THE HINDU

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A new arsenal to fight old enemies

K. A. Martin

The Hindu Kudumbashree members working at their plantain at Kottukal near Thiruvananthapuram. Photo: S. Mahinsha

A farmer in Nilampur puts to good use FM radio broadcasts against wild boar raids on her yam and tapioca farm

What do detergent cakes, abandoned compact discs, sardines, FM radio broadcasts and good old garlic have in common?

They are part of a new arsenal being built by farmers across Kerala to fight old enemies that include wild boars and hares; stem borers and rice sappers.

Farmers have come up with new concoctions and found new applications for things of everyday use such as plastic bags, used rubber tyres and old cotton saris, robustly vouched for by a new compendium of farm knowledge.

Running into more than 30 print pages, it is the fruit of an elaborate exercise by Kudumbashree poverty eradication mission, credited with providing the blueprint for the National Rural

Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and its sub-programme Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP).

Compiling the tome took more than six months and involved 68,000 women farmers in 699 panchayats, who were brought together to share their best practices. With scribes in toe, every word was taken down for posterity.

In its present form, Nattarivu (literally, local knowledge) stands on its own and endorses the need for thinking out of the box and adopting a hands-on approach to common and varied problems.

Stringing up old compact discs using abandoned cloth around a plot can considerably reduce attacks by wild boars, say farmers in Kozhikode. A ‘savoury' mix of cement and fried rice flour is a rat-killer without parallel, say farmers in Wayanad.

They also found that music from mobile phones drives away animals just as cotton balls soaked in jaggery liquid are traps easily taken in by rats.

Yellow boards smeared with castor oil are effective fly traps, say farmers in Thrissur.

Their counterparts in Ernakulam found the slurry from a mixture of sardines and jaggery, seasoned over 45 days, effective against pests in root crops.

Reena Gijo, a farmer in Nilampur puts to good use FM radio broadcasts against wild boar raids on her yam and tapioca farm. She says that the endless chatter on FM radio makes the animals a little cagey. And, the word is spreading.

Published: March 6, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 6, 2012 04:54 IST

Pulses cultivation picks up speed

Special Correspondent

hope abounds:Farmers at a black gram field at Soorakottai village in Thanjavur district on Monday.Photo:B.Velankanni Raj

Pulses cultivation has picked up in Thanjavur district.

Pulses are raised in two phases - ‘thai pattam (Tamil month of thai) raised in December, January and February, and ‘chithirai pattam' (Tamil month of chithirai) cultivated in April, May and June. During ‘thai pattam', black gram has been raised in 23,000 hectares while green gram in 4,600 hectares.

"I have sown ADT5 black gram which will come up for harvest next month. The crop is good," said Thamizharasan of Soorakottai near Thanjavur, while removing weeds from the black gram field. He has raised black gram in nine acres of land and gingeley in seven acres.

"I hope to get a yield of nine quintals of black gram per acre this year. I can sell this at Keelavasal market in Thanjavur," he said.

Pulses have been cultivated at Orathanadu, Thanjavur, and Pattukottai . Agriculture department is expecting pulses cultivation in nearly 10,000 to 15,000 hectares in the district during ‘chithirai pattam'.

The department is promoting pulses cultivation under various schemes such as National Food Security Mission and National Agriculture Development Programme. Seed subsidy and irrigation facilities like pipelines are given to farmers.

"Farmers take an average yield of 300 kg per hectare under rice fallow pulses (pulses raised in the field after harvesting paddy) and one tonne per hectare under irrigated pulses (pure pulses area).

Farmers of the district have raised gingeley so far in 1,250 hectares and groundnut in 5,000 hectares.

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‘Cocoa cultivation as inter crop can enhance income of farmers'

Special Correspondent

Cocoa cultivation as inter crop in grown-up coconut garden can boost the income of farmers of Thanjavur and Tiruvarur district, said P. Kalaiselvan, director of extension education, Tamil Nadu Agriculture University (TNAU), at Nidamagalam recently.

After inaugurating a seminar on cocoa cultivation as inter crop in grown-up coconut garden at KVK at Nidamangalam, Mr. Kalaiselvan said marketing the cocoa beans is not a problem. The Cadbury's India Ltd has signed an MoU with the State government to procure cocoa beans from the farmers at market price. The cocoa can give income up to Rs. 60,000 per acre.

B.Chandrasekaran, professor and head, Soil and Water Management Research Institute, said intercropping in any primary crop would add advantages of effective utilisation of inter space, moisture and nutrients besides getting additional income and soil conservation.

'“Main crop and inter crop will not fight for space, water and nutrients, but give complementary effect to each other thus making the crop profitable.” He suggested that the delta farmers go for cultivation of cocoa as inter crop in grown up coconut garden which has 60 per cent shade as India imports cocoa beans from other countries.

T.Senguttuvan, professor and head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Nidamangalam, said cocoa is said to be the ‘angel of coconut garden'. It is an ideal crop for inter cropping in coconut garden.

N.Sampath Kumar, Deputy Director of Agri Business, C.Srinivasan, Assistant Director of Horticulture, Tiruvarur, and K.Kumanan, Asisstant Director of Horticulture, handled the session on cultivation, post harvest management and marketing.

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Training programme on NM-Rice

Special Correspondent

A training programme on ‘site specific nutrient management' (SSNM) and ‘nutrient manager for rice' (NM-Rice) was conducted by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Sikkal, at Soil and Water Management Research Institute, Kattuthottam, here recently.

P. Kalaiselvan, director of extension education, Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, inaugurated the project, and gave his presidential address.

B.Chandrasekaran, professor and head, SWMRI, shared his experience on SSNM research and extension in the Cauvery delta zone.

R.Rajendran, professor and head, KVK, Sikkal, spoke on the features of NM rice.
T.Senguttuvan, professor and head, KVK, Nidamangalam, spoke.

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Paddy farmers hit by poor storage

K. Raju

Illegal pumping is compounding the problem for farmers

The low storage level in Periyar dam and large scale illegal pumping of water from Periyar river and channels pose grave threat to standing paddy crops in over 14,000 acres in the valley spreading from Goodalur to Veerapandi, six km away from Theni town.

The Public Works engineers have already introduced turn system and are releasing water for irrigation once in three days.

Water level in Periyar dam stands at 111.2 feet and the discharge is 200 cusecs. Farmers need, at least, 200 cusecs of water a day for the next 45 to 60 days to protect the standing crop.

At this juncture the low storage level and indiscriminate illegal pumping of water is causing concern to the farmers.

They allege that water is being diverted from Periyar river and is being sent to irrigate vegetable farms and coconut groves some located even five to six kms away from the river.

It is said that the crops in thousands of acres survive on illegal tapping of water and hundreds of motors have been pumping a large quantum of water throughout the day.

This indiscriminate pumping of water has lead to scarcity of water for paddy growers whose land fall under the authorised ayacut.

Utilisation of water for generating power at the mini hydro power unit too indirectly hits regular supply.

Large quantum of water stored in a check dam constructed across Mullai Periyar at Guruvanuthu village has been used for power generation.

After generating power, the unit discharges the entire storage at one stroke.

This leads to heavy flow in the river for an hour and after some time, there is no flow for several hours.

Seed farm

The worst affected is the government seed farm, which has raised paddy in 42 acres. The seedlings are just two or three weeks and needs water for at least 100 days to save the crop.

