

TN to press for immediate water release



Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Jayalalithaa and Jagadish Shettar, will meet in Bangalore on Thursday to discuss sharing the available waters in the reservoirs across the Cauvery in the backdrop of a suggestion by the Supreme Court.

Sources close to Mr. Shettar told *The Hindu* that Karnataka would approach the issue with a “positive mind to evolve at least a short-term solution that will last the current water year.

Farmers in both States are in distress due to the failure of the southwest monsoon, and the talks between the two Chief Ministers to be held in a cordial atmosphere will yield results and a better understanding between the people of the two States”.

Sources in the Tamil Nadu government say that even as the State will continue to reiterate its position that Karnataka make good the shortfall of about 53 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft),

it will highlight the need for releasing a substantial amount of water immediately to save the standing long-term 'Samba' crop.

The net storage in the four Cauvery basin reservoirs of Karnataka is around 40 tmcft, while it is hardly six tmc ft in the Mettur dam for irrigation.

Ms. Jayalalithaa will reach Bangalore by a special flight. She will drive to the meeting venue at a private hotel for the 3.00 p.m. talks.

The Tamil Nadu team will include Public Works Minister K.V. Ramalingam, Chief Secretary Debendranath Sarangi, Public Works Secretary M. Saikumar and Cauvery Technical Cell Chairman R. Subramanian, while the Karnataka government will be represented by Water Resources Minister Basavaraj Bommai, Chief Secretary S.V.Ranganath and Principal Secretary (Irrigation) D.Sathyamurthy.

Farmers pin hopes on CMs' meet in Bangalore

Desperate farmers of Cauvery Delta districts are pinning hopes on a meeting between Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka on the Cauvery issue, to be held in Bangalore on Thursday.

"Something tangible should emerge at the meeting lest we will lose the samba crop also this year," a cross-section of farmers said, hoping that Karnataka would relent from its rigid stand. With the release of water from Mettur Dam being reduced to less than 1,000 cusecs on Wednesday evening, farmers are facing a crisis in the delta.

S. Ranganathan, secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, said Karnataka should take this opportunity and make a goodwill gesture by releasing water. "I think the people, government and political leaders in Karnataka will have understood the precarious situation in Tamil Nadu. While we need 60 tmc ft of water to save the entire samba, Karnataka should release at least 20 tmc to save the standing samba crop," Mr. Ranganathan said.

V. Jeevakumar, a farmer from Budalur was not optimistic about the outcome of the meeting. "We held talks several times but nothing tangible had come out. As talks failed, we went to Supreme Court. Again the issue is back to square one. Respecting Supreme Court's order, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa is going for talks. But Karnataka has never respected the apex court.

In such a situation we can't expect miracles to happen but if something good comes out we will welcome it. The Supreme Court or the Centre should come out with a mechanism to release water from Karnataka when the State disobeys their orders," Mr. Jeevakumar said.

Sundara Vimalanathan, secretary of Thanjavur District Cauvery Protection Association, felt that the meeting of Chief Ministers was crucial as it was taking place at a time when samba crop was in peril. "Karnataka should take a decision on humanitarian grounds and to maintain good neighbourly relationship."

Samba crop has so far been raised on 82,000 hectares in Thanjavur district and nearly 1.20 lakh hectares in Tiruvarur district. Tiruvarur district has direct sown crop with about 70,000 hectares, while transplanted area is more in Thanjavur at around 72,000 hectares. In Thanjavur district, the samba target is 1, 20,000 hectares. But the target may not be achieved in view of acute water shortage. Farmers of the delta districts are keen to save samba as they had lost kuruvai in canal-irrigated areas. Against 45,000 hectares of normal kuruvai area in Thanjavur district, only 20,000 was covered under kuruvai in pumpset-irrigated areas.

Maize farmers trapped in a maze



Brandishing evidence: Farmers displaying maize crop damaged by water scarcity in Perambalur district. PHOTO: M.SRINATH

: Maize, one of the major crops of the district, which has more than 90 per cent of the population dependent on it, is moribund.

Maize is normally raised in about 40,000 hectares in the district, one of the highest in the State. Last year, the coverage of this four-month rain-fed crop rose to 43,423 hectares and this year, up to October, it touched 45,613 hectares.

If the crop were to fail as farmers apprehend, due to inadequate rainfall, this district, one of the most backward in the State, is in for trouble. More than 80,000 farmers here are said to be dependent on maize.

However, official sources expressed confidence that if it were to rain in the next couple of weeks, most of the crops would survive.

The normal rainfall of the district up to November is 791 mm but till date it has received only 634 mm. "As the normal annual rainfall is 861 mm we hope that northeast monsoon might still help the district. We are confident that the district, which did not get even a single shower due to cyclone Nilam, will get some rains during December."

"Our problem does not stop with rain alone. The fundamental issue is that maize has no minimum support price (MSP)," laments Rajachidambaram, general secretary, Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham.

When several agricultural produce including paddy, wheat, sugarcane and cotton have been prescribed MSP, maize gets no such attention which has led to it facing the slings and arrows of market dynamics. "We are at the mercy of merchants or the poultry industry of Namakkal, our major consumer," he adds.

P.Manickam, district president of the Sangham, says the cost of cultivation per acre is Rs.15,000 and the average production is 15 quintals to 25 quintals. "Even if we get Rs.10 per kg, we will get per acre Rs.10,000. Now it fetches only around Rs.6 a kg which has resulted in serious loss."

R. Sundarajan, who has 10 acres of maize, says "if the government were to announce Rs.10 per kg as MSP, we should be able to get at least Rs.15 from merchants. Unless we are able to get at least Rs.20 per kg, it won't be remunerative," he asserts.

N.Ramiah, who contends that the cost of cultivation has touched Rs.20,000 per acre due to spiralling labour cost, laments “our production itself is going to be less than 10 quintals this year because of poor rains.” Hence, he seeks compensation from the government. Besides, he wants the entire crop loan to be written off.

Farmers are incapable of storing it for months together and would like to dispose it at the earliest. They demand a direct procurement centre for maize in every village of the district so that extra loading and transport expenditure could be avoided. They also demand insurance.

Official sources point out that maize never had an MSP. “It is a policy decision to be taken by the Union Agriculture Ministry.”

When contacted, Darez Ahmed, Collector, said the regulated market here could be utilised by farmers to store their produce for some time and sell at rates remunerative to them. Besides, the district has initiated several steps to boost maize marketing under the Food Processing Mission. Already eight projects are ready for making corn flake and corn syrup.

Water level

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Wednesday stood at 71.40 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 517.71 cusecs and 604.75 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 64.14 feet (118 feet) with an inflow of 75 cusecs and 35 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam.

Sugarcane growers urge government to revise SAP



Highlighting demand: State general secretary of Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Farmers' Association D. Ravindran speaking at a cane growers conference held in Erode on Wednesday. —PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

Sugarcane growers in the State have urged the government to revise the State Advised Price (SAP) upward to Rs. 3,500 a tonne as the current price is non-remunerative.

The growers, while participating in a State-level conference organised by the Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Farmers' Association here on Wednesday, charged that the government had fixed the SAP without consulting the farming community.

Factors such as spiralling cost of cultivation and shortage of labour were not taken into account, the growers claimed.

Growers said the State government had made a false claim that it had fixed the SAP for sugarcane at Rs. 2,350 a tonne, giving an increase of Rs. 250 a tonne. But the government had actually passed the increase given by the Centre. It did not raise the sugarcane price.

Speaking on the occasion, Tamil Nadu Farmers' Association president K. Balakrishnan said the farmers in the State cultivated sugarcane in more than six lakh acres. If the government did not ensure remunerative price, a large number of farmers would be forced to quit sugarcane cultivation.

The farmers' associations in the State would stage a massive demonstration in Chennai in December urging the government to fix Rs. 3,500 per tonne as the SAP for sugarcane.

Mr. Balakrishnan also urged the State government not to implement the recommendations made by the Dr. C. Rangarajan committee. If implemented, it would cause huge damage to the sugarcane cultivation in the country.

Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Farmers' Association State general secretary D. Ravindran and leaders of various farmers' associations spoke in the conference.

Water released from Vaigai dam to be stopped

The Public Works Department (PWD) will stop releasing water from the Vaigai dam for irrigating 1.5 lakh acres of land in Dindigul, Madurai and Sivaganga districts on Thursday morning.

With only 20 days of irrigation possible since November 9, this irrigation season is the shortest ever duration of water released for paddy irrigation in the recent years. PWD officials had already cautioned the farmers that irrigation would not last beyond November 28, if it did not rain in the catchment areas, owing to the poor storage in the Periyar and Vaigai dams.

While the second season of irrigation begins in mid-September from Vaigai dam, it was not possible till November as the storage did not increase up to the expected level.

However, farmers of both the double crop area (in Madurai and Dindigul districts) and the single crop area of Melur region and Sivaganga district fought for the water. Despite the combined Periyar water storage in the Periyar and Vaigai dams not reaching the mandatory 6,000 mcft for commencing irrigation, the PWD officials released the water on November 9.

The combined Periyar credit stood at 5,594 mcft then. The water release that reached 800 cusecs on day one, was maintained at 1,200 cusecs for the next five days and then on, the release was at the rate of 1,400 cusecs.

After waiting in vain for the last one week expecting the monsoon to favour the basin, the PWD officials decided to stop the irrigation in order to store water in the Vaigai dam to cater to the drinking water requirement of Madurai city and other habitats till the South West monsoon sets in June 2013.

Stating that not much area had been brought under irrigation, a PWD official said that they could implement their plan of supplying water only to the irrigated areas, since farmers of all the villages wanted to have their share of water.

