long run, improvement in fiscal situation will help in moderating inflation.

By raising taxes, Mukherjee planned to bring down the fiscal deficit to 5.1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 5.9 per cent estimated in 2011-12.

Inflation, as measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), was 6.95 per cent in February. It remained close to double-digit throughout 2011 before moderating to 8.3 per cent in December.

"We expect inflation to be 6.5 per cent over the next fiscal," he said, adding that the average inflation during the current fiscal would be 8 per cent.

Unlike 2011, Basu said, "I do not expect food inflationary pressure next year. I expect food inflation around the average of 6-6.5 per cent."

Daily foodgrains availability rises by over 25 g in 2011

Agencies Posted online: Sun Mar 25 2012, 14:55 hrs



New Delhi : The daily per capita availability of foodgrains has gone up by 25.8 grams to 462.9 grams in 2011 compared to the previous year, according to government estimates.

The daily per capita net availability of foodgrains was estimated at 437.1 grams/day in 2010.

As per a data presented by Union Agriculture minister Sharad Pawar in Parliament, per capita foodgrains availability was 444 grams per day in 2009. The same was 442.8 grams per day in 2007 and 436 grams in 2008, it added.

The minister informed Parliament that as per the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey carried out by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) between 2004-05 and 2009-10, the per capita consumption of cereals and pulses and pulse products declined in both rural and urban households.

On the other hand, the consumption of health promoting items like fruit and vegetables, milk, eggs and fish etc. increased both in rural and urban households.

On steps taken to augment availability of foodgrains for individuals, Pawar said various incentives are being provided under different schemes like National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna (RKVY) and National Horticulture Mission (NHM) to boost farm productivity.

In addition, the government imports various agricultural commodities to boost their domestic supply, he added.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

26 MAR, 2012, 04.34AM IST, JAYASHREE BHOSALE, ET BUREAU

Maharashtra sugar production up 10%

PUNE: A better availability of labour due to [wage hike](#) and an increased use of harvesting machines have helped Maharashtra [sugar mills](#) crush more cane in less time this year.

The mills have crushed about 10% more cane till last week as compared to the previous year. Barring a few mills in Pune region, the crushing season is expected to get over in the state by April-end. Despite a late start due to farmer protests over cane price, cane crushing is going on unhindered.

Till last week, Maharashtra mills had crushed 640 lakh tonne cane and produced 734 lakh quintal sugar with a recovery of 11.46% as compared to crushing of 585 lakh tonne cane and [sugar production](#) of 651 lakh quintal with a recovery of 11.12% during the same period of last year.

The quantity of cane crushed is higher by 9.40% while the quantity of sugar produced is higher by 12.7%.

Sugar production is higher because sugar recovery this year is higher by 0.32% as compared to the last year.

An increment of 70% in wages ensured that the labour did not migrate to neighbouring states. "We have better labour availability this year," said the managing director of a Baramati-based sugar co-operative.

The increase in the use of harvesters has also eased some pressure. "As compared to 28 harvesters we had last year, 130 harvesters are operating this year," said an official from the state sugar commissionerate. Sugar mills get a 25% subsidy for the harvesters.

Although there is an improvement in recovery, the per-acre cane yield of the sugar cane crop has dropped. As a result, the state [sugar commissionerate](#) has revised downward its estimate of sugar production to 88 lakh tonnes to 89 lakh tonnes.



Agriculture glorified as prime means of growth

SUNDAY, 25 MARCH 2012 23:56

PNS | BHUBANESWAR

The College of Agriculture under the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology here observed its Golden Jubilee on Friday and Saturday with speakers and scientists glorifying the role of agriculture as the prime means for all-round growth of the people and the country.

On the first day of the function, 100 farmers from different parts of the State, agricultural scientists and students participated in the Krushak Mela organised by the college in the OUAT campus.

On the second day, Rajya Sabha member Pyarimohan Mohapatra, who attended the celebrations as chief guest, said agriculture was the basic need of the modern society and only its development could help the country grow in all respects.

OUAT Vice-Chancellor Debi Prasad Ray said agriculture science was the only science which could meet the basic needs of the people in the context of their livelihood. The function ended with a cultural scintillating programme.

Business Standard

Monday, Mar 26, 2012

Groundnut oil price nears Rs 2000 per tin

Vimukt Dave / Mumbai/ Rajkot March 26, 2012, 0:50 IST

Groundnut oil prices have reached close to Rs 2000 per 15 kg tin on Saturday even as demand stays grim from the millers. According to sources, groundnut oil mills have been more or less closed for past one month due to shortage of raw material, i.e. groundnut. On the other hand, export demand has pushed up groundnut oil price.