With poor flow of water the possibility of protecting the crop in the farm is very remote, opine farmers.

When Public Works Department cannot ensure water for one month, how will they supply water to the government farm for three months, they question.

Farmers have appealed to the government to stop lifting water for power generation during dry season and prevent illegal pumping.

Further slump in storage will only force the Public Works Department to release water strictly for drinking purpose.

However, storage level was 53.22 feet in Vaigai dam and the inflow was 21 cusecs and discharge 1,100 cusecs.

Due to this Vaigai dam ayacut will not face any difficulty or shortage of water this season.

Even as the Public Works Department officials retain 25 ft of water to maintain drinking water supply to Madurai city, they can manage with 27 ft of water to meet the entire irrigation needs of 86,000 acres up to Kallanthiri and 10,000 acres in Thirumangalam.

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Turmeric damaged

Staff Reporter

About four quintals of turmeric kept for drying at Pongalur were damaged as the water overflowed from PAP canal on Sunday.

The water came out into the open owing to blockage in the canal. Standing crops, however, did not suffer any significant damage, sources said.

Arrested

A total of 25 persons were arrested on charges of gambling during raids conducted across the district on Saturday night and Sunday. A sum of Rs. 1 lakh was seized from them. Of the accused, eight people were arrested from Alangiyam and the remaining from various parts of Tirupur city and its suburbs.

Share

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UAS-B to train farmers on value addition of crops

Special Correspondent

Signs memorandum of understanding with IICPT

The University of Agricultural Sciences-Bangalore is gearing up to take the technology of value addition of crops and food processing to rural farmers by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Thanjavur-based Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology (IICPT) here on Monday.

Programme

A capsule programme will be launched for training young entrepreneurs from rural areas, which is stated to be the first of its kind in the country.

UAS-B Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda told presspersons here on Monday that training would be offered to groups of farmers if they were willing to form an association to run food processing units.

A collective effort would be better as the machinery was expensive and would also enable easy handling of the day-to-day affairs of these units. Professionals from the university would assist the farmers. It might take about a year to commence the training course. According to him, value addition and processing is a sector that has the potential to create employment opportunities for a large number of people in villages.

Main aspect

“The main aspect is that this sector can provide employment to rural youth closer to their home and will enhance their income leading to improvement in their living standards,” Mr. Gowda said.

Sharing of knowledge

The MoU also focusses on extensive research as well as teaching students on technical aspects through sharing of the technical know-how, infrastructure and manpower between the university and the IICPT.

Students can update their knowledge through the inputs from IICPT, which is an advanced research institute

IICPT Director K. Alagusundaram, UAS-B Director of Research H. Shivanna and B. Ranganna, were present.

- *Training will be offered to farmers if they are willing to form an association*
- *The MoU focusses on extensive research as well as teaching students on technical aspects*

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Meet on sericulture begins

Staff Reporter

Speakers advocate mechanisation for sustainability

Given the high cost of mulberry cultivation, mechanisation is an important approach to make sericulture sustainable, said Beera Saratchandra, Director, Central Silk Board, Bangalore.

Addressing the national seminar on ‘Recent trends for sustainable sericulture' organised by Sri Padmavati Women's University (SPMVV) Sericulture Department here on Monday, he cited reduction in agriculture land, changing employment options and the artificial silks flooding the market as factors to be considered to change the approach towards sericulture.

“Instead of expanding area under silk cultivation, we have to generate wealth from existing resources that can provide a remunerative occupation,” he said, seeking enhanced focus on crop stability, yarn quality, cost-cutting, enhancement of productivity per unit area and recycling waste.

V. Sivaprasad, Director of National Silkworm Seed Organisation (NSSO) Bangalore, sought greater thrust on ‘Vanya Sericulture' instead of mulberry, as the former could contribute largely to poverty alleviation among Indian tribal settlements. He also spoke on stress-tolerant mulberry varieties, disease-tolerant silkworm hybrids and rearing technology.

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Training for scientists on ‘dryland agriculture' begins

Staff Reporter

The three-day training programme for scientists on ‘dryland agriculture' began at ANGRAU's Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) here on Monday.

Giridhar Krishna, who recently took over as Associate Dean of Research of RARS, lit the traditional lamp to inaugurate the event. In his address, he said that increased importance had to be attached to dryland agriculture in view of the changing climatic conditions and that optimal utilisation of water resources in the hinterland by using modern technology would be a vital intervention.

N. V. Naidu, Associate Dean, S.V. Agricultural College lamented that the depletion of groundwater was converting hitherto water-rich areas into drylands, while records continued to point that only 42 per cent of upland areas in the country were under cultivation.

Course co-ordinator Krishna Reddy, scientists Muneendra Babu, Pratima and Mahesh took part.

COIMBATORE, March 6, 2012

Training in preparing bakery products

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will organise a training in preparing novel bakery products on March 6 and 7 on the university premises.

Varieties

According to a university press release, the training will cover the following aspects: basic bakery formulations, and varieties of breads, cakes, and biscuits.

It is aimed at those seeking avenues for self-employment, the release added.

Fee

Those interested can attend the training by paying a fee of Rs. 1,000.

For details, contact Head, Post-Harvest Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003. For details, contact 0422-6611340 / 6611268.

BANGALORE, March 6, 2012

Growers threaten fast over SAP for sugarcane

Members of the Rajya Kabbu Belegarara Sangha (RKBS) on Monday told the Government to fix statutory advisory price (SAP) for sugarcane. They said that they would launch a fast outside the Vidhana Soudha during the budget session if the Government failed to do so.

Addressing presspersons, president of the sangha Kuruburu Shanthakumar said that a resolution had been passed to launch a fast during the sangha's meeting on Monday.

“Announcement of SAP will facilitate in fixing the statutory minimum price (SMP) for sugarcane,” he said.

More funds sought

Mr. Shanthakumar said that it had been decided to urge the Government to earmark more funds for rural areas and fix minimum support price for produce such as turmeric and ginger, as growers were facing a serious crisis due to fall in prices.

The Government had been urged to direct the Agricultural Produce Market Committees to set up weighing machines near all sugar factories in the State.

GUNTUR, March 6, 2012

Concern over falling prices of cotton

Government's decision to ban exports ill-timed, say traders

Cotton prices slid down further as traders expressed disappointment over the Centre's decision to ban export of Cotton.

The decision is set to have trickling affect on the prices and is set to have a devastating affect on farmers already smarting under low prices. Traders in Guntur felt that the prices might come down further as reports of a steep fall in prices of cotton in Gujarat trickled in. Cotton prices slid by Rs.1,200 per candy in Gujarat.

“The government's decision is ill-timed. First, it allowed registration of 1.20 crore bales for exports and now it has banned export after 85 lakh bales have been exported,'' a trader, Madan Purohit told *The Hindu* on Monday.

Andhra Pradesh is the third largest producer of cotton after Gujarat and Maharashtra. The State produce is 55 lakh bales per year. With China accounting for 70 per cent of exports, traders felt that the decision banning exports would have detrimental effect on spinning and ginning industry.

The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) officials maintained that since 70 per cent of cotton had already been sourced in the market, farmers would not have much impact. The prices of cotton have dipped sharply since 2011 when prices of cotton soared fetching a windfall for traders. On Monday, the prices remained sluggish at Rs.3,400 per quintal. The season started on a sluggish note with prices hovering between Rs.4,500 and Rs.3,500 per quintal.

