

Squads to ensure fertilizer availability



verification: Agriculture department officials inspecting the stock of fertilizers at a godown in Pudukottai on Wednesday.

With samba cultivation gaining momentum after the recent showers, the Agriculture Department has constituted six special teams for ensuring fair availability of fertilizer.

The teams each led by Assistant Director of Agriculture comprises four members, including two fertilizer inspectors. There has been a rise in the demand for urea and the department has been ensuring availability of urea to the paddy growers, says Shah Jehan, assistant director, Quality Control.

Explaining the steps taken by the squads, he said that the department had served 'stop sale' orders on three private dealers in and around Athani near Aranthangi. The dealers were found to have flouted certain norms on fertilizer sale. "We have called for explanation from the dealers for their lapses," he said.

He said that three factors namely exact weight, quality and price of fertilizer, were being ascertained. Bills should be issued to farmers, along with details of sale price. Adequate fertilizer had been stocked at godowns in cooperative societies to facilitate samba cultivators this season, sources said.

Animal husbandry scheme announced in 2007-08 being revived now

Scheduled Castes can buy cows with 50 p.c. subsidy; STs get 70 p.c.



A family can procure not more than two cows under the scheme.— FILE PHOTO: D. Gopalakrishnan

An animal husbandry scheme, primarily to serve the interests of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, the landless people and the agricultural labourers, which was enunciated in 2007-08 and yet to be implemented, has now come to light and orders have since been issued to the primary agricultural cooperative societies, the district cooperative banks and the Karnataka Milk Federation to implement the funding programme immediately. Action will be initiated against those who fail to comply with the directions of the government.

Minister for Cooperation B.J. Puttaswamy, during a review meeting here on Wednesday, reprimanded the officials concerned and directed that a circular be issued. Under the programme, Scheduled Castes are eligible to purchase cows with a 50 per cent subsidy while for the Scheduled Tribes, a 70 per cent subsidy is provided.

The beneficiaries are eligible for a loan not exceeding Rs. 70,000 (finalised in 2007) and now, it is being raised to Rs. 1 lakh given the increase in the cost of milch animals.

Briefing presspersons after the meeting, Mr. Puttaswamy said that for the benefit of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, loans would be provided for the margin money required. A family can procure not more than two cows under the scheme. Further, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes cooperative societies promoted under the scheme in the Hyderabad-Karnatak region will be eligible for a government grant to form cooperative societies.

The Hyderabad-Karnataka region contributes only 20 per cent of the milk produced in the State, while over 50 per cent per cent of the milk production is from the southern districts.

Waiver

On the farm loan waiver scheme announced by the government nearly three months ago, following drought in 140 taluks of the State, the Cooperation Minister said that while the requisite funds for the waiver (estimated at Rs. 3,500 crore) has been set apart by Finance Department, the district cooperative banks were yet to submit the reimbursement bill.

A ceiling of Rs. 25,000 on the farm loan amount that is set to be waived is directly handled by the primary agricultural cooperative societies which, in turn, have to obtain a reimbursement from the district cooperative banks.

He said that of the subsidised crop loans being provided by the government, changes have been introduced to ensure that the small and poor farmers benefit the most. Further, steps have been taken to provide loans with a preference to new applicants (at least 25 per cent). The zero per cent interest farm loan (with a ceiling of Rs. 1 lakh) has been provided to 7.45 lakh farmers in this financial year and the gross outgo was Rs. 2,346 crore.

It is expected that nearly 19 lakh farmers will seek farm loans totalling nearly Rs. 6,500 crore.

In the last financial year, farm loans were disbursed to 17 lakh farmers and involved an amount of Rs. 5,600 crore. For being eligible to obtain fresh loans, farmers have to necessarily repay the loans obtained. The rate of recovery is around 98 per cent. Apart from the zero per cent interest farm loans, the farmers are eligible for loans up to Rs. 3 lakh at an interest rate of three per cent.

Poultry ban: State in talks with Kerala

Karnataka is still in talks with the Kerala government over lifting the ban on movement of poultry products from the State, even as no fresh occurrence of bird deaths were reported outside the Central Poultry Development Organisation (CPDO) where the outbreak of avian influenza (H5N1) has been notified by the Union government. "We are trying to convince the authorities in Kerala," Principal Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry, Arvind Jannu, told *The Hindu*.