Groundnut oil prices gained Rs 20 per 15-kg tin at Rajkot markets and traded at Rs 1,985-1,990 per tin. Loose groundnut oil rose by Rs 10 per 10 kg to Rs 1180-1185 per 10 kg.

According to market sources, groundnut oil prices rose by Rs 60 per tin during past three days and about 50-70 tonnes of groundnut oil was traded across Gujarat.

"We have no choice but to close our mills as for past very long time, we are experiencing scarcity of groundnut for crushing. Hardly two or three mills are operational in Saurashtra area," said Ravajibhai Mandanaka, president of Gondal Oil Mills Association.

He further said, "All the groundnut arrival mostly gets consumed by the groundnut traders for export. The price they are offering to the farmers in the open market, are not viable for millers."

During past one week, groundnut oil prices have increased by Rs 3000 to Rs 76,000-77,000 per tonne in Saurashtra area on heavy export buying due to high demand mainly from China.

Currently, about 20,000-25,000 bags of groundnut arrive every day in Gujarat markets. Industry is not hoping much from the summer groundnut crop as last year experience was not good.

"The prices have increased mainly because millers have no stock of groundnut for crushing. Most of the groundnut is absorbed in exports at present," said Samir Shah, president, Saurashtra Oil Mills Association (SOMA).

According to figures provided by Indian Oilseed and Produce Export Promotion Council (IOPEPC), India has exported 384,000 tonnes of groundnut during April-October 2011. In 2010-11, country's total groundnut export stood at 419,000 tonnes. According to IOPEPC, India may export over 500,000 tonnes groundnut in 2011-12.

Meanwhile, A Jamnagar-based oil miller, who is also close to Saurashtra Oil Mills Association (SOMA) said, "Instead of producing oil, most of the millers' have now started trading of groundnut as they get more money in it."

Mandanaka further informed, "Most of the summer groundnut crop had been consumed by exporters due to high export demand and this year also we are not hopeful to get it for crushing as we are expecting good demand in export." A Rajkot-based edible oil retailer informed that groundnut oil buying has dropped significantly due to exorbitantly high prices. "Most of the groundnut oil users have shifted to other edible oils like cotton oil, palm oil and sunflower oil," he maintained.

Millers and traders see little possibility of groundnut oil prices coming down in near future.

[EGoM to meet tomorrow to decide on additional sugar export](#)

Press Trust of India / New Delhi March 25, 2012, 11:23 IST

An Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM), headed by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, will meet tomorrow to decide on allowing an additional export of up to one million tonnes of sugar in the 2011-12 marketing year.

The government has allowed 2 million tonnes of sugar exports in the 2011-12 marketing year in two equal tranches, as the country's sugar output is all set to exceed domestic consumption.

"The EGoM is scheduled for March 26. There are three-four proposals, including sugar exports, for discussion," a source said.

Recently, Food Minister K V Thomas had said that EGoM would soon take a call on permitting additional sugar exports. Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, too, had said there was a scope for additional 1 million tonnes of sugar exports.

Based on the inputs of Cane Commissioners of all sugar producing states, the food ministry recently revised upwards the sugar production estimates to about 25.2 million tonnes from the earlier projection of 24.6 million tonnes for this marketing year.

However, the industry has pegged the sugar output at 26 million tonnes in 2011-12 against 24.3 million tonnes in the previous year.

The annual domestic demand is projected at 22 million tonnes.

India, the world's second-largest producer of sugar and biggest consumer, had exported 2.6 million tonnes of sugar in the previous marketing year.

FCI to get another 8 mt storage facility in 18 months

To help reduce post-harvest foodgrain loss logistic issues still remain

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai March 25, 2012, 0:16 IST

The foodgrain storage problems are likely to get partly resolved in the next 18 months with the public sector procurement agency, the Food Corporation of India (FCI), clearing approvals for building fresh capacity for storing another eight million tonnes (mt) of foodgrain under the 10-year guarantee scheme.

"Tenders for eight mt of storage capacity have been cleared by us. This facility would come for use in the next 18 months," said a senior FCI official.

While FCI currently owns 13 mt of storage capacity, over 15 mt of warehousing space has been hired from the government and private agencies. Under cover and plinth, the company has

owned capacity of 2.62 mt while it hired another 0.54 mt of storage facility from various private players.

Apparently, the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) and various States Warehousing Corporations (STCs) own 10 mt of warehousing capacity each. Accumulative all, FCI currently has access to 51 mt of storage facility which is insufficient to meet the requirement of 63 mt as cited in the Food Security Bill.