Trade circles attributed the steep decline in average prices to a range of factors, including the market fluctuations and the sluggish demand for yarn as domestic textile industry has not taken off as per the estimates of trade.

The prices of yarn too showed considerable decline. While the prices hovered at Rs.220-Rs.240 per kg in 2010-2011, this year the price dipped to Rs.150-160 per kg.

The CCI is keeping its cards close to its chest and playing a watching game. With the average prices still hovering above the MSP of Rs. 3,300 per quintal, the CCI feels its entry into the market may not be necessary.

The CCI purchases have been coming down in the last two years.

While the CCI purchased close to 12 lakh bales in 2008-2009, it has limited its purchases to 1.15 lakh bales in 2009-2010 and 1.35 lakh bales in 2010-2011.

hindustantimes

Tue,06 Mar 2012

weather

INDIAN CITIES | INTERNATIONAL CITIES

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Sunny

Tuesday, Mar 6

Max	Min
33.3º	24.5º

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 84%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:35

Sunset: 18:03

Barometer: 1011

Tomorrow's Forecast

Cloudy

Wednesday, Mar 7

Max	Min
31º	20º

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Mar 8	Mar 9	Mar 10	Mar 11	Mar 12
31º | 19º	32º | 19º	33º | 19º	32º | 21º	31º | 22º
Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

UP sugar cos up as SP win looms

Agencies Posted online: Mon Mar 05 2012, 12:10 hrs

Shares in sugar refiners based in India's Uttar Pradesh state Bajaj Hindusthan and Balrampur Chini rose, after voter surveys indicated the Samajwadi Party (SP) is likely to get the largest number of seats in the state elections, two dealers said.

The results of the elections will be known on Tuesday.

We can buy call option of UP sugar stocks (Balrampur Chini & Bajaj Hindustan) as the SP is more favourable to the industry than the rival Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), said Sunil Kumar Arora, country product head of futures and options at Kantilal Chhaganlal Securities.

At 10:20 a.m, shares of Bajaj Hindusthan were up 3.13 percent at 36.25 rupees and Balrampur Chini 1.37 percent at 55.35 rupees.

Coffee exports up 13 pc in Feb

Agencies Posted online: Mon Mar 05 2012, 15:09 hrs

New Delhi : India's coffee exports rose by 13 per cent to 35,555 tonne in February this year on the back of increased shipments of robusta variety, latest data from the Coffee Board said.The country's overseas shipments of coffee stood at 31,567 tonne in the year-ago period. Exports of robusta rose by 33 per cent to 28,002 tonne in February 2012 from 21,091 tonne in the same period of the previous year.Arabica shipments, however, declined 23 per cent to 12,799 tonne in February, from 16,728 tonne in February 2011. Unseasonal rains in end-November and early-December last year, which resulted in the harvest being delayed by 3-4 weeks, resulted in decline in arabica exports, experts said. In the first two months this year, coffee exports rose 10 per cent to 56,524 tonne as against 51,612 tonne in the January-February, last year. Export realisation increased by 16 per cent to Rs 856.26 crore in January-February 2012, from Rs 739.78 crore in the year-ago period.According to experts, export realisation has risen due to weak rupee, though global prices remained almost stable at last year's levels. India exports coffee mainly to Italy, Germany, Russian Federation, Belgium and Spain.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Commodities

Chana seen down on higher suplies; guar up

MUMBAI: Chana futures are expected to open lower on Tuesday on rising supplies from the new season crop in spot markets.

Daily rrivals of chana, or chickpea, in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, the largest grower, have touched 100,000 bags from less than 20,000 bags in the previous week, analysts said.

The April chana contract on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) closed down 1.35 percent at 3,647 rupees per 100 kg in the previous session.

GUAR SEED

Guar futures are likely to extend gains on lower availability amid aggressive buying by exporters to meet their commitments, though analysts expect volatility in the next session as volumes have declined sharply.

The March guar seed contract closed up 3.5 percent after at 21,784 rupees per 100 kg, after hitting a record high and the 4 percent upper circuit at 21,856 rupees per 100 kg.

6 MAR, 2012, 05.02AM IST, NIDHI NATH SRINIVAS & MADHVI SALLY,ET BUREAU

Cotton farmers, traders slam government on export ban

NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD: Government is on a collision course with farmers, traders and state governments after a surprise decision to ban cotton exports despite a bumper harvest and lacklustre demand from local textile mills.

Cotton prices plunged across mandis in six major producing states on Monday as ginners and exporters stayed away because they can no longer ship out cotton even for contracts already registered with the commerce ministry. Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi has written to the Prime minister, demanding revocation of the ban. In an emergency decision, the Cotton Corporation of India arranged Rs 4,000 crore in working capital to immediately procure 20 lakh bales at MSP in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa.

"The ban is a wrong move by the government. It will dent global confidence in India which is the world's second-largest cotton grower and exporter," said Bhadresh Mehta, additional vice president, Cotton Association of India. International cotton prices jumped nearly 5% after India exited the world market. The shipments were mainly headed to China.

Plentiful global supplies have kept prices in India's domestic market hovering around Rs 34,000 per candy, a little over half the record high of Rs 61,700 per candy reached in March 2011. The export ban pushed down the key March contract on the Multi Commodity Exchange by 4%, the maximum permissible limit.

A committee of secretaries from commerce, agriculture and textiles ministries met on Saturday to take stock of the cotton demand and supply and decided a ban was necessary to ensure adequate supply for local mills. More than 9.5 million bales has been exported which was higher than the earlier estimate of 8.4 million made by the government in January this year.

However, agriculture minister Sharad Pawar said he was unaware of the development. "It's news to me. I was not consulted for it. I will make a detailed enquiry before commenting anything further," he said on the sidelines of the national conference on agriculture for kharif 2012. Last year, Pawar had opposed an export ban, arguing that it deflates returns to farmers. According to a commerce ministry statement, the ban was also necessary because exporters were sending shipments on consignment basis to their sister outfits overseas.

But traders say this is a specious argument. "There are adequate checks in place under the transfer pricing rules to ensure that all contracts are signed at market prices even between sister companies," said the managing director of a multinational company. Farmers are the worst hit as they are still holding almost 40% of the harvest, roughly 12.5 million bales, and were depending on exports to keep prices buoyant.

Angry farmers reportedly turned violent in Jalgaon in Maharashtra, Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh, and one mandi in Gujarat where trucks were burnt, traders said. The export ban move comes at a time when cotton sowing begins across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana.

Maharashtra's Swabhimani Shetkari Sangathana, a farmers body, which has been demanding an increase in cotton procurement prices, intends to stage protest marches. "There is a lot of distress selling. In such a scenario, if export is banned, what will farmers do?" said Swabhimani Shethkari Sanghtana president and Member of Parliament Raju Shetti.

"There was no trading in the Rajkot mandi on Monday," said Bharat Vala, president, Saurashtra Ginners Association.

Exporters are staring at a loss of at least Rs 120 crore as they will be forced to sell 4 lakh bales lying at port in the local market. Dhiren N Sheth, president of theCotton Association of India, which groups exporters and traders, said he had appealed to the government to review the ban immediately.