According to the poultry industry sources, the ban imposed by Kerala was resulting in a loss of Rs. 5–6 crore daily, especially in Mysore. He said the sanitisation work at the CPDO will be over in 5 days and all samples from the 10-km surveillance zone sent to laboratory had shown negative.

While initially around 70 samples were collected daily, the authorities were now collecting 40, he added.

Mr. Jannu said a decision would be taken in three days on whether to lift the ban or not.

Union reduces procurement price of milk

Sudden fall in the price of milk powder forced us to reduce the price, says union president

The Gulbarga-Bidar Milk Union has reduced procurement price of milk by Rs. 1.5 a litre.

"The sudden fall in the price of milk powder forced us to reduce the price," union president Mallikarjun Biradar told presspersons here on Wednesday.

However, the reduction was temporary and would be reversed in two months, he added. "We will start paying the full amount after two months," he said. He clarified that the union was not reducing the quantum of procurement.

All the district unions in the State are facing problems due to fall in the milk powder price. While other unions have reduced the procurement price by around Rs. 4, we have reduced it by Rs. 1.5, he added.

According to him, the union procures 80,000 litres of milk a day. "We sell around 60,000 litres of milk and 4,000 litres of curds a day. The remaining 15,000 –16,000 litres of milk is converted into skimmed milk powder. We are unable to sell this profitably. Even when we find buyers, the price is low and payment is delayed. In recent times, the price has seen a steep fall," he said.

"This has led to accumulated losses. We suffer an average loss of Rs. 8.5 a litre for the milk procured. We want to reduce the loss and, hence, the reduction in the procurement price," he said.

He clarified that the union would continue to pay the State government's incentive price of Rs. 2 a litre to farmers.

Mr. Biradar claimed that the union had increased procurement four-fold to 80,000 litres a day from 19,000 litres a day two years ago. "We have also started a system of weekly payment to farmers," he added.

Officials said the reduction in prices was inevitable. Criticism

However, this decision has not gone down well with farmers. "This government has been taking anti-farmer steps since it came to power. This is the latest in that series," said Siddappa Metre, Karnataka Pranta Raitha Sangha leader.

"The BJP came to power promising to pay cash incentives to milk producers. Now, it is betraying us," he said and added that the KMF and unions had to work on increasing their efficiency.

Marketing

The union had big plans to market its products more efficiently, Mr. Biradar said. This would help us sell more milk and other produce, he said.

"We are tying up with the North East Karnataka Transport Corporation to set up milk booths at bus-stands in Hyderabad Karnataka districts. Managing Director of the Karnataka Milk Federation Harsha Gupta and NEKRTC Managing Director G.N. Shivamurthy have agreed to this plan. We have asked the NEKRTC to give us stalls of 100 sq ft each at bus-stands on rental. We will outsource the management of the stalls," Mr. Biradar said.

The union is also writing to all urban local bodies in Hyderabad Karnataka districts to provide space to set up stalls in all wards in cities and towns. "In Bidar, we have requested the district administration and the City Municipal Council to give us land in all the 31 wards so that we can set up shops in residential areas," he said.

The union also plans an awareness rally about the good effects of consuming milk and the ill-effects of using adulterated milk. "We have noticed that some private companies are selling

adulterated milk. The first rally will be in Bidar on Friday. We will organise rallies in all districts later," he added.

We're in dire straits, say poultry farmers

Farmers running poultry farms in Davangere district have demanded that the government clarify that there was no bird flu in Karnataka, which, they said, would fetch them "fair price" for their chicken.

Addressing presspersons here on Wednesday, leaders of the district poultry owners' association O.B. Gurumurthy and Chennabasavaraj said that news that bird flu had been noticed in chicken at Hesaraghatta, near Bangalore, had resulted in chicken prices coming down drastically. Farmers used to sell chicken for not less than Rs.100 a kg till October 6, and now it was between Rs. 40 and Rs. 60, they said. They added that according to a rough estimate, poultry owners in the State had suffered loss of more than Rs. 100 crore since a month now.

Poultry sales had come down drastically along with the price, Mr. Gurumurthy said and added that many farmers who had sustained huge losses in agriculture had shifted to poultry. Taking exception to Minister for Animal Husbandry Revu Naik Belamagi's "silence" on the issue, they demanded that the Minister declare that there was no bird flu in the State. This would help farmers get a fair price for their chicken. The State should also compensate poultry owners for their losses, they said.

The leaders also wanted the government to introduce an exclusive insurance scheme for poultry, for which it should pay the premium on behalf of poultry owners.