“They said that they will stock the water in their irrigation tanks to recharge the groundwater table in their areas,” the official said. The officials had exhausted over 1,200 mcft of Periyar credit from the Vaigai dam for irrigation alone in the last 20 days. The present storage in Vaigai dam was 2,355 mcft.

Water level

Water level in the Periyar dam stood at 117.50 feet (136 feet) with an inflow of 94 cusecs and a discharge of 300 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 52.62 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of nine cusecs and a discharge of 1,460 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 3,738 mcf.

Wholesale egg price falls

In a bid to clear more than eight crore eggs that got stagnated during Diwali, the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) has dropped the wholesale price of egg by 35 paise from Rs. 3.10 to Rs. 2.75 on Wednesday.

This drastic price drop is not quite common, as the usual rate reduction in a maximum of 15 paise a day.

“It would take three days to bring price egg to what was fixed on Wednesday. But the price drop was an exemption as we had to boost sale of egg in the retail, where the price of egg is based on price fixed by NECC. It is expected to come below Rs. 3 in a couple of days and boost egg sale,” Chairman of the NECC Namakkal Zone Dr. P. Selvaraj told *The Hindu*.

He said that there was a slowdown in egg sale after bird flu outbreak in Karnataka in the last week of October.

“Before it was back to normal, the Diwali holidays resulted in stagnation of eggs. The stocks could not be cleared till date as the Iyappa season in Kerala and Karthigai in Tamil Nadu when many devotees turn vegetarians began, due to which the stocks could not be immediately cleared,” he observed.

The NECC Chairman said that on the other hand, sale of egg in Kerala – the second big egg market for eggs from Namakkal – dropped by about 25 percent from the little more than one crore eggs that used to be consumed in Kerala every day, after the bird flu outbreak, due to short term consumer resistance.

Delay

Dr. Selvaraj said that this was one of the important reasons for delay in clearing eggs.

He also attributed the price drop to uncertainty in the egg export market in the post bird flu scenario.

“However the price will not drop further and will start picking up again after the stocks are cleared,” he added.

President of the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers Association R. Nallathambi said that picking up of winter in North India has led to increase in demand for eggs in those States.

“We are confident that the drastic price drop will increase movement of eggs to Bombay (Maharashtra) and other North Indian States,” he said.

Meanwhile the NECC has advised poultry farmers to sell 65-week-old hens for meat.

“This is because they steadily lay eggs till they are 72 weeks old. The culling of birds seven weeks in advance will reduce production that will match market requirements. Doing so will help farmers realise better price for their eggs without much delay,” an NECC source said.

Rice price rise looms large



Traders fear if the delta region fails to get rains or water from the Mettur dam in the next 10-15 days, there is every possibility that the samba yield will be extremely poor. — PHOTO: M. SRINATH

With the prospects of samba crop looking bleak, a rise in the price of rice is looming large.

“If the delta region fails to get rains or water from the Mettur Dam in the next 10-15 days, there is every possibility that the samba yield would be extraordinarily poor. Thus the arrivals to market in January would dwindle. This might result in a steep hike in price of rice, even to an extent of 25 per cent to 50 per cent”, trade sources warned.

They told *The Hindu* that at present branded rice was quoted around Rs. 45 a kg, while the unbranded good quality rice was sold at Rs. 40 a kg. The former might touch even Rs. 60 a kg and the latter Rs. 50 a kg by the middle of January if samba paddy failed to reach the markets in a substantial quantity, they apprehended.

The sources pointed out that the total paddy production (both kuruvai and samba put together) last year was 70-75 lakh tonnes. And Tamil Nadu Civil supplies Corporation (TNCSC) registered a record procurement of 26 lakh metric tonnes last year. "With only one third of the kuruvai crop surviving and the uncertain future of the samba it is impossible to achieve so much this year."

"While the State would manage its PDS requirements because of considerable stocks, the impact on the open market needs very careful monitoring," they said.

"Merchants are prepared to pay even higher prices for mature paddy which goes through a fortnight of misty weather as that rice would be extremely tasty and also would not be broken. But the yield is quite uncertain this year because of poor rains."

They said the TNCSC procured even as much as 20,000–30,000 tonnes in a day last year and then the merchants used to buy substantial quantity at the same or slightly higher price offered by the TNCSC. The sources are worried whether the State government would resort to the stock control order, which restricts stocks with rice mill owners (not more than 3,000 quintals), with traders with attached rice mill (not more than 1,500 quintals), and shopkeepers (not more than 1,000 quintals). "The rice mandis in Chennai would normally have stocks of 10,000 quintals and shops in Chennai 3,000 quintals." There are a number of rice mills in the State, especially in Erode and Kangeyam, who buy paddy only from Karnataka and are now known for their quality. At least 30 per cent of the open market rice requirements are met by Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. And Chennai city is always fed by AP rice and the Red Hills market has been of immense help to the city.

Crop insurance

The weather-based crop insurance scheme has been introduced in Dharwad and Navalgund taluks. Rain-fed crops such as maize, wheat and groundnut and irrigation-based crops such as wheat and groundnut will be covered under the scheme. The last date to pay the premium is December 15, stated a release.

Pig breeding unit to be launched

Animal Husbandry Minister K.P. Mohanan will launch the construction of a pig breeding unit of the Animal Husbandry Department at Kappadu near Kanjirappally on Thursday. N. Jayaraj , MLA, will preside over the function. The cost of construction of the facility has been estimated to be Rs. 4.89 crore.

Rewarding farm lesson

The students watched eagerly as R. Raveendran, a farmer, set about pulling out a giant African yam from his garden at Ulloor in Thiruvananthapuram. Beside him, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan also did not spare any effort in helping pull out the tuber. Encouraging the duo were the children who whistled and clapped and with a final hurra, gathered around Mr. Raveendran and Mr. Mohanan for a lesson or two on farming.

As part of outside classroom learning, the children got a fair idea of harvesting yam under the guidance of Mr. Raveendran who had made it to the Limca Book of Records in 2011 for harvesting a massive African yam weighing 275 kg.

The venue proved to be the perfect occasion for heralding the 'Bala Krishi Sastra Congress' (Children's Agriculture Science Congress) to be held in the city on January 24 and 25.

Mr. Mohanan joined the students from more than 22 schools in examining the various vermicomposting units and the terrace garden set up at Mr. Raveendran's house.

For the children, the purple passion fruit garden atop the farmer's terrace, the potted vegetable plants, and the units of home-made biofertilizers was an insight into the world of organic farming.

"We are really awed at seeing this type of farming. While most of us today are interested in white collar jobs, we cannot achieve what this farmer has achieved, a place in the Limca Book of Records. This is truly inspirational," V. Akhil, the student leader for the upcoming congress, said.

Reviving interest

The aim of the meet, he said, was to revive interest among the younger generation in farming and related activities.

It was an opportunity to interact with farmers and understand the problems faced by them. This would also help the students to come up with feasible solutions to some of the farmers' problems, and help them understand more about agriculture and farming, Akhil said.

The congress, to be held at the Museum Hall, will witness the participation of more than 500 students from across the State. The main theme for this year's congress is 'Traditional wisdom and empirical knowledge.'

"This year, the students will present a number of projects based on their experience in farming and agriculture. Research projects, those based on 'Ende Krishi' programme, and exhibition of agriculture produce from various schools will be the highlight of this year's congress," Jayakumar, programme coordinator of the congress, said.

Dairy farmer association thanks Chief Minister

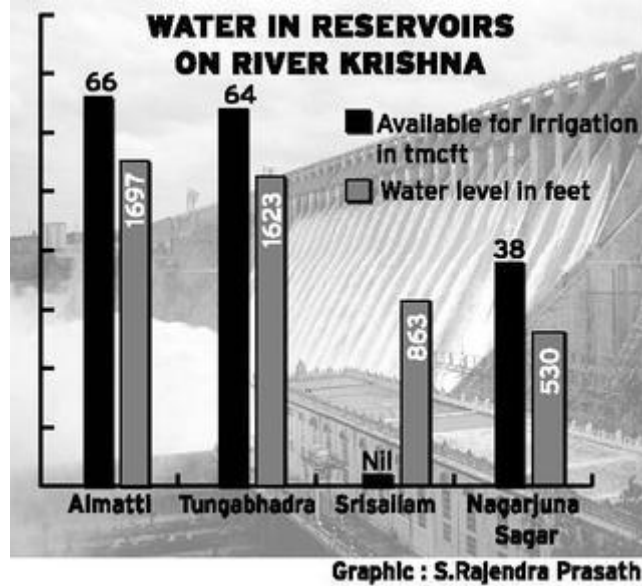
The Progressive Dairy Farmers Association (PDFA) of A.P. expressed gratitude to Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy for announcing different decisions, including VAT-free supply of ghee to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, milk supply to women and anganwadi children.

These measures will go a long way in relieving pressure on dairy farmers, who are reeling under severe crisis, PDFA secretary, Kandala Bal Reddy, said in a statement, here on Wednesday.

Further, PDFA suggests that the government announce an incentive of Rs. 3 per litre to rescue dairy farmers.

The government could win the everlasting confidence of farmers by evolving "Minimum Support Price" (MSP) as recommended by Dr. Swaminathan, chairman of National Commission on Farmers.

No second crop for second consecutive year?



There is unlikely to be a second crop (Rabi) for a second consecutive year if the water levels in the Major reservoirs of the State are any indication. According to Reservoir Storage Monitoring System (RSMS), there is no water available for irrigation in the Srisailem Reservoir as per the norms of the Irrigation Department.