Local textile mills have drastically reduced procurement due to rampant sickness and lackluster demand for yarn. "If on an average they were consuming 2.5 million bales a month, it has now come to 1.9 million bales," said a leading exporter from Mumbai.

The Confederation of Indian Textile Industry last week even wrote to the ministry of textiles, requesting no market intervention. "There is neither a shortage nor any increase in prices of cotton and cotton yarn. While there have been some increases in exports and registration of export contracts for cotton, prices both in the domestic and global markets are well within affordable levels," said SV Arumugam, chairman, CITI.

The garments industry has welcomed the ban. "We expect cotton pries to remain stable in the coming days. By selling one kg of cotton an exporter will get Rs 50. However, if we sell one kg of garment we get Rs 400 apart from providing employment and local taxes to the state government," said Tirupur Exporters Associationpresident A Sakthivel.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Mar 06, 2012

Surplus burden to hit sugar

Kunal Bose / March 06, 2012, 0:50 IST

The symbiotic relationship between crude oil and sugar prices should still be at work. In fact, any rally in oil will prove to be an incentive for Brazil where cars are designed to use up to 100 per cent ethanol to commit a much larger portion of cane crop for production of the fuel during the new season to start next month (for India and most other cane-based sugar producers, the season starts in October.)

Such a possibility is leading many to believe that in the medium term, ICE raw sugar futures will rise to 27 cents a pound from the present low of around 25 cents a pound. Brazil apart, some other cane producers, though not India, the second-largest harvester, could also put their bet on ethanol production. For the time being, New Delhi has restricted ethanol blending in oil to five per cent.

An analyst with F O Licht says high oil prices could lift sugar in the near term. But, any rise in sugar prices from the current level will not be sustainable as the world will have surplus of the commodity this season and also in the next year. While commodity research house Licht is not ruling out raws caving below 20 cents a pound by year-end under the weight of global surplus, HSBC Holdings says in a recent report that the soft commodity will move in a range of 25 to 20 cents a pound. The last time sugar traded at less than 20 cents a pound was in September 2010.

To further add to the discomfort of sugar exporting countries – New Delhi, so far, has given sanctions for export of two million tonnes (mt) as the country is heading for a bumper production of 26 mt – Federal Reserve Board chairman Ben Bernanke hinting that the Fed was no closer to the third round of quantitative easing (QE3) led many investors to take money out of soft commodities, including sugar.

That the world will be awash with surpluses in two consecutive seasons was foreseen by the trade quite early prompting liquidation of forward positions. In the process, ICE futures lost 27 per cent in 2011. This proved to be the biggest sugar futures fall for a year in a decade. Earlier, three annual shortages in a row sent sugar futures to a 30-year high of 36.08 cents a pound on February 2, 2011. Much light was thrown as to where sugar is heading at two conferences last month – first by Kingsman in Dubai and then by Licht in Bangkok.

While there is a consensus about surplus, quite expectedly research agencies are posting surplus figures different from one another. Surpluses bring happy tidings for bulk users like Coca-Cola. A company official says as sugar surplus is to overwhelm demand, price falls are inevitable and any rally will be short lived.

Let's see how different surplus estimates stack up. The International Sugar Organisation (ISO) has raised global surplus estimate for the current season from the earlier 4.5 mt to 5.2 mt based on likely record production of 173 mt and consumption of 167.83 mt, a rise of 2.32 per cent, against 0.34 per cent in 2010-11 when sugar prices ruled high.

Interestingly, much of the production rise is on account of beet sugar. Output of the sweetener derived from cane is to have a modest increase of 1.9 mt despite the setback in Brazilian crop. The Brazilian loss and therefore, of exports are more than compensated by gains in Thailand, India, Australia and Pakistan.

At the same time, world exports will rise by 2.28 mt to 53.28 mt. As China is to miss sugar production target of 12 mt by up to 700,000 tonnes, it is likely to end up importing 3.5 mt. In a season marked by high production and low prices, countries, including China and bulk users like Coca-Cola and Pepsi will go for inventory building. ISO has pegged 2011-12 stocks to use ratio at close to 37 per cent.

Stocks of such order should have a bearish effecton sugar prices. The median conclusion of traders and analysts that Bloomberg spoke to on the sidelines of Dubai conference is raws could be down to 19.75 cents.

Kingsman thinks global sugar surplus will be down to 5.5 mt in 2012-13 from 9.7 mt. Market intelligence agency Olam International is seeing this season's surplus at nine mt and as for the next season supply will be ahead of demand by anything between six and eight mt. Licht is still not ready with its surplus estimate for 2012-13. Which, however, is likely to be smaller than available this season.The size of the Brazilian crop and how much of that will be used for making ethanol will be the major determinants of global surplus for the next sugar year.In the meantime, price falls will hit the Indian industry badly which must export at least three mt to mitigate burden of mounting stocks. Lower realisations from exports will compromise the capacity of factories here to clear cane bills.

Nothing could be more disturbing for the sugar economy than mills not able to settle dues on cane account in time.

Coffee exports may fall 15% in FY12

Less carryover stock, low output and declining prices in international markets to hamper exports

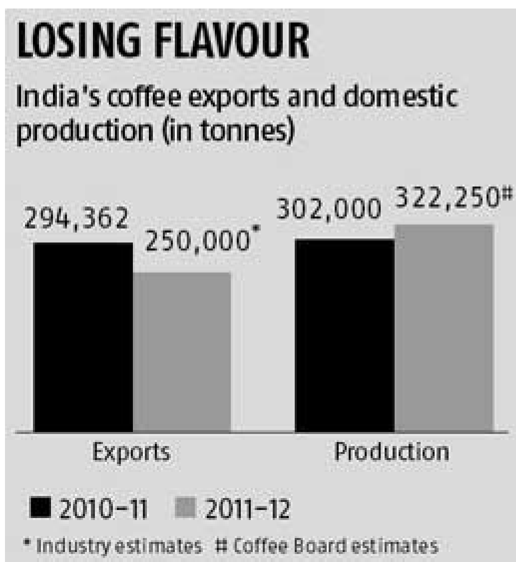
Mahesh Kulkarni / Bangalore March 6, 2012, 0:44 IST

Due to less carryover stock and low domestic robusta output, India’s coffee exports are likely to decline by 15 per cent to 250,000 tonnes for the financial year ending March 2012. During FY11, India had exported 294,000 tonnes. The fall in coffee prices in the international market is also seen as a reason for the decrease in exports.

“Coffee exports will be less this year, mainly because we had lower carryover stocks. Carryover stocks declined from about 40,000 tonnes to about 20,000 tonnes. Also, we expect the robusta crop to be lower by 15 per cent at about 190,000 tonnes,” said Ramesh Raja, president, Coffee Exporters’ Association.

Prices of coffee in the international market declined 20 per cent in the past two months from $2.30 per lb to $2 per lb.

India mostly exports coffee to Italy, Germany, Russia, Belgium and Spain. The robusta variety of is mainly used in preparation of instant drinks and espressos worldwide.



“Lack of uniform blossom showers last season and shortage of power and water resources during March last year were seen as the main reasons for a smaller robusta crop this year,” said Sahadev Balakrishna, partner, Netraconda Estates.

The arabica harvest is almost over in major growing regions, while the robusta harvest may stretch till mid-April.

