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Unusual rise in night temperature brings down 'imampasanth' yield

M. Balaganessin



File Photo GREEN RELIEF: Imampasanth at the Thathachariar Gardens in Srirangam.

The yield in the popular 'imampasanth' this season at the Thathachariar Gardens in Srirangam has been far less, particularly due to hot weather condition in the night in December last year. The gardens is noted for highly delicious and mouth watering variety of 'imampasanth', in the wake of the special cultivation techniques adopted in the fields.

It has been attracting a large number of customers because of specific organic manure in the form of cow dung, the soil condition, and the environmental condition favouring the growth of the fruit.

"Mango yield follows a specific pattern. Every bumper harvest season is followed by a low yield or vice versa; last season, the yield was good, making fall inevitable this year. But the extent of fall is quite unusual," says S. Rangarajan, who has analysed various factors for the current phenomenon in the yield at the gardens this season.

Mr. Rangarajan says the weather condition during the night especially during the flowering season was not quite favourable for the mango this season, especially during late December and all through January when flowering is visible to naked eye. "A night temperature of less than 20 degree centigrade favours the flowering; but this season, it ranged quite above this mercury mark and even touched 24 or 25 degree," he says, explaining one of the major changes witnessed this season.

The rise in night temperature has, in turn, resulted in the abundant growth of male flowers – an unfavourable indication for the crop. Mango registers better yield in the presence of larger female flowers; but, it was quite the other way last December. Male flowers outnumbered female ones, due to the rise in night temperature.

Against the normal yield of 300 'imampasanth' fruits a tree, the yield is not that good this season. "There has been a growing demand for the fruits among customers and we have been adopting a fair proportion formula to satisfy all of them," he says.

Cultivation technique is the characteristic feature at this gardens, ensuring a balanced supply of nutrients.

"For every tree, we apply 100 kg of cow dung, four kg of superphosphate, and two kg each of potash and urea. The combination along with the soil and environment add to the delicious nature of the fruits," Mr. Rangarajan says.

It is round-the-year cultivation practice which keeps the 'imampasanth' from the gardens dear to customers from several parts for decades together. Shortly after the harvest comes to an end, emphasis is on pruning of trees.

The tree is exposed to sunlight and the spacing between two trees is ensured through pruning for preserving the quality of fruits for the successive season.

Mr. Rangarajan says that apart from 'imampasanth', a few other mango varieties has registered less yield. The 'banganapalli' variety at the gardens was also below normal. Against per tree yield of 800 fruits, the yield is far less.

Tough times for Punjab

Bharat Dogra



The Hindu Problems: The agrarian decline has led to frustration among the youth. Photo: Akhilesh Kumar

Decaying land fertility, lack of proper education and a stagnant employment scenario is driving more and more Punjab youth towards drug abuse

There is a general impression about Punjab that it is the land of high productivity agriculture and well-built healthy people. However, a silent health and environmental crisis sweeping across the State, known for its hardy farmers, sturdy soldiers and valiant freedom fighters, is draining it of its vitality.

Perhaps the biggest problem which has shattered the physical and mental health of Punjab's youth is the alarming rise in drug addiction. It is now officially admitted that about 70 per cent of the State's youth have been affected by some form of drug abuse. Alcoholism was a problem even earlier, but in recent years it is drug addiction which has emerged as the biggest killer of youth.

Manmohan Sharma, executive director of Punjab branch of Voluntary Health Association of India, says, "Land holdings kept getting smaller with every generation. The kind of education imparted to youth alienated them from agriculture, but at the same time did not qualify them to

the extent that the jobs coveted by them could be accessible to them. In a situation of stagnating local employment, youth tended to become more outward looking given the background of remittances from abroad in Punjab. But of course only a small percentage could actually get proper jobs abroad. This led to a situation of aimlessness and drifting around.”