This may be because all the water from Srisailem was released to the Nagarjuna Sagar Reservoir that is downstream for power generation and also increase the level in the reservoir to the Minimum Draw Down Level (MDDL) of 510 feet to enable the State Government to release water to Krishna Delta farmers in the wake of a High Court stay.

But, the amount of water in Nagarjuna Sagar is not sufficient taking into consideration the needs of the ensuing Rabi in Krishna Delta. The State Government had asked the farmers to forego Rabi at the end of 2011 saying that the water in the reservoirs was not sufficient. There is just 38 tmcft of water available in Nagarjuna Sagar for Irrigation. There was 66 tmcft in the reservoir on the corresponding date last year, but the State Government opted to cancel the second crop.

The two big reservoirs in Karnataka -- Almatti and Tungabhadra -- are comfortably placed with 71 tmcft and 64 tmcft.

Ironically the Vijayawada Irrigation Circle authorities had to lift the crest gates of the Prakasam Barrage when the river was in spate in October and November to let go 54 tmcft to prevent water from flooding low-lying areas on either side of the river upstream the barrage.

Second phase of animal husbandry training programme gets under way

Animal Husbandry Department Joint Director T. Damodar Naidu on Wednesday said the animal husbandry sector, especially the dairy sector, was set to grow in size generating employment for rural youth.

He was addressing a meeting organised by Nestham NGO in connection with inaugural of second phase of a training programme in animal care at K. Tadepalli in Vijayawada rural mandal.

The NGO is imparting training to rural educated youth in animal health and dairy management with the financial support extended by the NABARD and technical support by the Department of Animal Husbandry. Of the 80 educated youth selected for the purpose and divided in two groups of 40 each, training for the second batch started on Wednesday.

He said the role of the 'pasurakshaks' would be to educate farmers on animal health and provide them first aid services. Animal Husbandry Department Assistant Director Diwakar said the youth, who were being trained here, must transfer their knowledge on animal welfare to the farmers involved in dairy farming. Director of Nestham V. Suresh explained the objective of the training programme.

OKS demands relief for farmers

Efficiency shown by revenue officials to provide crop loss compensation for land of Revenue Minister Surya Narayan Patra and his wife should get replicated in case of other poor farmers of the district who also incurred crop loss, demanded activists of Odisha Krushak Sabha (OKS). Leaders of Ganjam district unit of OKS as well as chairman of Digapahandi Notified Area Council (NAC) V. Rabinarayan Raju said Mr. Patra and his wife Rajeswari Patra had two separate patches of land in their respective names in Digapahandi tehsil.

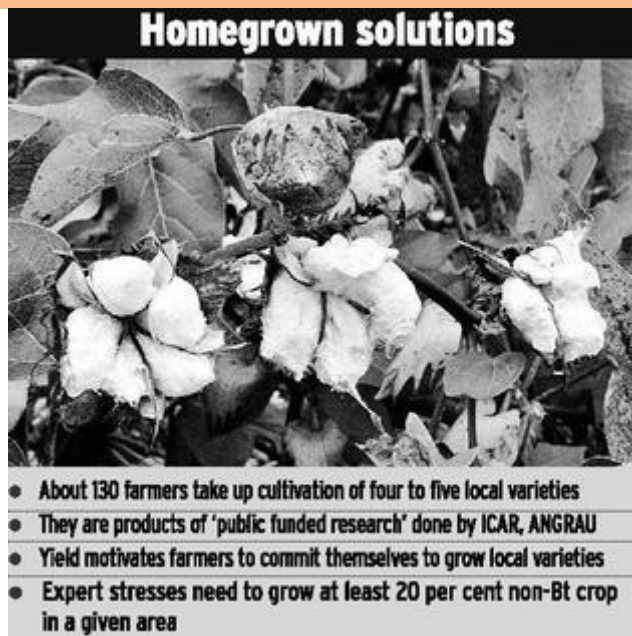
"Compensation for crop loss due to drought like situation during last kharif season was paid for both these land patches. Mr Patra got Rs. 11,655 compensation for the land patch in his name while similar amount was issued towards crop loss for his wife's land," said president of Ganjam district unit of OKS Kailash Sadangi.

Mr Sadangi and Mr Raju came up with a grave allegation that the land in the name of the Revenue Minister's wife was not fit for any compensation towards crop loss. According to them this patch of land had eucalyptus plantation so was not meant for any kind of cultivation.

It is an irony that several genuine drought affected farmers of the district, who had incurred loss during 2011 kharif season had not received their compensation till date, while compensation was provided to the Minister and his wife, Mr Sadangi alleged. As per OKS activists the declared compensation was too meagre in comparison to the real loss incurred by the farmers. Farmers especially the paddy growers have suffered vagaries of nature for three kharif seasons in a row. Cyclonic rains in December 2010 had destroyed standing paddy crop in the district. It was followed by crop loss due to drought like situation during kharif season in 2011 and crop loss due to untimely cyclonic rains this year.

"We the members of OKS demand the revenue officials to show up efficiency they had shown for the State Minister to replicate same efficiency to identify real crop loss affected peasants and provide them compensation as early as possible," Mr Sadangi said.

Ryots prove Bt cotton has better alternatives



Ever since the much-hyped Bt cotton started virtually invading agricultural fields in the late 90s, a vast majority of farmers have almost given up growing indigenous varieties of the 'white gold'. Their belief that the local species are inferior to those imported from abroad paved the way for Bt cotton to become completely dominant.

Amidst this seemingly unending monopolistic reign of Bt cotton, nearly 130 farmers owing allegiance to the District Cotton Growers' Mutually Aided Cooperative Society and Rythu Rakshana Vedika (RRV) have proved that there are ample number of indigenous varieties which are equally high-yielding and remunerative.

These farmers took up cultivation of four to five local varieties, which were products of 'public funded research' done by institutions like the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University and achieved satisfactory results in terms of yield and quality.

What the cooperative society and RRV did was to motivate a group of farmers in each one of the 26 mandals where cotton was grown to experiment with the local varieties, which proved that the indigenous varieties were not so bad as to be completely discarded when compared with the hybrid (Bt) varieties.

They have since committed themselves to grow local species to maximum extent.

N. Venugopala Rao, retired professor of ANGRAU, who was instrumental in bringing over 200 farmers together to form the RRV, told *The Hindu* that the main reasons for success of Bt cotton were the policy framework that helped some well-known multi-national companies in gaining monopoly and the extensive publicity that made farmers believe that growing the native varieties was a waste of time and resources.

"The biggest danger of completely growing Bt cotton lies in the high possibility of losing our genetic resources to MNCs which already have a tremendous grip over the market." The crux of the problem is the farmers' ignorance about the need to grow at least 20 per cent non-Bt crop in a given area.

Though it's an uphill task, the RRV has decided to grow indigenous varieties in about 5,000 acres next year.

Decentralised procurement of rice begins in Warangal

The Civil Supplies Corporation, which has embarked on decentralised procurement of rice has already collected 14,400 tonnes of rice in Warangal district alone.

Corporation managing director D. Varaprasad, who was here to review the ongoing collection, storage and other issues said that they target to collect 40 lakh tonnes of rice in seven districts – Karimnagar, Nalgonda, Warangal, Guntur, Prakash, Nellore and Chittoor as per the directions of the Central government. The collected rice would be distributed to the poor through Public Distribution System across the district.

In all seven districts, the Civil Supplies corporation targets to collect 11 lakh tonnes of levy rice and four lakh tonnes through public procurement centres.

Of the targeted 1.5 lakh tonnes in Warangal district, already 14,400 tonnes have been collected and procurement will continue until February next year. “In Warangal district alone, the corporation intends to spend Rs.680 crore procuring rice from farmers,” Mr. Varaprasad said.

The decentralised procurement will help avoid transportation costs to the extent of Rs.70 crore in seven districts. The collected rice would be stored for three months at mandal-level stock points and every three months, the rice would be sent to the PDS shops.

SRI system revives popularity of paddy cultivation



Availing benefits:Venkattahiri in his field at Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu.-Photo: special arrangement

Paddy cultivation requires a lot of water. In fact the year’s production of paddy depends to a large extent on the season’s rainfall and any delay or failure in the monsoon has a direct impact on the paddy yield.

“As scientists we face a great challenge in motivating a farmer and sustaining his interest in continuing paddy cultivation with less amount of water, using techniques like Systematic Rice Intensification (SRI). For this we need to identify enterprising growers in respective districts who are optimistic and ready to try,” says Mr. M.Devanathan, programme co-ordinator, Thirur KVK, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu.

Personal interest

“Though today SRI technique has established increased yield and helps farmers get a better income there are some pockets where farmers still have not accepted it. We take a personal interest for those farmers having some inhibition and try to make them aware through interactions with others who have successfully done it, and impress upon them to try it out,” he says.

A. Venkattahiri, a farmer, has nearly 13 acres in Ramakuppam village in the region. Initially the farmer was growing paddy under the common conventional method along with some other crops. He was not willing to accept this simple and effective technology having his own doubts on its effectiveness. On one of their regular visits, the KVK staff met him and impressed upon him to try SRI. “Though initially reluctant, the farmer was willing to try it since we promised him that he would get a better yield and income.”

And today the farmer does not regret taking to SRI as he has got a net income of more than Rs. 1 lakh from his two and half hectares in less than four months in which he carried out SRI. Previously he was able to earn a little over Rs. 50,000 using conventional methods.

“I regret not taking to SRI earlier,” says the farmer.

“Practically under this method the cost of cultivation has come down. The seed requirement for an acre is only 3 kg, whereas under conventional methods I used to sow 30 kg of seeds for eight cents. Plant protection is easy and less expensive. The incidence of pest and disease also seems to be low.