The bad news for the sector is likely to continue during the next financial year as well, as exporters do not see any recovery soon. Exports of coffee are further expected to fall by 8-10 per cent during FY13 to 225,000-230,000 tonnes. Again, the main reason for poor performance is attributed to low carryover stock and lower robusta crop.

The farm gate prices of arabica are down 20 per cent to Rs 175 a kg and that is seen as one reason for farmers holding on to stocks. During January and February, export of arabica fell 21.4 per cent to 13,386 tonnes, as compared to 17,035 tonnes in the same period last year.

Farm gate prices of robusta are flat at about Rs 100 a kg, the same as last year. As a result, shipments of this variety have grown 38 per cent in the first two months of 2012 at 30,305 tonnes, as against 21,951 tonnes in the corresponding period last year. “However, we do not see the trend to continue in the next financial year as far as exports of robusta are concerned, due to lower domestic crop this year,” Raja said.

Export between January 1 and March 2 rose 13.5 per cent to 60,294 tonnes, as compared to 53,090 tonnes in the same period last year.

Pressure on cotton prices to stay despite India curbs

Reuters / Canberra March 6, 2012, 8:22 IST

Global cotton prices are likely to remain under pressure even after India banned exports, a senior Australian farm official said on Tuesday, as more production comes on stream from other producing countries.

Benchmark cotton futures rallied more than 4% to close limit up on Monday, spurred by India's surprise ban on exports of its cotton.

"There is quite strong production coming from many countries. I think there will still be downward pressure on prices despite India not being around," said Paul Morris, executive director of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics.

India stopped cotton exports with immediate effect on Monday to ensure supplies for domestic mills, boosting global prices some 4.5% as the absence of shipments from the world's second-largest producer might tighten a market facing weak demand.

Australia, typically the world's No. 4 cotton supplier, should be well positioned to take advantage of India's exit from the market.

The country's cotton exports are expected to soar 89% in 2011-12 to a record 955,000 tonnes, rising to 1.1 million tonnes in 2012-13, ABARES said.

India has already exported 9.4 million bales, the government said on Monday, higher than the projected export surplus quota of 8.4 million bales New Delhi had set in January, due to strong demand from China. Each bale is 170 kg.

This excess led India's Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) to ban shipments, to ensure steady supplies for the local textile industry, the country's largest employer after agriculture and which accounts for some 4% of GDP.

Benchmark US May cotton futures hit their highest level since February 29 after the announcement on Monday, erasing a fall of 2.13% last week which was driven by a stronger dollar and ample global supplies.

Prices in China, India's top customer and the world's largest user of the fibre, gained more than 1%.

Centre bans cotton export on fears of price rise

Sharp criticism from industry, farmers Cotton Corporation of India promises intervention if prices slump

Sanjay Jog / Mumbai March 6, 2012, 0:02 IST

The central government on Monday banned cotton export, amid fear its prices would shoot up on account of declining production in the current season.

Looking to the damage caused to the standing crop due to high temperature, moisture stress and absence of winter rain/dew, the Cotton Advisory Board (CAB) had recently revised the cotton crop estimate to 34.5 million bales (a bale is 170 kg) against the earlier figure of 35.6 million for cotton season 2011-12.

"Export of cotton has been prohibited till further orders," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification. It said export against registration certificates already issued would not be allowed either.

Soon after the decision was made public, cotton prices started falling. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, it closed four per cent lower, at Rs 16,470 per bale. US cotton futures for delivery in May also soared by a little over four per cent, to a high of 92.23 US cents a pound, while Shanghai futures rose a little above one per cent on the news. China, the world’s biggest user of cotton, is India’s largest export market.

The government's decision was sharply criticised by the industry and cotton growers. They termed it "unwarranted and most regrettable" and “anti-farmer”. The notification comes after nearly 9.4 million bales have been exported against an estimated surplus of 8.4 million bales, say industry sources. Besides, exporters had already registered another 2.6 million bales for exports as per data from the textile ministry.

The ministry explained the rationale behind the ban in a note issued today. It said higher-than-anticipated exports in cotton season 2010-11 reduced the expected carryover of stock for the season 2011-12 from 4.83 million (mn) bales estimated by the CAB to 3.3 mn bales. Availability declined to less than the 2009-10 production levels, reducing the carry forward figure to below the advisable inventory level.

Dhiren Sheth, president, Cotton Association of India, told Business Standard: "Today's decision will damage India's reputation as a reliable supplier in the global market. Farmers will bear the brunt . The price will achieve the minimum support price (MSP) level soon, beginning Andhra Pradesh. Decision is a dampener for farmers who won’t grow cotton next year."

Sheth appealed to the government to reconsider. The government had increased the MSP of medium staple cotton to Rs 2,800 a quintal and for long staple to Rs 3,300 last year.

A Cotton Corporation of India official said, "We will intervene if the cotton prices reach the MSP level to support the farmers." However, he declined to comment on the impact on the sector due to the ban.

Sheth's views were shared by Jaggubhai Shah, chairman and managing director of Gill & Co, an exporter. "Immediately after the government's decision, New York futures rose by 400 points. Today's decision will benefit Africa and America in a big way, while India's image will take a serious beating. Buyers in the international market will lose faith in India as a honourable country which fulfills its commitment."

According to Shah, the decision comes at a time when most mills, especially in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, have been either closed or are running below capacity due to severe power shortage and financial constraints.

Cotton growers marketing federations said the decision was pro-mill and would seriously affect farmers. N Hirani, chairman of the Maharashtra Cotton Growers Marketing Federation,said, "The government must come to the rescue of farmers,as done by China. The government must start direct procurement through Cotton Corporation of India, Nafed and federations like ours, by paying Rs 4,000 per quintal to farmers."

THE HINDU Business Line

Oil prices up on Iran risks

PTI

Singapore, March 6:

Oil prices edged higher in Asian trade today as geopolitical tensions over crude oil producer Iran’s nuclear programme outweighed weak economic data from Europe and China, analysts said.

New York’s main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in April, gained 18 cents to $106.90 and Brent North Sea crude for April was up 21 cents to $124.01 in morning trade.

“Oil prices edged up... in tug-of-war trading as supply risks and tensions over Iran’s nuclear programme provided support, but concerns about global economic growth limited gains,” said Mr Phillip Futures in a market commentary.

Prime Minister Mr Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday told US President Mr Barack Obama that Israel must remain the "master of its fate" in a firm defence of his right to mount a unilateral strike on Iran.

Israeli leaders are worried that despite their potency, increasingly tough US and European sanctions on Iran and its central bank and vital petroleum industry will not convince Tehran to renounce a nuclear arsenal.

Israel is eager to move quickly and decisively using a military strike before Tehran reaches a point when it could quickly produce weapons-grade uranium.

Iran has so far insisted that its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful civilian purposes.

Meanwhile, traders are also keeping a close watch on economic data indicating weakening growth in Europe and China, analysts said.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said yesterday that the country was targeting growth of 7.5 per cent in 2012, a third straight reduction as the world's number two economy is buffeted by ongoing troubles in the West and high oil prices.

Turmeric drops below Rs 4,000/quintal

ERODE, MARCH 5:

Turmeric prices decreased by Rs 300 a quintal on Monday, with rates falling to below Rs 4,000 a quintal.