Compared to some other States, more cash was available with several families thanks to the early Green Revolution gains and the remittances from abroad. There was rampant smuggling of drugs from across the border as well as more organised efforts to spread the drug habit among youth. The volatile situation of Afghanistan and the flourishing opium smuggling there also had its impact in Punjab due to its relative proximity.

Moreover, drug addiction and other serious health problems are also related to increasing agrarian issues. As Prof. Jagmohan Singh, a nephew of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh and secretary of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Research Committee, says, “The Green Revolution of Punjab turned after some years into a bleeding red revolution as the farmland got addicted to high doses of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The high cost of inputs pushed farmers into indebtedness and a crisis situation. Now the so-called second green revolution being pushed around in the form of genetically modified (GM) crops is likely to prove even more harmful for farmers”.

“At the same time”, Prof. Singh continues, chemical fertilisers, pesticides and weedicides also took an increasing toll on the health of people. As soil health was destroyed and various nutrient deficiencies, particularly deficiency of micro-nutrients, appeared, this also adversely affected the nutrition of food crops. There is evidence that staple foods deprived of some key micro-nutrients can make people more vulnerable to come under the influence of intoxicants.

Prof. Singh, who retired recently from the Punjab Agriculture University, says that health threats emerging from food and agriculture are likely to accentuate as GM crops are being pushed despite their well established health hazards. Another disturbing trend is that education in government schools is suffering from neglect, while privatisation of education is being promoted in various ways. Thus the possibility of rural youths getting a proper education is further reduced, adding to frustration and aimlessness which provide fertile ground for problems like drug abuse.

Clearly problems like drug addiction cannot be seen in isolation, but are linked to the overall development paradigm which promotes inequalities and alienation. The authorities ignore the

more basic and deeply rooted problems while at best providing short-term, populist solutions to the problem faced by people. The result is that in the 'land of five rivers' today water-table is receding alarmingly and in the famous bread-basket of India soil-fertility is getting depleted badly. These basic issues have to be put on top of the development agenda in future.

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All is not well at Central Vegetable Market

S. Sundar

Many retail shops are closed due to encroachments by outsiders, and failure of officials to take remedial steps



RAISING A STINK:Public utility space at the integrated vegetable market in Mattuthavani being encroached upon by vendors.— Photos: G. Moorthy

When the Central Vegetable Market was shifted from near the Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple to Mattuthavani, the Corporation officials claimed that this would help provide a hygienic atmosphere with lot of facilities.

After a prolonged protest, the traders finally came to Mattuthavani in September 2010. No doubt, there were better roads, lighting and clean environment. But, the past 21 months have been a harrowing experience for the retail vegetable traders.

For a little over 500 shops, both authorised and unauthorised ones, that were functioning at the Old market, the Corporation officials, due to pressure from the politicians, constructed 524 permanent shops and a whopping 1,090 floor shops on the lines of Uzhavar Sandhai for retail traders at the new market.

“The influential people have taken shops in the front rows (prime spots) not only for themselves but also for their friends and relatives. The real traders were allotted shops way behind. Over

and above, the outsiders who have taken permanent shops have deliberately allowed encroachment on the pathway, roads and platforms where retail sale of vegetables take place denying us business opportunity,” complains M. Thavamani, president of retail traders' association.

“We had only 220 (retail) shops at the old market. But with 1,070 shops at the new market, outsiders have started ruling the business,” he adds.

They had been crying foul over the allocation of shops to politicians, councillors and even to benamis of the Corporation officials.

True to their claim, for the past 21 months, most of the retail shops are seen deserted for want of traders. “Our members, who have paid a deposit of Rs. 50,000, and after paying a monthly rent of Rs. 700, have taken on rent shops from the politicians. But, still we are unable to make both ends meet. Many have left the trade. One of the traders, Thanni Raja committed suicide unable to meet the family expenses,” says the association secretary, P. Pandiarajan.