Interest-free crop loans for farmers

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Wednesday launched a new campaign for disbursement of interest-free crop loans to farmers at Niwaru village near here while affirming that regular elections to the cooperative bodies would maintain their democratic character and help strengthen the cooperative movement.

Interest-free loans will be sanctioned to farmers during the rabi crop season as part of the campaign. As a symbolic gesture, Mr. Gehlot gave away cheques of Rs.1 lakh each to 18 farmers and five women's self-help groups.

He said an earlier announcement for disbursement of loans worth Rs.8,000 crore had been revised to Rs.9,431 crore this year. Similarly, the subsidy for waiving interest for farmers who make repayment on time has been enhanced from Rs.200 crore to Rs.262 crore.

Favourable changes in the cooperative laws had made the boards of directors in the cooperative institutions more powerful and brought to an end the so-called "inspector raj", said Mr. Gehlot. He said 2012, being observed as the international cooperative year, had witnessed new initiatives in the State for expansion of cooperative movement.

"Our decision to allot land free of cost for construction of buildings and godowns of village cooperative societies has made a tremendous contribution in expansion of their membership,"

Mr. Gehlot said and pointed out that the State Government had for the first time paid bonus on procurement of wheat.

Union Minister of State for Rural Development Lal Chand Kataria, State Cooperative Minister Parsadilal Meena and Urban Development Minister Shanti Dhariwal were among those present at the launch ceremony.

Registrar of Cooperative Societies Pawan Kumar Goyal said there were at present about 1 crore members of 30,000 cooperative institutions in the State. All the cooperative societies were being computerised in phases at a cost of Rs.25 crore, he added.

One-Stop Solution Provider institute for food processing

Even as the decision to allow FDI in multi-brand retail opens doors to multinational retailers like Wal-mart, Tesco and Carrefour, the Ministry of Food Processing has got started a world class institute in food technology, research and management which is expected among other activities, to produce skilled manpower to cater to the needs of the sector.

“Recent trend shows that the food processing sector is growing more than agriculture as well as the manufacturing sectors. Though a sunrise sector, it faces various bottlenecks such as lack of infrastructure, packaging and grading centres, quality control and testing facilities. However, I consider the lack of human resource as one of the biggest impediments in the development of the sector, which need this institute will fill,” Union Agriculture and Food Processing Minister Sharad Pawar said on Wednesday.

The Minister was here to dedicate NIFTEM—the National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management—to the nation. Among those present on the occasion were Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Union Ministers Harish Rawat and Tariq Anwar, Planning Commission member Arun Maira, NIFTEM Chancellor Rakesh Kakker and Vice-Chancellor Ajit Kumar.

Mr. Pawar recalled the contribution of his predecessor Subodh Kant Sahai, the then Food Processing Secretary Ashok Sinha and Expenditure Secretary Sushma Nath in conceiving and accelerating the establishment of the institute. UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi had laid the foundation for the institute in 2008.

Expressing the confidence that it will grow into an apex world class body to promote networking and cooperation with global centres, he said the best part of NIFTEM was convergence of entrepreneurship and management. According to him, the sector not only has the ability to bridge the gap between the producer and the consumer but can convert a farmer into an entrepreneur.

Century Seeds changes hands

French company, Groupe Limagrain, through its Indian subsidiary, has acquired India's Century Seeds Private Limited, a vegetable seed firm, in an all-cash deal. The company has not disclosed the amount.

This is Groupe Limagrain's second acquisition in India in 12 months.

The Century Seeds buy-out considerably strengthens Limagrain's vegetable seeds market presence in India, and would immediately double the size of the new entity, representing almost 5 per cent of the vegetable seeds market, with sales of almost 8 million euro.

Limagrain, with revenues of \$1.9 billion, focuses on field and vegetable seeds and cereal products. The group has about 7,000 employees, including 1,400 researchers.

The privately-held Century Seeds owns more than ten species, including cauliflower, pepper, cabbage, tomato and vegetables mainly consumed in Asia. It has extensive production and sales networks in India, particularly in the north.

Recently, Groupe Limagrain acquired 61.01 per cent stake in BISCO Bio Sciences, a company engaged in the corn seed market.

In 2009, Limagrain acquired Atash Seed, a unit of biotech firm Avasthagen, specialising in field crop technologies for rice, wheat and maize.

TNCSC hopes to increase procurement during samba season

: With Kuruvai cultivation taken up only in pumpset irrigated areas in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts this year and with a good price in the market, Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has to procure very little Kuruvai paddy from farmers this year.