In the Union Budget 2012-13, the minister proposed an allocation of Rs 5,000 crore on creation of new storage facility as against Rs 2,000 crore allocated during the last year's Budget. During the past year, the government has cleared two mt of additional storage facility which is set to be completed soon. Storage facility of another five mt is set to get government clearance soon.

But, the allocation of another Rs 5,000 crore in this year's Budget will provide a significant boost to the warehousing sector in India, said Sanjay Kaul, managing director of National Collateral Management Services Ltd (NCMSL).

The Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee allocated Rs 5,000 crore to the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) for distributing through loan and subsidy to the investor in warehouses. Currently, the government provides a subsidy of 15 per cent of capital expenditure of on warehouses built by private investors. The government also proposes to avail loans through concessional rate of interest to them.

Creating warehouses near producing and consuming centre would reduce the post-harvest grain loss significantly provided the government addresses key issues like logistics cost and provides infrastructure status to warehouses, said S Mittal, chairman and managing director of Arshiya International Ltd. Since logistics cost consists around 14 per cent of the gross domestic products (GDP) of our country, the public private partnership (PPP) model should be encouraged to achieve desired success, he added.

“Substantial increase in outlay for warehousing under rural infrastructure development fund (RIDF) is indeed a timely measure when the country is facing huge deficits in storage space. With rise in foodgrain production and the intended Food Security Act, this measure would help in higher credit flow for warehouse construction at affordable rates for intending investors. The government's endeavour should therefore be to reduce the interest cost further for such a

critical requirement. This could be done if the funds from RIDF are directly disbursed by Nabard to recipients to avoid intermediation cost of commercial banks,” said Anil Choudhary, managing director of the National Bulk Handling Corporation.

THE HINDU Business Line

High volatility keeps pepper under uncertainty

G. K. Nair

Kochi, March 25:

For the past few weeks, confusion prevails in the pepper market in view of the uncertainty over the availability of the material.

Based on the speculative assessments of both bull and bear operators the market is being pushed up and pulled down. Last week the bear operators had the upper hand and consequently all the active contracts showed a sharp fall.

There was substantial decrease in the volume. Liquidation was also moderate.

Availability in India, as it appears so far from the arrivals, is tight. Fresh pepper arrivals from the high ranges of Kerala is very thin. Meanwhile, a good portion of pepper appears on the primary markets of Wayanad is said to be from Karnataka.

Low bulk density pepper from Sakleshpur and Chikmagalur region of Karnataka was being offered at Rs 370-375 a kg delivered anywhere in India in recent days. But, the sellers are said to be hesitant to offer now at these rates and have raised the price to Rs 380-385 a kg. Pepper from Kodagu region is of high bulk density and bold is being pushed into Wayanad, one of the major pepper growing regions of Kerala bordering Karnataka and offered at Rs 390-395 a kg, market sources told *Business Line*.

Slack demand

Domestic demand has slowed down as the traders have closed down as the financial year is coming to an end. Those who want the material urgently are buying while those who want money are selling but on cash and carry basis, they said. Buying activities are expected to pick up from early April as the industrial buyers are expected to become active. The supply situation

continues to be unimpressive and Vietnam is the only producer having the material. But, the arrivals there have not reportedly shown any significant pick up so far.

A report from overseas last weekend said "Pepper market remains indecisive. In general the trade is forecasting higher prices, which is largely based on the assumption that supply is still falling short of demand during 2012".

It attributed this argument to "low stocks in Brazil, India's latest position as a net importer, Indonesia not being a factor of importance at least until July/August and Vietnam at best having a crop that is equal to last year".

Last week all the active contracts fell as the bear operators were in the driving seat almost all the days except for one day.

Apr, May and June contracts fell by Rs 2,410, Rs 2,350 and Rs 2,115 respectively to the last trading price of Rs 41,700, Rs 42,470 and Rs 43,000 a quintal at the end of trading on Saturday.

Total turn over decreased by 18,230 tonnes to close at 48,206 tonnes. Spot prices fell during the week by Rs 2,400 a quintal to close at Rs 38,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 40,000 (MG 1) a quintal. Indian parity in the international market was at \$8,450 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and \$8,750 a tonne (c&f) for the US.

Gujarat to get camel milk dairy soon

PTI

Ahmedabad, March 26:

(PTI) Gujarat will soon get its first commercial dairy for processing of camel milk into various products in Kutch district.

A proposal in this regard has been received by the Government from the Kutch District Cooperative Milk Union or the Sarhad Dairy.

A local union of camel breeders Kutch Unt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan (KUUMS) has been formed to develop milk collection networks, while a Kutch-based NGO Sahjeevan has been roped in to mobilise the camel breeders and spread awareness with regard to economic and nutritional importance of camel milk.