The wholesale shops are supposed to function between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. From then onwards, the retail business begins and goes up to evening. “But, here the wholesale shops, are rented out to traders without license. After the wholesale business ends, four to five persons are allowed to put up their shops outside the wholesale shops. They encroach upon the roads, pathways and platforms, deny access to customers to enter our area and eat into our business,” he complains. The shops owners take Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 a day from each of the (outsider) trader.

After making many representations in vain to the Corporation officials, the licensed traders sought legal help from the High Court that directed the district Collector and the Corporation Commissioner to remove the encroachment. “Even that is not heeded to by the Corporation officials,” Mr. Thavamani complains.

On Friday morning, the Corporation Commissioner (in-charge), N. Arumuga Nainar, along with the Deputy Commissioner (in-charge) A. Devadoss, raided the market and removed the encroachments. But, within a few minutes after they left, the squatters were back, says Mr. Thavamani. “One of the employees in a shop challenged us claiming that no one can stop them ,” Mr. Pandiarajan said.

The traders say that it was the primary duty of the Corporation is to protect the interests of the licensed traders who were paying rent to the civic body.

They also want the officials to restrict entry of two-wheelers through the Melur Road. Mr. Arumuga Nainar said that surprise checks at the market should be conducted and also proposed to post at least 10 security guards to ensure that no one encroached upon the roads and platforms.

The availability of limited number of pay-and-use toilets (six for men and four for women) at the market where at least 5,000 people come every day was also causing untold suffering to the traders. "We have to wait in queue for at least 30 minutes to attend nature's call. Why do not the Corporation construct more toilets," he asks. Besides, the Corporation officials were not regular in filling up the tanks meant for supplying drinking water.

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Farmers oppose laying of gas pipeline through agricultural fields

Staff Reporter

Farmers of 60 hamlets in the 10 revenue villages in Tiruchengode taluk through which the Cochin to Bangalore gas pipeline is being laid have opposed the works. A 'Vivasayegal Valvathara Pathugapu Kuzhu' (Farmer's Livelihood Protection Committee) to protect the interest of farmers who will be affected by the project, was also formed.

Its president S. Rajavel said that the pipeline runs through fields in Kokarayanpettai, Thokavadi, Karumakavundampalayam, T.Kavundampalayam, Varagooraanpatti, Paapampalayam, Thevankurichi, Yemapalli, Karuveppampatti and O. Rajapalayam revenue villages and affect more than 300 farmers and about 800 acres of cultivation.

S. Thangamuthu, a tapioca and groundnut farmer of Karuveppampatti and leading member of the Committee, said that the pipeline runs across – corner to corner – in his four acres of land and hinders irrigation. "Officials of the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) have not told us the dos and don'ts in the fields," he said and added that this has pushed farmers into a confused state. He recalled that revenue officials gave them a notice dated January 18, 2011 stating that gas pipelines will be laid through their fields. "They also asked farmers who owned the fields through which it is to be laid to raise their issues of concern to the officials concerned (in Salem) in 21 days from the issuance of the notice," he said and added that many farmers opposed the project. "So far, we have not got any reply from them and a couple of days ago workers of the

project dug pits to place the pipes, but we stopped them,” Mr. Thangamuthu said. Members of the committee said that they would be petitioning the Collector on Monday on the issue.

Farmers claimed that media reports had mentioned that stringent action would be taken against farmers who own the fields as they will be held responsible if anything went wrong in the pipeline in their field. “We cannot monitor it all the time,” they said and added that the government could instead lay the pipeline alongside the national highways.

They suggested laying it alongside the highways that runs from Coimbatore to Bangalore. They said that it would also be impossible for fire tenders and other disaster control teams to reach the pipeline in the fields, especially during rainy season. Committee members said that they will join hands with affected farmers in other districts and fight against the project till GAIL comes out with a solution that will not affect farmers.

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Officials asked to look into complaints of onion farmers

Staff Reporter

Collector M. Mathivanan has directed the Agriculture department officials to constitute a committee to look into the widespread complaints of onion farmers in the district that yield were low this season owing to distribution of poor quality seeds. “The committee constituted should have officials from the department and have experts in seed certification techniques as well as a scientist from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University,” he said during the special farmers' grievances redressal meeting organised by district administration here on Friday.