No rat menace

Most important, rat menace is practically absent in SRI planted fields due to the square system of planting the seedlings. I noticed that the grain panicles are quite dense and tillers are more in number,” explains the farmer.

The KVK constantly kept guiding and motivating him. Right from supplying leaf colour charts to providing the different machines on time they saw to it that the farmer got all the necessary inputs on time.

Sourcing is difficult

“Though the Government has made available certain devices like cono weeder and markers (devices required for this type of cultivation) at a subsidized cost for farmers through the different KVK offices to encourage SRI cultivation, many farmers find it difficult to source the devices on time as there is a good demand for them.

“One needs to wait for some weeks to be able to get the machines. In such cases farmers lose patience and decide to grow the crop under the conventional method. If they are able to get the devices on time then I am sure like me many would start adopting SRI,” he says confidently.

At a time when paddy growing is fast becoming un-remunerative for many paddy growers across the State, people like Mr.Venkattahiri serve as motivation for others.

Earning nearly Rs. 1 lakh from an hectare in three and half months is no longer a fairy tale.

In fact today nearly 200 hectares in Poondi region have come under SRI cultivation after seeing the financial success of Mr. Venkattahiri, according to Mr. Devanathan.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has also uploaded a detailed visual presentation on SRI cultivation, methods, inputs, irrigation schedule etc at [http://agritech.tnau.ac.in/](http://agritech.tnau.ac.in/sri.html)

[sri.html](http://agritech.tnau.ac.in/sri.html)

Scheme

The state government through a world bank scheme called 'TN-IAMWARM' is presently supplying six bags of urea, three bags of superphosphate, one bag of potash and eight kg of any seed variety free of cost for cultivating SRI in one hectare. Interested farmers need to approach the respective KVK offices in their region with relevant land documents to avail this benefit.

For more details readers can contact Mr. M. Devanathan through email: kvktirur@tnau.ac.in, mobile: 9443095008 and the farmer Mr.Venkattahiri on mobile: 09629508079.

Rs.37.28 lakh paid as compensation

An amount of Rs.37.28 lakh was paid to paddy farmers for crop loss under the State government's crop insurance scheme in the district. The amount was paid to 1,311 farmers under 16 Krishi Bhavans in the district during the months of September, October, and November this year. Deputy Director of Agriculture K.K. Sobhana said that an amount of Rs.12,000 was given as compensation for one hectare of paddy under the State Crop Insurance Scheme. Paddy, banana, coconut, rubber, tapioca, pepper, cardamom, ginger, coffee, and tea were among the 25 crops included in the insurance scheme, she said.

Kulkunda cattle fair begins without a hitch

The annual Kulkunda cattle fair kicked off at Kulkunda village near Kukke Subramanya on Wednesday morning despite earlier threats from Hindutva activists.

The fair, which attracts about 500 cattle, will go on till Friday. Farmers from Sullia, Vitla, Mangalore and other areas, looking to buy cattle for farming and animal husbandry, purchased half the number of cattle that had been brought to the fair, according to Subramanya Gram Panchayat member Shivaram Rai.

The Bajrang Dal wanted an end to the tradition alleging that the animals purchased here were being transported to abattoirs in Kasaragod district of Kerala. However, the panchayat said only farmers in possession of RTC documents were being allowed to buy cattle.

The panchayat had originally decided to discontinue holding the fair this year when some of its members said that Bajrang Dal had made it impossible to conduct it.

Later, the district administration intervened and the Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat also directed the Subramanya Gram Panchayat to hold the event.

Help

The district administration assured all help for the smooth conduct of the fair. The people of Kulkunda were also keen on the fair as they feared its discontinuation would invite divine wrath (dhosha) for the village.

The panchayat decided not to levy any fee for the cattle brought or sold at the fair from this year onwards.

The panchayat was known to charge Rs. 10 per cattle. In addition, it decided to waive the Rs. 150-fee on vehicles transporting cattle.

Mr. Rai, however, said since there was no farmer who owned a vehicle modified to carry cattle.

All farmers who purchased cattle had to walk home with the animal.

“This has been the tradition,” he said.

Subramanya police said no untoward incident was reported till evening.

Panchayat president Bhaskar Poojary said the cattle fair began with cow worship.

Management of pod borer in chickpea

Pod borer is a notorious pest of chickpea causing heavy damage to the crop. Yield loss due to pod borer is estimated at 21 per cent. The pest is reported to cause about 50 to 60 per cent damage to the chickpea pods.

Apart from chickpea the pest also attacks pigeonpea, sunflower, cotton, safflower, chilli, sorghum, groundnut, tomato and other agricultural and horticultural crops. It is a devastating pest of pulses and oilseeds.

Infestation

The infestation starts on chickpea usually a fortnight after germination and becomes serious just after the initiation of flower bud coupled with cloudy and humid weather.

Medium sized light brown moths measuring about 40 mm across the wings have a dark speck and dark area on the forewings.

Hind wings are light in colour with a dark patch at the outer end.

Females lay several small white eggs singly. Upon hatching in 3-4 days the caterpillars feed on the leaves for a short time and subsequently attack the pods.

A full-grown caterpillar is about 34 mm long, greenish to brownish in colour with scattered short white hairs and buries itself in the soil to make an earthen cell inside which it pupates. The life cycle is completed in about 30-45 days. The pest completes eight generations in a year.

Management

- Summer ploughing to expose the hidden stages of the pest to natural predation.
- Application of HaNPV at the rate of 100 LE per acre along with 0.5 per cent jaggery and 0.1 per cent boric acid at egg hatch stage and repeat at 15-20 days.
- Use of chemicals should comprise 0.6g methomyl 40 SP or 2.00 ml profenophos 50 EC per litre of water as ovicides.
- Use of pheromone traps at 4-5 traps/ha. Spraying neem seed kernel. Extract 5 per cent in the early stage.
- If the infestation is severe, new insecticide molecules like 0.3 ml indoxacarb 14.5 SC or 0.1 ml spinosad 45 SC or 0.75ml Navaluron 10 EC or 2.5ml chlorpyriphos 20 EC can be applied.
- Use of 4-5 bird perches to attract birds and sowing bhendi or marigold around the field as trap crops are most effective.

(D. N. Kambrekar, Assistant Professor, Agricultural Entomology, Regional Agricultural Research Station, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bijapur, email: kambrekardn@gmail.com, phone: 08352-230568)

Power and pollution beg for solution

The vexatious industrial pollution and the omnipresent power scarcity echoed at the farmers' grievances day meet held here on Thursday with people from various parts of Karur district raising the issues and demanding concrete reply from officials . Since district-level officials were "pre-occupied elsewhere" the ryots could only have the satisfaction of just airing their grievances and not finding any remedy.

Pettaivaithalai Sugar Mill Cane Growers Association president Nachalur Anbalagan was up on his feet raising the issue of erratic power supply in several eastern and south-eastern parts of

the district . Mr.Anbalagan pointed out that TANGEDCO officials were lax in attending important issues such as the one in which people and farmers of Nachalur area were suffering for 22 days now.

More than 100 farmers were not getting agricultural power supply. The TANGEDCO officials present reasoned that a transformer had burst due to overload and they were in the process of setting that right by sanctioning another transformer for the area. To persisted queries they conceded that it might take another week to resolve the issue. That irked the farmers who flatly negated the delay saying by then the crops would have withered.

Taking up another damning issue, Farmers Discussion Group convener Kulithalai A.V.Gopaladesikan demanded to know the extent of damage caused to agricultural fields in Karur district due to industrial pollution. He also sought details on quantum of sludge and pollution waste accumulating at the effluent treatment plants and elsewhere.

Stating that farmers had to bear the brunt of pollution and they have not been adequately compensated so far, Mr.Gopaladesikan observed that the governments and agencies must be more sympathetic in understanding the plight of the affected farmers.

Mr.Gopaladesikan pointed out that despite the Madras High Court ban, several dyeing and bleaching units were functioning and draining treated and untreated effluents into water bodies affecting not just farmers but all public. He urged the district administration to form special squads to keep a tab on dyeing units.

Another farmer K.S.Chandrasekar of Thennilai also demanded action against polluters and complained that all affected farmers had not received just compensation in Karur district so far. Efforts must be taken to adequately compensate the farmers, he urged.

Awareness meet on futures trading

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development organised an awareness camp over forward market trading to members of farmer's clubs in Srikakulam on Wednesday. NABARD Assistant General Manager K.Subramaniam, Multi Commodity Exchange Assistant General Manager M.Sambasiva Rao explained about the opportunities and challenges in future trading. They said lots of changes were being taken place in the future trading with the reforms in agriculture sector.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Thursday, Nov 29

Max Min

30.0° | 22.6°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:14

Sunset: 05:40

Barometer: 1012

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Nov 30

Max Min

31° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Dec 1	Sunday Dec 2	Monday Dec 3	Tuesday Dec 4	Wednesday Dec 5
31° 23° Partly Cloudy	32° 25° Overcast	32° 25° Overcast	32° 25° Overcast	32° 25° Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 55

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:55

Sunset: 05:24

Barometer: 1013



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

28.11.2012 P.M

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28nd nov 2012 P.M

Rice concedes initial assessment on Benghazi attack incorrect

The US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice conceded before Republican senators that the initial assessment she gave of the attack on American consulate facilities in Benghazi was “incorrect” but said she had never intended to mislead the nation.

Rice, who has been facing a Republican backlash over her initial account of the Libya attack, and Acting CIA Director Michael Morell met in Washington yesterday with Republican Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Kelly Ayotte, who have said they would oppose any bid by President Barack Obama to make her Secretary of State.