" Arrivals are higher than demand; so prices are decreasing at all the four turmeric markets in Erode. However, arrivals were up at the Nizamabad and Sangli markets. Further, demand from

North India has decreased sharply, resulting in traders quoting lower rates, " said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.Quality turmeric, however, fetched a maximum of Rs 4,200 a quintal. The Hybrid Salem crop ruled lower by Rs 390 a quintal at Rs 4,639 a quintal. The unpolished new finger variety turmeric was sold at Rs 3,200 a quintal, while the root variety was at Rs 2,850.On Monday, 15,000-odd bags arrived for sale, of which only 50 per cent were sold. "We are expecting arrivals to touch 20,000 bags within the next two to three days; prices may then fall further".At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety fetched Rs 2,534-3,891 a quintal, the root variety Rs 2,419-3,689.

Salem Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 3,511-4,639, the root variety Rs 3,490-3,889. Ouf the 3,609 bags that arrived, 1,402 were sold.At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,619-4,049 and the root variety at Rs 3,569-4,007. 1184 bags were sold of 1335 that arrived..At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,219-4,170 and the root variety at Rs 3,190-4,009 . All the 408 bags of turmeric that arrived were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,200-4,200 and the root variety Rs 2,711-4,011. Some 883 bags of turmeric were sold as against arrivals of 973.

Pepper hits historic high of Rs 395/kg

Kochi, March 5:

Pepper market on Monday shot up with both futures and spot prices scaling new heights on good demand amid limited supply. As a result, spot prices hit the highest-ever price in its history of Rs 395 a kg for garbled and Rs 380 a kg for ungarbled.

The bull operators were in the driving seat and they, citing no selling pressure, on the one hand, and large open buying interest on the other, pushed the market up significantly. “Fundamentally, the supply is tight but the way and the level at which the market is being pushed up is not good for the market,” market sources told *Business Line*. “The market now appears to be in the firm grip of big and powerful operators and not in the hands of exporters, traders and farmers as it was in the past, and that is not a good sign for the commodities trade,” they alleged.

They said the pipeline in the upcountry markets are empty and the slowdown in demand in recent days was because of some supplies from the exchange, Karnataka and pushing in of some Vietnam stuff imported for value addition and re-export as Karnataka pepper, they alleged.March contract on the NCDEX shot up by Rs 1,550 a quintal to close at Rs 40,200, while April and May increased by Rs 1,565 and Rs 1,565, respectively, to close at Rs 40,645 and Rs 40,645 a quintal.Total turnover dropped by 4,515 tonnes to close at 1,097 tonnes indicating limited activities. Total open interest increased by 97 tonnes to close at 10,570 tonnes.March open interest dropped by 27 tonnes to close at 4,180 tonnes, while that of April and May went up by 88 tonnes and 36 tonnes, respectively, to close at 4,787 tonnes and 1,245 tonnes.Spot prices shot up by Rs 1,200 to close at Rs 38,000 (ungarbled) and Rs 39,500 (Garbled) a quintal.Indian parity in the international market shot up to $8,400 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and $8,700 a tonne (c&f) for the US and remained out priced.

Other origins, following closely the Indian futures market trend, are also said to be firmer but are much below the Indian parity, they said.

Edible oils unchanged by low buying

Mumbai, March 5:

Barring rapeseed oil which rose by Rs 10 for 10 kg, edible oils ruled unchanged on Monday despite need-based local demand.

Volume was thin. Malaysian crude palm oil futures closed slightly lower due to profit-taking.

Sources said local spot demand was less than expected, keeping volume thin. Resellers traded about 200-250 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 568-570. Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 580-582. Ruchi offered soya refined oil at Rs 680 and sunflower seed refined oil at Rs 692. Allana quoted palmolein at Rs 580.In Saurashtra and Rajkot, groundnut oil was firm at Rs 1,750 (Rs 1,735) for a *telia* tin and at Rs 1,145 (Rs 1,135) for loose (10 kg).

Malaysian crude palm oil's March contract settled at 3,220 ringgit (3,235 ringgit), April at 3,240 ringgit (3,250 ringgit) and May at 3,246 ringgit (3,259 ringgit) a tonne. On the National Board of Trade in Indore, soya refined oil's March contract closed at Rs 710 (Rs 711.40) and April at Rs 715.70 (Rs 716.70).

Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 1,110 (1,110), soya refined oil 680 (680), sunflower seed exp. ref. 630 (630), sunflower seed ref. 695 (695), rapeseed ref. oil 785 (775), rapeseed expeller ref. 755 (745), cottonseed ref. oil 635 (635) and palmolein 572 (572).

Sugar drops despite Pawar's comments

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, March 5:

Heavy sales in the resale market pulled down sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale spot market by Rs 10 a quintal on Monday. *Naka* rates improved by Rs 10 as the period for lifting sugar from mills came to an end on Monday. Mill tender rates ruled unchanged. Volume was routine.

Market sources said the Union Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar's statement may improve sentiment at the producing centres but in the physical market, demand remains need-based.

Retail demand is tepid despite the month having just begun, when usually it is high. Stockists are reluctant to increase inventories. Transport charges have increased by Rs 4-5 a bag. Producers, too, are not keen to sell at lower prices due to higher cost of production.

In absence of demand from neighbouring States, local mills in Maharashtra have been forced to depend on local markets. Demand may go up with the onset of summer. Bulk demand from soft-drink sector is expected to rise, too. The Union Government declared lower non-levy free sale quota of 13.5 lakh tonnes for March (14 lakh tonnes for February).

Arrivals in Vashi were about 54-55 truckloads and despatches about 51-52 truckloads. On Saturday, 10-12 mills offered tenders and sold 35,000-40,000 bags at Rs 2,770-2,840 (Rs 2,770-2,850) for S-grade and Rs 2,870-2,940 (Rs 2,880-2,950) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 2,900-2,955 (Rs 2,900-2,966) and M-grade Rs 2,982-3,061 (Rs 2,991- 3,061).

***Naka* delivery rates:** S-grade Rs 2,850-2,900 (Rs 2,840-2,880) and M-grade Rs 2,950-3,000 (Rs 2,940-3,000).

Cardamom up on supply woes, demand

G. K. Nair

Kochi, March 5:

Cardamom prices continued to head north last week at the auctions on good buying support and declining arrivals. Harvesting for the current season crop is nearing its end.

The prevailing dry spell accompanied by high temperature in the growing areas without any signs of summer showers is adversely affecting the crop. In some of the areas plants are withering and if the weather continues plants in estates without irrigation facilities will slowly dry up, some of the growers said.

Wherever irrigation is possible, water sources have started drying up fast, they said.

Given the current unfavourable weather, the crop next season may be poor, Mr P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *Business Line*. “Arrival of the next crop will be some time in July, five months from now with only one or two showers in the meantime,” he said.

The consistent upward trend appears to have slowed export buying, which is estimated at around 60 tonnes last week against about 120-150 tonnes in recent weeks, they said.

The arrivals also continued to show a downward trend. It dropped last week to around 430 tonnes from around 600 tonnes over a month ago. Arrivals on Sunday at the KCPMC auction stood at 80 tonnes and almost the entire quantity was sold out. The maximum price was at Rs 1,125 a kg and the minimum was Rs 512 a kg. The auction average stood at Rs 770.52 a kg up from Rs 728.41 a kg on the previous Sunday. At two auctions last week, the average price crossed Rs 800 a kg levels on Tuesday and Friday.