While procurement was 300 tonnes in Thanjavur district, it was 500 tonnes in Tiruvarur district. TNCSC offers Rs.13 and Rs.13.50 per kilo for common and 'A' grade variety of paddy. But in the open market farmers get Rs.15 per kilo. So farmers prefer private parties to TNCSC. TNCSC gives Rs.1,300 for common variety of paddy per quintal and Rs.1,350 for A grade variety of paddy. A total of 40 direct purchase centres (DPCs) are functioning in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts.

TNCSC hopes to procure more during samba season, with a target of 1.20 lakh hectares in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts.

Farmers have gone for direct sowing, System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method of cultivation and community nurseries to raise samba crop this year. Heavy rains have helped in transplantation of samba crop.

Samba harvest will begin from the last week of December and go on till February end. Peak procurement will be in the month of January.

Mass production of bio-control agent empowers tribal women

The SHG has been earning a monthly income of Rs. 5,000



Something new: Training given to tribal girls for making bio control.— Photo: Special Arrangement

Wayanad is a land of spices.

“The agricultural market strength of the region is highly influenced by the fluctuation in production of spices.

“The productivity of spices, especially black pepper, has declined over the years due to various problems of which foot rot of black pepper is one. In the era of promotion of bio-safety and quality products, the farmers are resorting to eco friendly plant protection techniques,” says Dr A. Radhamma Pillai, Programme Coordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Ambalavayal, Wayanad, Kerala Agricultural University.

Enhance opportunities

Moreover Wayanad KVK wanted to enhance economic opportunities for tribals of the district by utilising their labour.

For empowerment of farm women, rural transformation and employment are considered important. But the pace of diffusion of technologies was not commensurate with the pace of information generation, mainly due to the poor accessibility, lack of knowledge, and little motivation on the part of farm women.

Inspite of this, Wayanad KVK adopted a sustainable livelihood approach by mobilising tribal women who had lost their livelihood by getting displaced from their agricultural land which was acquired for a major irrigation project.

This provided a gender responsive learning environment in the laboratory for meaningful translation of lab to life, and hence helping rural productive transformation. In India, more than 70 per cent of the area under black pepper is confined to the Wayanad district in Kerala.

One of the major factors attributed to the low productivity of pepper compared to the potential yield, is the high incidence of foot rot disease caused by a fungus called *Phytophthora capsici*.

“It was during the late 90’s, that Wayanad KVK intervened in the crisis through campaigns and training sessions and later identified and isolated the biocontrol agent, called *Trichoderma*, from

soil and started its production for the effective management of the fungal disease,” says Dr. Radhamma.

Increased demand

As Trichoderma gained popularity, to meet the increased demand, scientists speculated about its mass production.

“In an attempt to explore this as an exemplary opportunity for technological empowerment of tribal women, we had a discussion with the Tribal Development Department and the idea was highly appreciated by them. Following this, we conducted a technological feasibility and economical viability study, which proved promising. We then advertised in dailies about vocational training to be conducted solely for tribal women (youth).

Also for identification of good training we were in constant touch with the Tribal Development Department. There was good response and our KVK received many applications,” she explains.

Selection

A wealth rank analysis of the trainee applications was conducted and the economically weaker candidates were selected.

“The analysis was conducted scientifically to assess the economic status of the candidates as we were of the view that economic empowerment will definitely help to improve the socio-economic conditions of the tribal women/ their family and thus improve their overall living standards,” says Radhamma.

Thus a tribal group of 13 girls was targeted with an idea of generating self employment to the tribal youth of Nellarchal tribal colony.

Thereafter, they were given training for six months' in the production of biocontrol agents such as Trichoderma and Pseudomonas and were finally registered as a self help group (SHG) called 'Sabari'.

During the training programme extension classes were organized and social awareness and leadership training conducted that helped them gain self-confidence.

The biocontrol agents are being mass multiplied and distributed through a revolving fund mode employing these trained SHGs under the direct technical supervision of KVK specialists as well as by utilizing the facilities at the Kendra office in Ambalavayal. The members of the SHG gained 35 per cent of the total benefit on an MoU basis with the Kendra.

Income

The SHG has been earning a monthly income of Rs. 5,000 which revolutionized the income pattern of their family.

The vibrant tribal SHG could assure 55 tonnes production of both the bioagents from 2005-2010 which fetched an income of 38.50 lakhs and has received about 13.48 lakhs.