“In the course of the meeting, we explained that the talking points provided by the intelligence community, and the initial assessment upon which they were based, were incorrect in a key respect: there was no protest or demonstration in Benghazi.

“While we certainly wish that we had had perfect information just days after the terrorist attack, as is often the case, the intelligence assessment has evolved,” a statement issued by the US mission to the UN here quoted Rice as saying.

Days after the American embassy in Benghazi was targeted, 48-year-old Rice had appeared on several TV news shows and said the September 11 attack was a spontaneous assault on US premises in the wake of the protests over an anti-Muslim film.

US Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other American consular staff were killed in the attack.

The US had later termed it as a terrorist attack.

The Republican senators have accused Rice of misleading the nation by giving an inaccurate assessment of the cause of the attack even as President Obama strongly defended his UN ambassador over the way she handled the response to the Benghazi attack.

Rice said neither she nor the Obama administration “intended to mislead” the American people at any stage in this process, and the Administration updated Congress and the American people as the assessments evolved.

She said the Obama administration remains committed to working closely with Congress as it thoroughly investigates the terrorist attack in Benghazi and brings to justice those responsible for the tragic deaths of Stevens and other consular staff.

'NCR channel will help meet Gurgaon's water needs'

The availability of water in Gurgaon will be enhanced by almost four times with completion of the NCR channel, which has a capacity of 800 cusecs.

This would help in supplying adequate quantity of water for the growing population of the town, an official spokesman said here on Wednesday.

He said that the State Government had spent Rs 322 crore on construction of the channel.

“At present, Gurgaon is getting 175 cusecs through Gurgaon Water Supply Channel (GWC). The residents of Gurgaon can hope to have more water to use during summer as compared to the last season,” he said.

The 71-km-long NCR channel originates from village Kakroi in district Sonapat culminating at village Chandu Budhera of district Gurgaon after passing through Sonapat, Rohtak and Jhajjar districts.

Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda had announced construction of the channel on September 13, 2006, to meet the growing water needs of the Gurgaon residents, the spokesman said, adding that work had started in September 2008.

At present, the drinking water needs of Gurgaon are met by the lone Gurgaon water supply channel and partly from the tube wells, he added.

Higher input costs push up poultry feed prices



Following an uptrend in the prices of key ingredients over the past month, prices of poultry feed products went up on Wednesday.

Higher input cost led feed prices upwards, said Subhash Sharma, Financial Head of Sarvottam Poultry Feed Supply Centre Pvt Ltd. The uptrend was anticipated as prices of key ingredients have increased rapidly over the last one month, he said. Feed prices may increase further in near future, said Sharma.

FEED PRICES

After ruling flat for almost a month, prices of poultry feed products went up by Rs 25-40 for a 30-kg and 50-kg bag on Wednesday.

Broiler concentrates feed went up by Rs 25 and quoted at Rs 1,860 for a 50-kg bag while Broiler Starter Mash was at Rs 1,460, Rs 30 up from previous level.

Prices of "broiler pre-starter concentrate 30 per cent" increased by Rs 25 and sold at Rs 1,600 for a 30-kg bag while layer concentrate quoted at Rs 1,425 for a 50-kg bag. Pre-lay mash improved by Rs 25 and quoted at Rs 1,030 while broiler finisher sold at Rs 1,440 for a 50-kg bag - up Rs 40.

POULTRY PRODUCTS

Meanwhile, increased supplies pulled egg and broiler prices down while chick remained unchanged on Wednesday. Egg eased marginally by 21 paise and sold to Rs 2.95, broiler

quoted at Rs 47 a kg, Rs 5 down from previous level, while chick went for Rs 5, remained unchanged.

Slack demand from millers pounds pulses



Amid sluggish demand in pulses and pulse seeds, the downtrend continued in tur and its dal following decline in demand and buying support in tur (Maharashtra).

On the back of slack demand and weak buying support from millers, tur (Maharashtra) prices in the past one week have declined by almost Rs 200 a quintal. On Wednesday, tur (Maharashtra) in Indore mandis further declined to Rs 3,950-4,000 a quintal (Rs 4,050-4,100), while tur (Madhya Pradesh) remained steady at Rs 3,200-3,400.

Tur dal (full) in local mandis was quoted at Rs 5,800-5,900, while tur dal (sawa no.) ruled at Rs 5,400-5,500 and tur dal marka at Rs 6,600-6,700.

Bearish sentiment also prevailed in moong and urad. Moong (best quality) ruled firm at Rs 5,200-5,300, while moong (medium) ruled at Rs 4,800. Moong dal also ruled steady with moong dal (medium) being quoted at Rs 6,500-6,600, moong dal (best) at Rs 7,100-7,200, while moong mongar ruled at Rs 7,200-7,300.

Urad and its dal also ruled flat on subdued demand with urad (best quality) being quoted at Rs 3,400-3,450, while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 3,000-3,100. Urad dal (medium) in local mandis was at Rs 4,100-4,200, urad dal (bold) at Rs 4,700-4,800, while urad mongar ruled at Rs 5,700-6,000 a quintal.

Suryalakshmi Cotton to invest Rs 150 cr in spinning capacity

Suryalakhsmi Cotton Mills plans to enhance its spinning capacity by 50,000 spindles from 65,000 spindles with an investment of Rs 150 crore. The company intends to raise Rs 80-100 crore through the Central Government-sponsored Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) and the rest will be tied up through internal accruals.

Paritosh Agarwal, Managing Director, Suryalakhsmi Cotton Mills, said the additional spinning capacity coming up at Ramtek, in Maharashtra, will be completed in two phases by 2014-end.

INTEREST SUBSIDY

“Besides the four per cent interest subsidy under the TUF scheme, the Maharashtra Government offers interest subsidy of up to 12.5 per cent under its new textile policy,” he said.

The company’s spinning unit in the Vidarbha region qualifies for the State interest concession of 12.5 per cent. This makes cost of funds even cheaper for the company. Suryalakhsmi Cotton recently commissioned a 25-MW captive thermal power plant at its denim plant at Ramtek with an investment of Rs 130 crore. It had raised debt of Rs 85 crore and promoters’ equity investment of Rs 15.6 crore, besides tapping internal accruals to fund the power project.

As of September, it had long-term debt of Rs 228 crore, of which Rs 140 crore was raised through the TUF. “With the commissioning of the power plant, the cost of electricity will drop to Rs 4.20 a unit from the Rs 7 we pay currently. The full benefit of lower power costs will be reflected from the next quarter as the power plant is just stabilising,” said Agarwal.

FUEL SUPPLY PACT

The company is close to signing a fuel supply agreement with Western Coal Fields of Nagpur for sourcing coal.

“We will use 50 per cent of the power produced for captive purposes and sign an agreement with the Government or private power trading companies,” he said.

Lack of new orders grinds turmeric



Pounded hopes: A file picture of a farmer drying turmeric at a yard.

Slack demand and eluding new orders have taken colour off turmeric in the last few days.

“For want of demand traders and exporters are quoting lower price and buying limited stock of turmeric. Farmers too bring medium variety turmeric and are confirming the price for only few bags. Traders are waiting for new orders from North India”, said traders.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,950-5,411 a quintal; the root variety Rs 3,699-4,594.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 5,605-6,064; the root variety Rs 4,605-4,919. Of the 1,092 bags arrived and 110 bags were sold. At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety fetched Rs 4,139-5,218 while the root variety got Rs 4,019-4,843. Of the 686 bags that were put up for sale, 562 found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,369-5,709 and the root variety Rs 4,169-5,039. All the 284 bags were sold. At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 4,039-5,669 and the root variety Rs 4,039-5,128. All the 170 bags were sold.

Cold chain market expected to double in 3 years: YES Bank

The cold chain market in India is expected to more than double to \$8 billion by 2015 from the present \$3 billion on rising investments. This is according to a study conducted by YES Bank and the PHD Chamber of Commerce.

Releasing the report at a conference organised by PHD Chamber, Planning Commission member, Saumitra Chaudhuri said the cold chain sector has somehow lagged others and there is a “lot of catching up to do”.

Despite several Government programmes, Chaudhuri said, “the investments have been very weak in cold chain sector,” while emphasising the need for adequate cold storage to prevent post-harvest losses. Investments in cold storage infrastructure should start now to achieve a perceptible change in the 12th and 13th Plan periods, he said.

Girish Aivalli, Country Head of Food and Agribusiness Strategic Advisory & Research, Yes Bank, said the cold storage segment in the country is expected to grow at 16-17 per cent over the next four years. However, the cold chain business faced challenges in terms of high real estate costs and long gestation period.

India has 30 million tonnes of cold storage facility, while the country needs an additional capacity of 9-10 million tonne. Existing cold storage facilities available in India are mostly for a single commodity and around 80 per cent of them are utilised for potato storage resulting in skewed capacity utilisation, Aivalli said.

The emergence of organised retail and changes in foreign direct investment norms are expected to open up immense opportunities for the cold chain sector.

Sanjeev Chopra, Joint Secretary, Agriculture Ministry, said about 50 per cent of the cold storage capacity in the country has come up in the past eight years.

Singur farmers irate over not getting land back

West Bengal's Agriculture Minister, Becharam Manna, on Wednesday faced the ire of a section of the farmers from Singur who lost their land.

They were reportedly irate at the failure of Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government to return the acquired farmland as part of her electoral promise. Manna along with the rebel Trinamool MLA Rabindranath Bhattacharya spearheaded the anti-land grab movement in Singur between 2006 and 2008.