The onion farmers from Pongalur, Kundadam and Udumalpet, among few other areas, had been raising the issue for the past one month and were seeking action against the private firm from which the seeds are obtained.

Mr. Mathivanan, who himself is an agricultural graduate, instructed the officials to test the germination and physical purity parameters of the particular brand of seeds in an independent manner and then compare with the percentage displayed on the cover in which the product was sold. Another issue that came up for discussion was the absence of veterinarians at the veterinary hospitals functioning at Udumalpet and nearby areas. The cattle farmers raised the concern that foot-and-mouth disease had been spreading in Udumalpet area.

The Collector immediately asked the Animal Husbandry department to conduct special medical camps.

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Assurance to seafood exporters

General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ), People's Republic of China, has brought in a notification during May, 2011 that Inspection and Quarantine Certification must accompany all the seafood exports to that country.

It is widely rumoured that China may ban Indian seafood exports from June 1, 2012, the proposed date of implementation of the certification requirement.

According to a statement, the Marine Export Development Authority of India (MPEDA) and the Export Inspection Council of India (EIC) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry approached the Chinese authorities through the Embassy of India in Beijing on this issue.

The Export Inspection Council of India would be issuing the required certificates for seafood exports to China to proceed with the exercise without any hindrance.

Hence, MPEDA has reassured the seafood exporters that any issue regarding export would be solved in the exporters' favour.

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A variety of seeds on display

Special Correspondent



main attraction:Visitors at the exhibition organised as part of the two-day convention of the Karnataka State Seed Conservators in Bangalore on Sunday.— Photo: K. Murali Kumar

Display of a variety of seeds from the State is the main attraction at the two-day convention of the Karnataka State Seed Conservators which began at NGO Hall here on Sunday.

Seeds of almost all crops, including cereals, millets, pulses, oil seeds, vegetables, fibre crops and fodders crops, are on display.

“This is a small effort to display our diversity in seeds,” said K.P. Suresh of Southern Action on Genetic Engineering (SAGE), the organisers.

The focus of the exhibition is on seed diversity of a particular region (State), ecosystem, and seeds available with the community, rather than individual collection of seeds of different varieties of crop.

“Conservation of seeds is a dynamic process and we don't want to reduce that to the level of stamp or jewellery collection,” he said.

The exhibition aims to emphasise the need to protect biodiversity and farmers' rights. Likening their movement to protect the seed diversity to the Salt Satyagraha, the organisers have put up placards with slogans such as ‘Andu uppu, indu beeja’, cautioning MNCs against ‘bio-attack’ against native agricultural practices.

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Fish farming project

Minister for Excise and Fisheries K. Babu said that a scheme aimed at enhancing fish wealth in the State by expanding fish farming to 12,000 hectares with the support of panchayats will be launched on June 10.

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy will inaugurate the project.

Mr. Babu was talking after inaugurating the distribution of subsidies for joint schemes of Kudumbasree and district panchayat here. The project aims at producing an additional 2.25 lakh tonnes of fish wealth.

The government's intention is to encourage fish farming wherever water is available. Mr. Babu said that two committees had been appointed to study the possibility of undertaking fish farming in pokkali-kole fields.

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Focus sought on empowering small farmers

Kerala can overcome stagnation in the agriculture sector only by empowering small, marginal, and sub-marginal farmers with knowledge-intensive farming, according to V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Executive Vice-President, Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE).

Delivering the third Visakham Tirunal endowment lecture organised by the Indian Society for Root Crops (ISRC) and the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) here on Friday, Prof. Pillai said obsolete farming practices and lack of scientific interventions and modern marketing strategies were the major impediments to agricultural development in Kerala.

“Though there are research institutions and extension systems here, agriculture sector is stagnating in Kerala. Farmers are leaving agriculture and the younger generation is not interested in the sector.