Also, the Gujarat Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) or Amul has agreed in principle for marketing of the camel milk which is high in nutrition and low in fat, a state government official said.

“The Government is planning to set up a dairy for commercial processing of camel milk, for which provision has been made in the 2012-13 budget,” the Director of Animal Husbandry, Dr A.J. Kachhiapatel, told PTI.

He said that a proposal for setting up a milk processing unit of capacity of 2,000-2,500 litres has also been received from Sarhad dairy.

This project has been taken up with two objectives — one to provide an alternative for income generation for the local community of cattle breeders or ‘maldharis’ and other to increase the use of camel milk which is high in nutritional properties, low in fat and easy to digest, Dr Kachhiapatel said.

Homedale tea fetches record price

P. S. Sundar

Coonoor, March 25:

Nearly 85 per cent of three-week high volume of 10.60 lakh kg was sold at sale No: 12 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions with prices easing Rs 2 a kg on inadequate demand at high bids.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, created a new record. “Our Pekoe Dust fetched the highest price among all CTC teas this week when Paras Tea Co bought it for Rs 172 a kg. This was the highest price fetched by any grade of our teas since manufacture started in our factory 60 years ago”, Homedale Managing Partner, Mr Prashant Menon, told *Business Line*.

Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 154, Hittakkal Estate Rs 145, Darmona Estate and Shanthi Supreme Rs 141 each, Kannavarai Estate and High Cliff Supreme Rs 138 each, Waver Tree and Garswood Estate Rs 135 each. In all, 101 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 220, Curzon Rs 210, Corsely Rs 176, Havukal and Kairbeta Rs 164 each and Kodanad Rs 156. In all, 36 marks got Rs 100 and more.

“Orthodox leaf market lost Rs 3-8 a kg. CTC leaf market was irregular. Orthodox dust market was irregular in Rs 2-5 range. CTC dust market eased up to Rs 3”, an auctioneer told Business Line.

On the export front, Pakistan bought selectively for Rs 54-69 a kg and the CIS Rs 55-70.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 50-55 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 85-154 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 55-58 for plain dusts and Rs 85-154 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Call to promote ornamental fisheries for biodiversity

Our Bureau

Kochi, March 25:

Ms Leena Nair, Chairman of the Marine Products Export Development Authority, has called for effective promotion of sustainable ornamental fisheries for environmental protection and conservation of biodiversity.

In her inaugural address at the conference on ‘Sustainable Ornamental Fisheries - Way Forward’ organised by the School of Industrial Fisheries here, Ms Nair said efforts to popularise sustainable ornamental fisheries will help in conservation of the environment. Sustainable ornamental fisheries will also strengthen the economy of the country, she said.

Pointing out that ornamental fishery has emerged as a major revenue earning sector across the world, Ms Nair said the country needs to step up its presence in the global market to tap emerging opportunities.

MPEDA has been actively supporting such ventures in the ornamental fisheries sector through initiatives like the green certification or eco-labelling, she added.

The Vice-Chancellor of Cochin University and Science and Technology, Dr Ramachandran Thekkedath, presided over the function.

Mr Svein A. Fossa, President of European Pet Organisation (EPO), delivered the keynote address on the occasion.

Dr A. Ramachandran, Director of School of Industrial Fisheries, said the conference would create awareness among people about the employment opportunities and economic benefits offered by the ornamental fisheries industry.

EGoM meeting tomorrow on allowing more sugar export

PTI



Business Line

New Delhi, March 25:

An Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM), headed by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, will meet tomorrow to decide on allowing an additional export of up to one million tonnes of sugar in the 2011-12 marketing year.

The government has allowed 2 million tonnes of sugar exports in the 2011-12 marketing year in two equal tranches, as the country's sugar output is all set to exceed domestic consumption.

"The EGoM is scheduled for March 26. There are three-four proposals, including sugar exports, for discussion," a source said.

Recently, Food Minister Mr K V Thomas had said that EGoM would soon take a call on permitting additional sugar exports.

Agriculture Minister Mr Sharad Pawar, too, had said there was a scope for additional 1 million tonnes of sugar exports.

Based on the inputs of Cane Commissioners of all sugar producing states, the food ministry recently revised upwards the sugar production estimates to about 25.2 million tonnes from the earlier projection of 24.6 million tonnes for this marketing year.

However, the industry has pegged the sugar output at 26 million tonnes in 2011-12 against 24.3 million tonnes in the previous year.

The annual domestic demand is projected at 22 million tonnes.

India, the world's second-largest producer of sugar and biggest consumer, had exported 2.6 million tonnes of sugar in the previous marketing year.