Paddy fetches more, but not for Bengal's growers



Output may dip: West Bengal might witness a 10-15 per cent drop in paddy production this year on account of a lower sowing due to delayed monsoons and poor weather conditions.

Rising fertiliser, labour costs to blame

Sheikh Rabiul, a paddy farmer of Boromuriya village at Golsi block in Burdwan district is happy that he can pay off some of his accumulated debts. With paddy fetching higher price in open market this season, inflow of cash has been better. But he grudges that profits are muted because of a subsequent rise in costs.

Last season, paddy prices had crashed in the open market following a bumper crop and stalled procurement by rice mills because of their inability to offload stocks. This season, however, farmers across Bengal might see muted profits but increased liquidity this year.

According to Gobinda Das Ghatak, Director, Shyama Sakti Rice Mill in Burdwan – commonly called rice bowl of Bengal, the open market price of paddy is ruling at Rs 1,200 a quintal. Last year market price stood at around Rs 850 .

The current market price of paddy is roughly the same as the minimum support price (MSP) – if logistics are taken into consideration. The Centre has declared a MSP of Rs 1,250 a quintal on paddy.

“Market price is already around the minimum support price (MSP) levels. It is likely to go up on account of an estimated drop in production and a steady demand from other States,” Ghatak said adding that prices will move up once State Government’s procurement starts.

The West Bengal Government's procurement is likely to begin from December 26 onwards.

MARGINS

However, the flip side has been muted profits for farmers. Despite increased price, input costs – primarily, labour and fertiliser costs – have seen a 30 per cent jump so far.

In monetary terms, to cultivate on one bigha of land (i.e. 0.33 acres), a farmer now spends around Rs 3,500 to produce at least 600 kg of paddy. His cost last season for the same stood somewhere between Rs 2,500 and Rs 2,700.

This minimises the near 41 per cent increase in paddy prices in the open market this year.

DIP IN PRODUCTION

According to agri-experts, West Bengal might witness a 10-15 per cent drop in paddy production this year. The drop is primarily on account of a dip in sowing (due to delayed monsoon and poor weather conditions). West Bengal is the largest producer of rice in the country.

Agriculture Department officials said the Tamil Nadu Government too has sought help from the State in supplying 3 lakh tonnes of rice.

The production of paddy in other States including Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Punjab is estimated to witness a drop due to poor weather conditions this year. As a result, lower quantities of rice will be transported from these States to Bengal.

This shortage is likely to lead to an increase in price of rice.

AP dairies drowning in flood of milk



The dairy industry in Andhra Pradesh is facing a serious challenge this year — the problem of plenty. Dairy firms are running at full storage levels, unable to take any more load. Milk procurement prices have dipped by Rs 5-6 the last two months, making prices unremunerative for the dairy farmers. The State produces 8 per cent of the country's total milk production of 127 million tonnes.

Though procurement prices crashed from Rs 32 to Rs 26 a litre, there is no change in purchase price for the consumers.

The crisis is so severe that the Government had announced a 'milk holiday', proposing to stop procurement for a few days in a month. However, fearing a backlash, it withdrew the decision.

The industry feels the present problem is temporary. But the larger challenge is to be tackled at the national level. "It is a cascading chain reaction after the country banned export of milk powder two years ago. Though we lifted the ban, it was not of much help because milk prices have crashed globally," Bhasker Reddy, President, AP Chapter, Indian Dairy Association (IDA), told *Business Line*.

The prices of skimmed milk powder (SMP) have plummeted to Rs 140 a kg, while the cost of production is Rs 200. The country is now saddled with stocks of 1.5 lakh tonnes of SMP.

"Consumer price has not come down because of the poor SMP price. We need to build extra capacity to handle situations like these. We should also do away with erratic (export ban) policy in order to sustain trust in the international market," he said. In Andhra Pradesh, the Government should reduce VAT from 14 per cent to 4 per cent, as in other States, Mr Reddy, who is also Managing Director of Creamline Dairy Products, said.

Coonor tea auction volume hits 26-week low

Following adverse weather, the arrival of tea for Coonor Tea Trade Association auctions has nosedived to several weeks' low level.

For the final auction of November to be held on Thursday and Friday, a volume of 10.94 lakh kg has been catalogued, reveals an analysis of brokers' listing.

This volume is as much as 3.86 lakh kg less than last week's offer and as much as 6.26 lakh kg less than the offer this time last year.

Of the 10.94 lakh kg on offer, 7.65 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 3.29 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 10.22 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.72 lakh kg, orthodox variety. In the leaf counter, only 0.40 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 7.25 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.32 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 2.97 lakh kg, CTC.

Fresh tea accounts for 10.76 lakh kg while about 18,000 kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions. Last week, in the leaf tea auction, Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) and Tata Global Beverages Ltd bought good medium varieties. Duncans Tea Ltd showed interest on good medium broken. Godfrey Philips India Ltd was selective. There was good demand from exporters for medium and plain varieties. Internal buyers were less active.

In the dust tea auction, HUL and Tata Global bought good medium varieties. Indcoserve showed interest on medium smaller grades. Exporters preferred medium and plain varieties. Internal buyers were fairly active. There was good demand for brighter liquoring teas from upcountry buyers.

Swaminathan seeks hike in wheat MSP to Rs 1450 a quintal

Amid difference of opinion about hike in wheat support price, renowned farm scientist M S Swaminathan on Wednesday pitched for increase in minimum support price (MSP) of the grain by Rs 165 to Rs 1,450 per quintal for next year starting April 2013.

Last year, the minimum support price (MSP) of wheat stood at Rs 1,285 per quintal.

"Wheat MSP should be at least Rs 1,450 per quintal for 2013-14. It should cover the rise in cost of production due to increase in prices of diesel, fertilisers and other inputs," Swaminathan told PTI on the sidelines of an event here.

The government should consider the increased cost of production in the last one year while fixing the MSP, he said.

Swaminathan, who is also a Rajya Sabha member, emphasised that the support price should at least take care of the expenditure incurred by farmers.

The government has not yet announced wheat MSP for 2013-14, though sowing is underway in wheat growing states.

Early this month, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had deferred the decision on this issue in view of differences among ministries on raising the price by Rs 115 per quintal. The matter was referred to the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP) for further review.

Meanwhile, CACP has maintained its stand that the MSP should not be raised and recommended to the Agriculture Ministry to keep the support price at last year's level in the wake of surplus stocks.

The Ministry is yet to move a fresh CCEA note with its views on CACP's suggestion.

According to the official data, wheat acreage was slightly lower at 9.18 million hectares till last week of the rabi season that began from October, as against 9.23 million hectare in the year-ago period.

Karnataka Bank introduces revised kisan credit card scheme

Karnataka Bank Ltd has introduced the revised guidelines of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme.

As per the revised scheme, which is effective November 15, farmers can avail themselves of working capital loan in the form of overdraft for raising various crops and maintaining their farm equipment, and also term loan for meeting their investment credit requirements.

A press release by the bank said here on Wednesday that the period of KCC is for five years under the revised scheme. Earlier, it was two years.

Overdraft facility

Farmers have the option to renew the overdraft every year with 10 per cent increase in limit.

The release said that the overdraft facility is more useful to farmers as it is an operative account and they can credit the sale proceeds of various crops to the account and utilise them when required.

ATM card transactions

It said that the bank is planning to introduce ATM card enabled transactions to farmers under KCC scheme as per the RBI guidelines.

The bank is targeting to disburse Rs 1,000 crore in agriculture sector during 2012-13, and KCC scheme is one of the important channels for disbursing the agriculture credit.

As on date, the bank has issued 17,791 kisan credit cards to farmers with an aggregate amount of Rs 202.21 crore. All the branches of the bank are empowered to lend under the KCC scheme, the release added.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

29.11.2012 A.M

Aska sugar factory hikes cane buying rate

The sugarcane growers in Ganjam district have some reason to joy. The management of the [Aska Cooperative Sugar Industries](#) Limited (ACSIL) has decided to increase the price of sugarcane by Rs 60 per tonne while procuring the cane from the farmers for the current crushing season.

The new rates of the sugarcane will be Rs 2,270 per tonne. Around 10,000 sugarcane growers in the district are expected to be benefited. The decision to increase the sugarcane price was taken at a meeting held between the officials of the ASCIL and the Ganjam district sugarcane growers' association at Chhatrapur. District collector [Krishan Kumar](#), who is also the chairman of the managing committee of the ACSIL, presided over the meeting.

“We have decided to increase the price of the sugarcane considering all aspects like the increase in fertilizer price, hike in labour rate and above all the financial condition of the industry,” Kumar said. The transport subsidy to the farmers will be applicable as usual, he added. The sugarcane growers' association had demanded for increase in cane price from from Rs 2,210 per tonne to Rs 2,500 per tonne. “We have agreed with this price considering the financial health of ASCIL, the oldest sugar factory in the country in cooperative sector,” said the general secretary of the association, [Samir Pradhan](#). He appealed to the factory authorities for early start of the crushing, so that the recovery percentage of the crop would be more. The recovery percentage of the sugarcane goes down as the crop dries up with lapse of time.

Rallis to start 'More Pulses' project in Odisha

[Rallis India](#) Limited, a [Tata Group](#) firm and one of the country's leading agro-chemicals companies, will start its More Pulses (MoPu) initiative in Odisha in the rabi season of next year. The initiative is aimed at scaling up pulses output.

“We will adopt five villages on an experimental basis in the state in the next rabi season under the programme for growing more pulses. About 10 farmers will be selected and our officials will offer advice to them on cultivation from seed to harvest stage,” said [V Shankar](#), managing director and chief executive officer, Rallis India.