This is largely due to the declining profitability of agriculture, especially major crops such as rice and coconut,” he noted.

“Despite all the research findings and the wide array of technologies, farming practices remain unchanged. Only rubber has received some systematic attention and resultant positive changes. Traditional crops remain neglected. Although there is a lot of focus on crop productivity, farming in its totality remains neglected.”

Advocating science and technology interventions at the grassroots level, Prof. Pillai called for better linkage between technology development and its implementation.

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Rain causes extensive crop loss

Untimely rain accompanied by strong gales lashed several mandals in the district, causing havoc and huge loss of property on Saturday midnight.

Sources said that K. Ramdasu, 60, an agriculture labourer, was killed when a shed collapsed on him under the impact of powerful winds that accompanied heavy downpour at Anantasagar in

Chintakani mandal. Another person was injured in a wall collapse incident at Narasimhapuram village in the same mandal.

Several villages in Chintakani mandal plunged into darkness following heavy rain. Electricity poles were uprooted at many places in the mandal due to the winds. Mango growers once again suffered extensive crop losses in Khammam rural, Sattupalli, Aswaraopeta and other mandals in the latest spell of unseasonal showers, sources added.

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Press Trust Of India

Mumbai, May 20, 2012

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India's foodgrain production to grow by 0.6% in 2012-13 : CMIE



India's foodgrain production is projected to grow by 0.6 % to 247.6 million tonnes (mt) in 2012-13 as against 246.2 mt in 2011-12.

A modest growth in output of rice and wheat alongwith a recovery in production of coarse grains and pulses will be responsible for the overall growth, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) said in its monthly report in Mumbai.

The rice production is projected to exceed 100 mt in 2012-13, while wheat production is pegged at 87.3 mt. The production of coarse grains is projected to rise by 0.7% to 42.3 mt in 2012-13.

However, a fall in acreage of pulses had taken a toll on production in 2011-12. Pulses production is estimated to have decreased by 3.7 % to 17.5 mt, mainly due to fall in acreage of gram and other pulses, CMIE said.

As the meteorological department has predicted a normal monsoon in 2012, the overall agriculture sector is expected to do well, but the major crop production is projected to decline by 0.6 % in 2012-13 due to lower output of cotton and sugarcane production.

"We expect acreage of non-food crops to decrease and limit production to levels lower than last year," CMIE said.

Production of non-food crops is projected to fall by 1.6% in 2012-13. This decline will largely be driven by lower output of cotton and sugarcane.

Cultivation of cotton and sugarcane had noted a steep increase in 2011-12. Acreage of cotton scaled up by over 9 % to touch a record 120.6 lakh hectares in the 2011 kharif season. Cotton production is estimated to have grown by nearly 6% to 35 million bales, in line with the Ministry of Agriculture's third advance estimate.

However, excess cotton production and weak demand had led to volatile prices during the 2011-12 marketing season. As a result, several farmers incurred a loss.

"We expect this to deter farmers from cotton cultivation and pull down production in 2012-13. Cotton production is projected to dip by 7.8% to 32.2 million bales in 2012-13," the CMIE report said.

The think-tank also expects the cultivated area of sugarcane to shrink in 2012-13, due to substantial cane arrears in the preceding year. The sugarcane production is projected to fall by 0.9% to 342.5 mt in 2012-13.

Sugarcane cultivation has been initiated in many parts of the country for the 2012 kharif season. Sowings were undertaken on 46.4 lakh hectares by April 27, 2012, higher year-on-year by over 5%. "However, we expect cultivation to slow down in the subsequent period," it said.

Major oilseeds production is expected to grow by three % in 2012-13. Higher production of groundnuts, safflower and sunflower seeds is expected to drive the growth.