Upcountry dealers were also buying but not aggressively, trade sources in Bodi said. Arrival of 8-mm bold capsule was negligible and the shortage raised rates to Rs 1,000-1,100 a kg. Good bulk was fetching over Rs 750 a kg, trade sources in Bodinayakannur, a cardamom trading hub, said.

Total arrivals during the current season from August 2011 up to March 4, 2012, was at 13,814 tonnes and the sales at 13,437 tonnes against 7,495 tonnes of arrivals and 7,311 tonnes sales in the same period last year.

Weighted average price as on March 4, 2012, was at around Rs 576 a kg against around Rs 1,111.02 a kg on the same date last year, according to official sources.

Prices of graded varieties were up on demand. Rates in Rs a kg were: AGEB 990-1,000; AGB 800-810; AGS 790-800 and AGS 1: 760-770.

Open market prices of graded varieties in Bodinayakannur in Rs/kg were: AGEB 975; AGB Rs 790; AGS Rs 775 and AGS 1, 745.

Radiation technique helps improve 39 crop varieties

Our Bureau
Hubli, March 5:

Radiation and chemical-induced mutation and subsequent use in recombination breeding at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has resulted in the release of 39 improved crop varieties in oilseeds and pulses in India, said Dr Ratan Kumar Sinha, Director, BARC, Mumbai.

Delivering the 25th Annual Convocation address of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, Karnataka, Dr Sinha said nuclear techniques in agriculture is particularly helpful in creating new genetic variability in crop plants, to improve one or two traits in well-adapted variety, to improve vegetatively propagated crops.

“I am happy to learn that our collaborative largeseed groundnut variety TDG 39 (TGLPS 3, Trombay Groundnut Large Pod Selection 3) has entered the seed chain due to large-scale breeder seed production by UAS, Dharwad,” he added.

“This groundnut variety can be of immense benefit to the farming community. I must compliment UAS Dharwad for large scale multiplication of our mutant varieties in order to reach farmers with quality seeds,” he further added.

Pulses are the major source of dietary proteins in India. This year (2011-12) pulse production is at 18 million tonnes (mt), a significant improvement from previous year's 15 mt. Dr Sinha said, “BARC's major contributions have been in blackgram, greengram and pigeonpea. Several of our pulse varieties have early maturity, resistance to diseases and suitability for residual moisture situations in rice fallows.”

“These varieties are very popular in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. Majority of the mutant varieties have not only benefited the Indian farming community, but also are being used as genetic resource material in national/State breeding programmes,” he added.

While enhancing our agricultural production system itself is a challenge, it is further made tough by post-harvest losses due to microbial spoilage, insect infestation and so on, which add up to 10-30 per cent, depending on the commodity.

“As a nation, we not only need to increase our agricultural productivity, but also focus our attention on post-harvest management of our agricultural produce. Post-harvest technology, for conservation and value addition, is going to play an increasingly important role in the new world order. Radiation processing is one of the upcoming methods to achieve this,” he explained.

Radiation processing

Radiation processing of various foods and food-products involves controlled application of the energy of radiation such as gamma rays, X-rays and accelerated electrons. Dr Sinha said, “This ensures killing of pathogens and storage pests. Radiation processing is used for sprout inhibition in bulbs and tubers, delayed ripening of fruits, shelf-life extension of sea-foods, meat and meat products, hygienisation of spices and for quarantine purpose”.

“Radiation processing can also be used for non-food products such as cut flowers, health foods, herbal and ayurvedic preparations, cattle feed, pet foods and packaging material. It is an eco-friendly alternative to fumigants, which are being banned and phased out due to their deleterious effects on human health and environment,” he added.

The wholesomeness, nutritional adequacy and safety of radiation-processed foods were endorsed by world bodies such as WHO, FAO, IAEA and Codex Alimenatrius Commission.

Kerala cuts new path in agro-ecological planning

Vinson Kurian

Business Line Green initiatives: The Minister for Planning, Mr K.C. Joseph, handing over a copy of ‘Agro Ecology of Kerala’ to the Additional Chief Secretary, Mr K. Jayakumar, IAS, at a workshop on ‘Agro-ecological planning for agriculture development in Kerala’, in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday. — Photo: S. Gopakumar

Weather portal for forecast launched at the workshop

Thiruvananthapuram, March 5:

The Kerala State Planning Board is cutting a new path in farm development through a pioneering initiative in agro-ecological planning.

The approach paper to the 12th Plan endorsed by the State Government has accepted the agro-ecological methodology to the development of agriculture.

An agro-ecological unit is characterised by distinct responses to the macro-elements as reflected in the vegetation, soils and use of land for agriculture.

AGRO-ECOLOGY ANALYSED

The analysis of the State's agro-ecology based primarily on climate, geomorphology, land use and soil variability has resulted in the delineation of five agro-ecological zones and 23 agro-ecological units.

In this connection, the Planning Board released a series of reports at the one-day workshop on ‘Agro-ecological planning for agriculture development in Kerala' organised here on Monday.

These reports pertained to agro-ecology of Kerala; agro-ecology of 14 districts in the State; agro-ecological atlas and reports (24 numbers); background report for agro-ecological zone-based planning in four districts; and nutrient management plan for Elanthur Block.

This apart, the workshop also witnessed the launch of *Kalavastha* (weather) portal for forecast for each agro-ecological unit.

DIFFERENT AGENCIES

The Bangalore-based National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning had been entrusted for the delineation of agro-ecological zones for framing regionally differentiated strategies.

The analysis of cropping and farming systems was entrusted to Kerala Agricultural University; study of animal husbandry systems to Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University; analysis of water resources to CWRDM (Centre for Water Resources Development and

Management), Kozhikode; weather modelling to C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing), Pune; and soil resources to 14 institutions and 27 laboratories.

Agricultural productivity and agro-biodiversity of an area are largely governed by the overhead climate and qualities of land and soil, a Planning Board official said.

In the tropics and sub-tropics where sunlight and temperature are in sufficient supply, it is often the precipitation and the capacity of the land and soil to retain water that control biological productivity.

Malnutrition in Assam tea estate confirmed

Press Trust of India
Karimganj, March 5:

A team of doctors on Monday confirmed that most workers of a tea estate, where death due to malnutrition have been alleged by a rights body, were suffering from it.

The team, consisting of doctors from Civil Hospital, Cachar Cancer Hospital and Kalyani Hospital, examined about 500 patients of Bhuvan Valley tea garden and a cluster of villages in the vicinity at a medical-cum-awareness camp organised by a local NGO, Arunodaya Sangha.

Investigation carried out by the Barak Human Rights Protection Committee on the death of 12 workers of the garden after its closure since the last Durga Puja came out with the findings that the human tragedy was due to malnutrition among other reasons.

The doctors admitted after examining the patients that 75 per cent of them suffered from malnutrition.

The team said the people there required food and nutrition, rather than medicines, as those examined showed loss of weight and were suffering from anaemia.

Dr Pallavi Mukherjee said most women patients were addicted to tobacco products and were cautioned if they did not discard the habit, the chances of cancer could hardly be ruled out.