The MoPu project initiated by the company is being successfully implemented in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. In MoPu, the company works with farmers to grow quality pulses, increase productivity, procure the produce and bring it for sale in packaged form.

In India, Rallis India aims to cover 0.15 million farmers and about 0.2 million acres under the project by the end of this fiscal.

Shankar was in the city to launch Tata Rallis Agri Input Training Scheme (TRAITS), an initiative aimed at enhancing the employability of non graduate youths from farming backgrounds by training them in agri-marketing and crop advising.

Rallis India has partnered the state agriculture department for training 25 selected youths for one year. The company is running similar training programmes in Maharashtra, West Bengal and Karnataka.

Maharashtra's irrigation potential up 28% in past decade

[Maharashtra](#)'s water resources department has said the state's irrigation potential has risen 28 per cent in the past decade — from 3.7 million hectares in 2001 to 4.75 million hectares in 2010. During this period, irrigated area in the state increased from 1.75 million hectares to 2.9 million hectares, a record 72 per cent rise.

It is expected the [state Cabinet](#) would take up a white paper on irrigation in the state at its meeting slated for tomorrow. If approved, the paper would later be tabled in the legislature for debate in the [winter session](#) starting December 10.

The state government is yet to complete the inquiry against 45 officials of the [Vidarbha Irrigation Development Corporation](#) for alleged irregularities in the implementation of 38 projects.

In May, Maharashtra Chief Minister [Prithviraj Chavan](#) had announced the government planned to bring out a white paper on irrigation. This followed the [Economic Survey](#) stating though Rs 70,000 crore had been spent on various projects in the past decade, the state's irrigation potential had risen only 0.1 per cent. However, the Nationalist Congress party, in charge of the state water resources department, argued the rise was much higher.

On condition of anonymity, a senior state government official told Business Standard: "The irrigation ratio has increased 5.17 per cent. This would rise an additional one per cent if one includes the 70,000 cubic metres of water provided for domestic and industry use. In a report in 2001, the Chitale committee had indicated the state would be able to irrigate up to 8.5 million hectares of the 22.6 million hectares under cultivation." The official denied the rise in irrigation potential was a paltry 0.1 per cent between 2001 and 2010.

The water resources department has denied allegations of irregularities in the implementation of various irrigation projects, primarily in the Vidarbha region. The white paper has listed the reasons for the rise in project costs and time overruns. "Primarily, the rise has been on account of a rise in input costs, delays in land acquisition and forest clearances and the implementation of rehabilitation projects. The department schedule of rate ([DSR](#)) in the 38 irrigation projects in Vidarbha and other projects across Maharashtra has been quite low, compared to the DSR of projects implemented in other states and those implemented by state-run Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran, the state public works department and the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation," the official said.

Marathwada water crisis: Water released from Mula dam

Despite a strong opposition from local people, [Maharashtra government](#) on Wednesday released three [TMC water](#) from [Mula dam](#) in the district to meet the needs of the [Marathwada region](#) facing acute water crisis.

Water was released for Jayakwadi dam in Aurangabad district in Marathwada region amid tight police security as per the state government directives, Irrigation Department officials said.

Electricity supply in the region was turned off so that nobody drew water from the flowing water released from Mula dam, the officials said.

Meanwhile, around 20 activists of [Shiv Rajya Party](#) attempted to stage protest by standing water against the move. However, they were taken away from the site, police said.

The irrigation department has received written orders from the state government after Maharashtra chief minister [Prithviraj Chavan](#) took a decision to release water from these dams, officials said.

Party leaders in Nashik and Ahmednagar districts have opposed the decision saying that there had not been adequate rainfall during the monsoon in their districts as well.

Karnataka offers interest sop to KMF, milk unions

The [Karnataka government](#) on Wednesday offered a slew of measures to help the [Karnataka Milk Federation](#) and [Milk Producers Unions](#), including extending of interest subsidy.

The government has decided to provide interest subsidy of 4 per cent towards working capital loan required by KMF and Milk Union, which have been facing financial crisis following fall in prices of [Skimmed Milk Powder](#) and butter in the wake of surplus stocks, for making payment to producers, an official release said here.

The sops offered by the government also intended to help 2 million farmers who depend on earnings from milk supply and also ensure that KMF and Milk Union pay them dues, it said. The release said the government would share 50 per cent of the loss due to the distress sale of SMP at a price lower than the production cost from this October one to March 31, 2013.

In the wake of the state extending Rs 2 per litre as subsidy to milk producers in the last two years, the procurement of milk has touched 5.4 million kgs per day. While the KMF sells 4 million kgs of milk and products, the remaining surplus of 1.4 million kgs was being converted into SMP and butter.

Due to countrywide surplus of SMP, the KMF is unable to sell its stocks, leading to shortage of working capital for it and milk unions. The prevailing prices of SMP is much lower than the production cost, the release said.

Paddy procurement at 17 mt, up 9% so far

So far in 2012-13, paddy procurement is nine per cent more than in 2011-12, according to



sources in the Food Corporation of India ([FCI](#)). If the trend continues, the rise in pan-India procurement in 2012-13 might be about 14 per cent.

On the basis of paddy arrivals in different states, FCI expects [rice procurement](#) of 40 million tonnes (mt) in 2012-13, compared with 35 mt in 2011-12. [Punjab](#) is likely to contribute

about a quarter to the central pool, retaining the top position among states. Andhra Pradesh is expected to be second in the list.

State agencies procure paddy and supply this to rice millers.

FCI lifts the rice from these mills for public distribution. So far in 2012-13, an estimated 17 mt of paddy has been procured, of which FCI's procurement stands at only 6,00,000 tonnes. In Punjab and Haryana, paddy procurement is in its final stage.



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TODAY FARM NEWS

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Water release from canals won't affect Cauvery basin farmers

BANGALORE: Any release of Cauvery water by Karnataka to Tamil Nadu, will not be from the reservoirs, said sources. The release will be from intermediate canals. This will not affect the Cauvery basin farmers.

Another issue expected to be taken up during the two-hour meeting, before Jayalalithaa flies back to Chennai, is the distress Karnataka is going through on account of a bad monsoon. The meeting might urge the apex court to expedite the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's final award, which has been challenged by all riparian states.

The two states have to place before the apex court the outcome of the meeting on November 30.

"Our view is that the talks be held in a cordial, congenial manner. If we are able to find a permanent solution to the problem through talks, it would be good for Karnataka as well as the farmers of Tamil Nadu," Karnataka deputy chief minister R Ashoka told reporters in Bangalore.

"This is a question of farmers, it doesn't concern any political party," Ashoka added.

Ahead of the crucial Bangalore meet, Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa on Wednesday chaired a meeting with high-level officials, including the PWD secretary and state advocate-general A Navaneethakrishnan, to chalk out a strategy.

A senior Tamil Nadu government official said Thursday's meeting will be held in a cordial

manner since both states are hoping to resolve the long-standing dispute at the earliest . "If the talks are inconclusive, there might be another round of discussions," he said, adding that the Tamil Nadu government is very determined to find an amicable solution by getting the required amount of water from Karnataka.

'TALKS ARE OUR BEST BET'

I welcome the Supreme Court's suggestion to resolve the Cauvery dispute through dialogue. In fact, this is not the first time the SC has suggested dialogue as the only means of resolving the dispute. In the mid-1990 s, when I was an MP, the then chief justice of India had suggested to then Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao to decide the dispute amicably through talks as it is an emotive issue between the riparian states. I hope the dialogue between the two CMs is fruitful and there is an amicable solution. Jayalalithaa too should understand the gravity of drought in Karnataka. At the meeting, [Jagadish Shettar](#) must explain the gloomy scenario of the Cauvery basin districts with statistics.

Yet another winter of discontent for Damoh farmers

BHOPAL: With winter chill setting in, the small and marginal farmers and landless labourers in Damoh are feeling jittery, yet again. The reason, inability of the State to compensate the farmers for crop failure arising out of extreme cold or frost bite or work out a comprehensive policy to deal with the situation. Between November 2010 and February 2011, about 13 farmers affected by crop failure and mounting debts attempted suicide while four lost their lives.

The affected families are yet to get compensation.

Though last year, weather was less hostile and the loss witnessed was minimal but the apprehension of frost ruining their hopes of good produce still sends shivers down the farmers' spine.

"Several announcements were made two years back but we received no help. We have grown pulses in 6 acres of land but are not sure if they would remain unscathed if the frost 'bites' them

once again. We are yet to clear Rs 1 lakh debt my brother had borrowed from money-lenders," said Chhevladubey village resident and father of five daughters [Ram Kumar](#) (42).

His debt-ridden younger brother [Bhagwan Das](#) (35) had consumed pesticide after frost destroyed his pulse crop completely in 2010. Nobody asked the family to pay debts for one year but now, they are constantly being pressurized for the same. Their land is under risk from the money lenders. File for widow [pension](#) is still stuck in red-tapism.

Family members have walked to the nearest Patera tehsil office located some 10 kms away from village at least a dozen time, requesting that the pension case be expedited, but in vain.

"Rs 10,000 to perform the last rites was the only help we received from the district administration," added Ram Kumar.

"Most of the villages in Damoh still get only 3-5 hours of electricity for irrigation. Crops in dry lands are more susceptible to frost-attack. Supply of original pesticides should be ensured to avoid 2011 like scenario," said another farmer Govind Yadav, adding organic farming should be promoted in Bundelkhand region which is prone to natural calamities.

"Compensation when given benefits only land owners and small and marginal farmers and landless workers are left out. This instills insecurity and promote suicidal tendency among them, said the president of Bundelkhand Vikas Samiti, Vishal, adding that the promise of 10-hour electricity everyday for the temporary electricity connections given to the farmers has also not been fulfilled.