In 2011-12, groundnut cultivators turned to alternative crops in anticipation of higher returns. Production of groundnuts is estimated to have declined by over 17% to 6.9 mt.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/858590.aspx>

weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, May 21

Max Min
40.7° | 28.9°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 53%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:35

Sunset: 18:03

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, May 22

Max Min
37° | 29°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday May 23	Thursday May 24	Friday May 25	Saturday May 26	Sunday May 27
38° 29°	38° 29°	38° 28°	36° 26°	40° 29°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy

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Business Standard

Monday, May 21, 2012

Groundnut oil prices rise again in Guj

BS Reporter / Mumbai/ Rajkot May 21, 2012, 0:29 IST

Having witnessed a fall for a week, groundnut oil prices have started soaring up yet again. The groundnut oil prices increased by Rs 30 per 15 kg tin on Friday due to higher demand of groundnut from peanuts exporters. Trader sources maintained that demand for groundnut oil has reduced to nil due to rise in prices in short term.

Groundnut oil traded in the range of Rs 2,075-2,080 per 15 kg tin, showing a sharp gain of Rs 30 per tin against previous rate of Rs 2,045-2,050 per tin at Rajkot market. Loose groundnut oil has moved up by Rs 40 to Rs 1,240 per 10 kg. Groundnut oil had declined by Rs 45 per tin over the past two days. About 150 tonnes of groundnut oil has been traded from Saurashtra regions. "Supply of groundnut is very poor and summer crop is likely to come after a week. We are expecting summer crop of groundnut to be available for crushing. But the way export demand has come up, it will be difficult to get it for crushing," said Suresh Kaneriya of Kaneriya Oil Mills.

THE HINDU Business Line

Pepper bullish on supply squeeze

G. K. Nair

Kochi, May 20:

Pepper market remained bullish with prices of all the active contracts rising on limited availability last week .

Ever since, there were reports of timely south-west monsoon this year, masala manufacturers were active. Kerala started receiving pre-monsoon showers for the past few days. The wet conditions seem to have compelled them to cover even MG 1 which they were buying from

outside the exchange platform. Low bulk density pepper allegedly with comparatively high moisture content, is being sold at Rs 370 a kg delivered anywhere in India. Each of these centres used to keep minimum of 1,000 tonnes of stock normally, trade sources told *Business Line*.

Overall, supply scenario sends out the feeling that not much pepper is held by the growers.

At the same time, domestic demand existed. For those who have been nourishing the idea of importing cheap Vietnam material for catering to the domestic consumer, the sharp all time fall in the value of rupee against the dollar has become a stumbling block.

At the same time, the prices in other origins continued to remain steady to firm giving the impression that the growers there were not keen to sell at lower levels or there existed some demand supply problem.

Bearish reports put Vietnam output at around 1.4 lakh tonnes. Sri Lanka, where from the Indian extraction units import pepper, reported to have a good crop this year of an estimated 12,000 tonnes. The industry imports an estimated 6,000 – 7,000 tonnes because of high oil content as claimed by the industry.

Indonesian actual crop position is not known yet. Conflicting projections were emanating. Actual situation would be known only by July/August. Brazilian crop will follow the Indonesian.

However, the actual demand supply position continues to remain uncertain and on mere “guesstimates”.

Last week all the active contracts on the exchange shot up on bullish sentiments. June, July and August contracts increased by Rs 2,145, Rs 2,300 and Rs 2,035 a quintal respectively to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 39,760, Rs 40,550 and Rs 40,900.

Total turn over dropped by 2,961 tonnes to 17,097 tonnes. Total open interest decreased by 540 tonnes to 4,902 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend and limited supply increased by Rs 1,400 a quintal during the week to close at Rs 37,600 (ungarbled) and Rs 39,100 a quintal on Saturday last.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$7,600 a tonne (c&f) and remained totally out priced.

Organic trade body wants Rlys to run dedicated vegetable wagons

Priyanka Pani

Mumbai, May 20:

The Indian Railways should allow a dedicated 'vegetable wagon' to be attached to each passenger train so that vegetables can be transported from one part of the country to another, according to the Organic Trade Association (OTA).