The Assam Excise and Sports Minister, Mr Ajit Singh, and the Additional Chief Secretary, Mr P.K Choudhury, visited the garden last week and are scheduled to submit a report to the Chief Minister soon.

Pawar bats for more exports of sugar, rice, wheat

New Delhi, March 5:

The Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, feels that additional exports of sugar, rice and wheat could be allowed as the country has sufficient stocks.

“There's enough stock to allow export of at least one more million tonne of sugar, rice and wheat (each),” Mr Pawar said on Monday. He was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Kharif 2012 strategy conference.

The Government has, so far, allowed 2 million tonnes of sugar exports in the current crop year, while it has lifted ban on the non-basmati rice and wheat exports since September 2011.

So far, sugar exports in 2011-12 have already crossed 1 million tonnes, while they stood at 2.6 million tonnes in the previous year. The country is expected to produce 26 million tonnes of sugar, up from 24.2 mt in the previous year, while the domestic consumption is pegged at 22 million tonnes.

SLOW WHEAT EXPORTS

Similarly, the non-basmati rice exports have picked up in the past six months and are estimated to have crossed 3 million tonnes. However, the wheat exports are a bit sluggish and were estimated at 5.5 lakh tonnes. “The wheat exports have been slow, while rice exports have been good,” Mr Pawar said stating that an additional export of one million tonnes of each could be allowed.

For 2011-12, wheat production is expected to be at a record high of 88.3 million tonnes, while the rice output is projected at 102.75 million tonnes.

CHALLENGES

Despite consecutive bumper harvests, Mr Pawar said that Indian agriculture faces huge challenges on rising food grain demand amidst dwindling land holdings, changing climate and increasing pressure on water resources. Stating that emphasis during 12th Plan will be on farm mechanisation, Mr Pawar asked the States to formulate State-specific agriculture infrastructure development plan and work on reforms.

Further, Mr Pawar said the issue of cancellation of licences to about 70 district central co-operative (DCC) banks would be taken up with the Finance Minister soon. These banks are unable to recover loans and are facing financial crunch. The RBI has issued notices to 70 DCC banks stating that their licences would be cancelled if they don't complete recoveries by March 30, 2012, Mr Pawar said. Such licence cancellation will hurt disbursal of agriculture credit.

Pact with Malaysian body to develop fresh water fish

Our Bureau
Kochi, March 5:

The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) has entered into an agreement with the Malaysia-based international body INFOFISH for the development and marketing of freshwater fish in India. Post-harvest technology and value addition have not yet received much attention in the domestic freshwater aquaculture sector.

The effort to transfer technology in the culture in fresh water fishes, processing and marketing for production and export of value-added products is the first of its kind in India, a press release from MPEDA said.

The three-year project has four main components: market/product studies, technology transfer, investment promotion and capacity building and dissemination.

The agreement was signed between Mr B. Sreekumar, Secretary, MPEDA, and Dr Mohammed Ayub, Director, INFOFISH, at a separate function on the sidelines of the just-concluded India International Seafood Show 2012 at Chennai. Speaking on the occasion, Ms Leena Nair, Chairperson, MPEDA, described the agreement as a path breaking project which would enable India to increase its freshwater fish export potential.

While Indian fisheries sector has made rapid strides in domestic and export markets, its aquaculture is mostly centred around saline water species, especially shrimps and cephalopods. India is the second largest aquaculture producer in the world.

Fresh water aquaculture production in India has registered remarkable growth in recent decades although production consists mainly of Indian major carps, which accounts for 70 per cent of the total production.

Production of value added products in freshwater fishes for export market is one of the potential avenue to expand our exports, MPEDA said.

It was envisaged that the new project would give a specific and focused attention to the development of value added products from freshwater fishes and enable marketing to various destinations.

About 21% tea unsold at Coonoor

P. S. Sundar

Coonoor, March 5:

Nearly 21 per cent of the four-week low offer of 10.70 lakh kg remained unsold at Sale No: 9 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions for want of adequate demand despite shedding prices up to Rs 3 a kg.

Homedale Tea Factory created a new record. “Our Pekoe Dust and our Red Dust, auctioned Global Tea Brokers, topped CTC market when Paras Tea Co bought them for Rs 169 and Rs 165 a kg respectively. These created record as they were the highest prices ever fetched by our factory since its inception 61 years ago,” its Homedale Managing Partner, Mr Prashant Menon, told *Business Line*.

Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 149, Darmona Estate and Hittakkal Estate Rs 143 each, Blue Mont Speciality Rs 142, Shanthi Supreme and Kannavarai Estate Rs 140 each. In all, 98 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Curzon got Rs 226, Chamraj got Rs 200, Havukal Rs 179, Kodanad Rs 171, Kairbetta and Highfield Estate Rs 165 each. In all, 38 marks got Rs 100 and more.

“Market was down Rs 5-10 a kg for whole leaf orthodox and irregular for other orthodox grades. High-priced CTC leaf grades eased Rs 2-5 and others, Rs 2-3. Primary orthodox dusts gained Rs 2-5. CTC dust market was irregular with prices oscillating up and down Rs 2-4,” an auctioneer said.

On the export front, Pakistan bought selectively for Rs 54-63 a kg and the CIS Rs 58-67.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 50-55 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 85-145 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 55-58 for plain dusts and Rs 85-143 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Narendra Modi protests ban on cotton exports

Gandhinagar, March 5:

Protesting against the Centre's “sudden” move to ban cotton exports, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi on Monday demanded a “permanent freedom” for exporting hybrid varieties of cotton.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, he said the cotton farmers of Gujarat had suffered a loss of Rs 14,000 crore last year due to a similar ban on exports. Later, when the ban was lifted in the wake of fall in prices, the farmers suffered again.

Alleging a nexus between the Union Government, textile mills and cotton yarn manufacturers, Mr Modi said these mills and manufacturers have kept an inventory of only 27 lakh bales, instead of 52 lakh bales. An artificial scarcity has thus been created and the farmers have been paid a price less than even the minimum support price (MSP), at a time when international price of hybrid varieties of Gujarat has been higher.

The Chief Minister pointed out that India has produced 365 lakh bales of cotton this year. Gujarat is also expected to increase its production from 98 lakh bales last year to 116 lakh bales this year.

Ample stocks keep rice market on leash

Karnal, March 5:

Aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties remained in demand on Monday.

Domestic demand is good but ample stocks are not allowing prices to move up, said Mr Amit Chandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company. An Indian delegation will visit Iran during March 10-14 to discuss on exports.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121(steam) quoted at Rs 3,900-4,000 a quintal while Pusa-1121(sela) sold at Rs 3,400-3,500.

Pure basmati (raw) sold at Rs 4,450-4,500 a quintal, while pure basmati (sela) was at Rs 3,950-4,000. Duplicate basmati sold at Rs 3,200-3,250.

Among the brokens of Pusa-1121, Tibar sold at Rs 2,900-3100, Dubar was at Rs 2,450-2,600 while Mongra was trading at Rs 1,900 a quintal.

Permal (sela) sold at Rs 1,900-2,000 a quintal, Permal (Raw) quoted at Rs 1,800-2,000 a quintal, PR-11 (sela) was trading at Rs 2,100-2,250 a quintal while PR-11 (Raw) went for Rs 2,000-2,200 a quintal.

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