"Government's approach towards agrarian crisis should be pro-active and not reactive. With proper electricity and fertilizer supply, authorities concerned should take all precautionary steps to save farmers from going into a crisis situation. Landless labourers and [women](#) farmers must be counted while distributing Kisan Credit Card and compensation," said regional director, Action Aid, [Sarika](#) Sinha.

When contacted, district collector, Damoh, Swatantra Kumar Singh, told Tol that "Farmers are ready to fight such natural calamities this time. With proper cropping pattern, traditional knowledge and use of advanced machineries, chances of frost affecting the crops have become

less. Camps are being held regularly to disburse Kisan Credit Cards. The administration is also providing on rent equipment and machineries required for scientific farming."

Small, marginal farmers have reason to cheer

KANPUR: Good news for the not so big farmers. The [Indian Council of Agricultural Research](#) (ICAR) will be providing input support, including bio-fertilizers, [chemicals](#) and high yielding varieties of seeds to marginal or small [farmers](#) who own land area less than one or between one and two hectares, respectively. The support rendered by ICAR will not include cash help but input support of worth Rs 10,000 to individual farmer.

This help will be given to 12 farmers identified by Chandra Shekhar Azad (CSA) University of Agriculture and Technology which is one among 74 centres of All India Co-ordinated Research Project on Integrated Farming System.

The project of ICAR is being undertaken by CSA University not only with the aim to help marginal and small farmers enhance their income but also to provide them with round the year employment and livelihood.

It will also help increase the gross domestic product (GDP) as 86% of farmers in the country come under marginal or small farmer category having land either less than one hectare or between one and two hectares and at present these farmers do not contribute much to the country and the GDP. The basic concept of the project being that along with cultivating crops, the farmers need to engage in allied activities like animal husbandry, bee-keeping, gardening, mineral mixture, fishery, floriculture, vegetable production, horticulture to name a few. They would be taught integrated farming methods. Principal of the ICAR's pilot project is M P Yadav, HOD, Agronomy Department, CSA University under whose supervision the project is being operated.

Talking to TOI, assistant professor Naushad Khan of CSA University, involved in the project, informed, "So far, farmers have remained completely dependent on agriculture, but now we will

teach them ways to increase their income. Along with cultivating crops, farmers will be taught about various other techniques by which they can earn more. These allied activities include animal husbandry, fishery, floriculture, vegetable production and horticulture."

Khan added that apart from these benefits, the farmer will be able to get food and nutritional security.

When asked if the university has identified farmers who will get the benefit of the ICAR's project, Khan said, 12 farmers of rural pockets of Kaushambi district had been identified by the university to be given necessary intervention which includes providing HYV seeds, [bio-fertilizers](#) etc of up to Rs 10,000 per farmer.

It is worth mentioning here that the CSA University will receive funds for the purpose from Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) as part of the contingency fund.

When questioned about the need of introducing such a project for farmers by ICAR, the CSA scientist said 86% farmers in the country were marginal with agricultural land either below one hectare contribute nothing in the market. According to the statistics (done by ICAR), while marginal farmers contribute nothing to market in terms of agricultural produce, small farmers sell 54% of their produce and consume the remaining part. Big farmers owning more than 2 hectares land sell 94% produce and consume the rest. But since the percentage of marginal and small farmers is higher in the country, the ICAR developed a pilot project to provide farmers with a support of Rs 10,000 by giving required inputs instead of cash.

The CSA scientist said farmers benefiting from the ICAR's project are identified based on the crop module used by them and the constituents it contains. It is only after this that scientists from CSA University would provide technical suggestion and other required intervention, he added.

Vice-chancellors will tell farmers about FDI: Governor

PUNE: State governor K Sankaranarayanan said that [vice-chancellors](#) of agricultural universities in the state have been asked to meet farmers' associations and groups across the state and explain to them the benefits of foreign direct investment (FDI) in retail.

"The vice-chancellors will meet [farmers](#) and discuss with them the concept of [FDI](#) and how it is set to make them better entrepreneurs. It will not result in their exploitation," Sankaranarayanan said in the city after unveiling a 12-ft statue of social reformer Mahatma Jyotiba Phule at the University of Pune (UoP) on Wednesday.

"Farmers are opposing the policy fearing that it will weaken their position in the market. However, it will not harm them, but strengthen them in many ways. The benefits are many to the farmers."

Meanwhile, the unveiling of Phule's statue was pending for the past five years due to several controversies surrounding it. [Chhagan Bhujbal](#), state public works department minister, had donated the statue to the UoP. Bhujbal was also present on the occasion. He said that Phule has played an important role in laying the foundation stone of the education system in the country.

Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, who was the chief guest for the function, said, "Social reforms in our country have been successful due to the efforts of Mahatma Phule. He encouraged women empowerment through education despite facing a lot of opposition and that is why we see successful women in every field today."

Panel led by Kakodkar to approve GM crops' trial

NAGPUR: In a move that will raise hackles of anti-GM (genetically modified) crop activists, [state government](#) has set up committee under famous nuclear scientist Anil Kakodkar to advise the government on allowing field trial for a particular GM-variety developed by a company. If this committee clears the crop variety, then its trial would be allowed by the government.

Besides Kakodkar, the ten-member panel comprises vice-chancellors and directors (research) of the four agriculture universities of the state and the agriculture commissioner as the member

secretary. Earlier, only central government's nod was required for field trials. However, now no objection certificate (NOC) of the government of state where the trial will be conducted is required. Some states have banned such trials completely.

Agriculture commissioner [Umakant Dangat](#) said any company desirous of conducting a field trial of GM crop would have to submit its proposal to agriculture ministry or the commissionerate. The committee would then study the impact of the crop and submit a report to the government. "We will study the possible impact on humans, animals, environment and biodiversity. The physical, social and economic impact would also be assessed. No aspect would be left untouched," Dangat explained.

The commissioner said he would meet Kakodkar on December 3 and the two would prepare a brief for the first meeting of the committee. "We will make experts in biotechnology special invitees," he added.

Earlier, in March 2012, the government had set up an internal committee headed by agriculture commissioner and having the directors (research) of the four agriculture universities as members. There was no procedure for deciding whether field trial should be allowed and the committee was expected to do that. However, later the government realized that GM crops was a complicated issue and hence it expanded the committee and roped in Kakodkar.

Farmer activist Kishor Tiwari feels that the committee is an eyewash. "There is a dichotomy in the government's approach. On the one hand our agriculture minister [Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil](#) is promoting organic farming and on the other [chief minister](#) Prithviraj Chavan wants GM crops. Chavan has always been in favour of GM products. Kakodkar has been chosen because he too is in favour of GM crops.

"Bt cotton has been a miserable failure in the state. The government itself admits this indirectly. It has ruined the cotton farmers of west Vidarbha and [Marathwada](#). Now, does it want to ruin the paddy farmers of east Vidarbha and Konkan," an angry Tiwari asked.

Climate change blamed for unseasonal Kesar crop

RAJKOT: Villagers lined up on Khambha-Rajula highway selling fruits resembling mangoes caught the attention of businessman Girish Savani who was on his way to Diu for a vacation.

When Savani stopped his car, he was surprised to know these were indeed kesar mangoes. Savani readily purchased 5 kg for Rs 1,000.

Not only travellers but farmers too are stunned by the sudden arrival of kesar mangoes, essentially a summer fruit, amidst the chill of winter. Orchards in several villages of Junagadh and Amreli districts on the periphery of the [Gir forest](#) are seeing kesars dangling on the trees, ready to be devoured.

"We were surprised to see the flowering of kesar fruits in winter. There is no difference in the size and taste of the fruit that grows in summer," said Salim Malviya, who owns a mango orchard sprawling 25 bighas near Savarkundla in Amreli district.

Malviya said each of mango weighs around 300 gm. Now, his family is preparing to harvest the mangoes and ripen them to sell in the market.

Agriculture experts say that the arrival of [kesar mangoes](#) in winter is a phenomenon attributed to [climate change](#) due to [drought](#) and seen after over a decade.

Dr D V Dalvadia, professor, department of horticulture at [Junagadh Agricultural University](#) (JAU), told TOI, "Many mango orchard owners in Saurashtra have reported flowering of mangoes this winter. This phenomenon is due to drought seen after 10 years."

According to Dalvadia, deficient rains and drought conditions create an imbalance in the carbon-nitrogen nutrients in mango trees. "The climate change this year caused an increase in carbon which led to early flowering," he said. "We are selling kesar for anything between Rs 150 per kg to Rs 200 per kg," said Bharat Solanki, who owns an orchard near Khambha in Amreli district.

Sugar firms fix price at Rs 2,500 per tonne of cane

BELGAUM: [Shiv-Shakti Sugars](#) and [Doodh-Ganga Cooperative Sugar Factory](#) in Chikkodi taluk on Tuesday announced Rs 2,500 per tonne for the high recovery breed sugarcane and Rs 2,400 for general breed.

The state government is charging purchase tax of Rs 112 per tonne from factories. We will meet chief minister Jagadish Shettar during the legislative session seeking exemption of the purchase tax, Amit Kore, owner of the Doodh-Ganga factory, said.

Rajya Sabha member and owner of Shiv-Shakti Sugars said Maharashtra government banned sugarcane coming to Karnataka factories from that state this year. But, the state government did not take any such step. Over 10 lakh tonnes of sugarcane goes to Maharashtra factories from border areas of the state every year, he said. Ashok Patil, chairman of the Karnataka State Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation, was present.