This move will help soften prices by 10-15 per cent for organic produce and 30 per cent for conventionally produced vegetables.

This proposal comes when retail inflation shot up to 10.32 per cent in April on substantial rise in prices of vegetables, edible oils and milk.

OTA, a Jaipur-based trade body of organic food producers, farmers, retailers and suppliers, plans to take up the 'vegetable wagon' proposal with the Railway Ministry.

"Everyone has the right to have good food. However, organic food is considered the food of the rich as it is expensive.

"We want to break this notion. Hence, we need the Government's support," said Mr Mukesh Gupta, OTA President and Executive Director of the Morarka Foundation, a non-profit organisation that promotes organic agriculture and product development.

Mr Gupta said that 'vegetable wagons' will bridge the gap in demand and supply of vegetables. Trains would be able to carry about 300 tonnes of vegetables a day with wastage being reduced to 2 per cent compared with the estimated wastage of 60 per cent in the current scenario.

At present, logistics and cold storage are major concerns for the food industry. Mr Gupta pointed out that transporting vegetables from Jaipur to Mumbai by truck costs around Rs 20 a kg, which by train will be less than Rs 5.

Foodgrain production to grow by 0.6% in '12-13: CMIE

Mumbai, May 20:

The country's foodgrain production is projected to grow by 0.6 percent to 247.6 million tonnes in 2012-13 as against 246.2 million tonnes in 2011-12.

A modest growth in output of rice and wheat, along with a recovery in production of coarse grains and pulses will be responsible for the overall growth, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) said in its monthly report here.

The rice production is projected to exceed 100 million tonnes in 2012-13, while wheat production is pegged at 87.3 million tonnes. The production of coarse grains is projected to rise by 0.7 per cent to 42.3 million tonnes in 2012-13.

However, a fall in acreage of pulses had taken a toll on production in 2011-12. Pulses production is estimated to have decreased by 3.7 per cent to 17.5 million tonnes, mainly due to fall in acreage of gram and other pulses, CMIE said.

As the meteorological department has predicted a normal monsoon in 2012, the overall agriculture sector is expected to do well, but the major crop production is projected to decline by 0.6 percent in 2012-13 due to lower output of cotton and sugarcane production.

“We expect acreage of non-food crops to decrease and limit production to levels lower than last year,” CMIE said.

Production of non-food crops is projected to fall by 1.6 per cent in 2012-13. This decline will largely be driven by lower output of cotton and sugarcane.

Cultivation of cotton and sugarcane had noted a steep increase in 2011-12. Acreage of cotton scaled up by over nine percent to touch a record 120.6 lakh hectares in the 2011 kharif season. Cotton production is estimated to have grown by nearly six percent to 35 million bales, in line with the Ministry of Agriculture’s third advance estimate.

However, excess cotton production and weak demand had led to volatile prices during the 2011-12 marketing season. As a result, several farmers incurred a loss.

“We expect this to deter farmers from cotton cultivation and pull down production in 2012-13. Cotton production is projected to dip by 7.8 percent to 32.2 million bales in 2012-13,” CMIE report said.

The think-tank also expects the cultivated area of sugarcane to shrink in 2012-13, due to substantial cane arrears in the preceding year. Sugarcane production is projected to fall by 0.9 percent to 342.5 million tonnes in 2012-13.

Sugarcane cultivation has been initiated in many parts of the country for the 2012 kharif season. Sowings were undertaken on 46.4 lakh hectares by April 27, 2012, higher year-on-year by over five percent. "However, we expect cultivation to slow down in the subsequent period," it said.

Major oilseeds production is expected to grow by three percent in 2012-13, after being hit in the preceding year. Higher production of groundnuts, safflower and sunflower seeds is expected to drive the growth.

In 2011-12, groundnut cultivators turned to alternative crops in anticipation of higher returns. Production of groundnuts is estimated to have declined by over 17 percent to 6.9 million tonnes.