Apprised of the success of this venture, the State Planning Board sanctioned Rs 36.39 lakhs for modernizing the existing bio control lab under the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY) for large scale production of the two bio control agents.

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Boron management in cole crops

Boron is an essential micronutrient and plays an important role in fertilization and flowering process.

Synthesis

It has been known to be constituent of plants since 1857. Facilitating pollination and fruit set is considered to be the most important function of boron besides its role in the synthesis of amino acids and protein metabolism.

Boron increases the translocation of sugar in plants and increases the rate of transport of sugars (which are produced by photosynthesis in mature plant leaves) to actively growing regions

It plays an important role in both structural and functional integrity of plasma membranes. Integrity and functionality of plasma membranes are ensured with adequate supply of boron.

Boron is involved in nitrogen fixation and it is required for growth and development of vascular tissues. It accelerates nitrogenous activity through effective nodule development for nitrogen fixation.

Cole crops (those which grow well in temperate climate like cauliflower and cabbage) have high boron requirement and its deficit is high in acidic soils.

These crops develop crack, corky stem, petioles and midribs. In crops like Knol Khol (Kohl rabi), cracking will be seen and as a result these vegetables will not fetch a market value.

In cauliflower it appears as small water soaked areas in the centre of the curd. Later, the stem becomes hollow with soaked tissue surrounding the walls of the cavity.

Brown rot

In more advanced stage, pinkish or rusty brown areas develop on the surface of the curd and hence, it is also known as brown rot or red rot. Affected curd develops a bitter taste.

It can be controlled by application of borax or sodium tetra borate at 20 kg ha. In case of acute deficiency, foliar spray of 0.25 to 0.50 per cent solution of boric acid is advocated.

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Soybean plants at Chernobyl produce fertile seeds



The environmental impact of radiation at Chernobyl continues to interest many researchers. There are only very limited studies on plants. Chernobyl accident led to contamination of large tracts of land.

“There have been a few molecular analyses of plants grown in the radio-contaminated Chernobyl area, and there is as yet no broad understanding of the mechanisms that underlie survival,” Dr. Katarína Klubicová and coworkers from the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia reported in the October 2012 issue of *PLoS ONE*, an open access journal.

Researchers found that in spite of the magnitude of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, local flora continues to grow and reproduce in the radioactively contaminated soil.

“Although there has been more than 80 years of research addressing the effects of ionizing radiation on plants, the ongoing success of plants in the Chernobyl area was not anticipated,” the researchers added.

These researchers who have been pioneers in the field, analyzed protein abundance in mature seeds harvested from first generation soybean plants grown in radioactive and non-radioactive plots in the Chernobyl area . They reported that the plants adapted very well to the contaminated environment (*Journal of Proteome Research* , 2009).This study was described in *The Hindu* on July 23, 2009.

There was evidence suggesting that the plant adapts itself to heavy metal stress and protects itself against radiation damage. Plants mobilise seed storage proteins to adjust to increased levels of ionising radiation.

Researchers planted soybean plants since 2007 in a radioactive field located 5 km from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (CNPP), near the village Chystogalivka, and in a control field established directly in a non-radioactive area in the town of Chernobyl. The soil in the radioactive field contained 20,650 Bq /kg of Cs-137 and 5180 Bq/ kg of Sr-90 and in the non-radioactive field 1414 Bq/ kg of Cs-137 and 550 Bq/ kg of Sr-90.(In a Bq of radioactivity one disintegration occurs every second).

The dry weight of mature soybeans harvested from the radioactive Chernobyl area was only 63 per cent of those harvested from the non-radioactive area.

Total oil content in mature dry seeds harvested from the radioactive area decreased to 20 per cent from 25 per cent in the seeds harvested from the non-radioactive area

Soybeans from the radioactive Chernobyl area were smaller, contained less oil, and were fertile. The Abundances for 211 proteins were characterised during soybean seed development in non-radioactive and radioactive Chernobyl areas.

“... the study showed that biochemistry of soybean seed development in radio-contaminated Chernobyl area is altered the specific way that resulted into the smaller seeds with less oil ... ”, Dr Martin Hajduch, co-author and Senior Scientist, Slovak Academy of Sciences responded to an e-mail query.

The researchers observed that relatively larger amounts of Sr-90 got transferred from soil to plant compared with Cs-137.

“This is due to different biochemical properties of these two radio-nuclides that are still not well understood,” he added.

“In the case of both contaminated and control fields, Sr-90 got concentrated in the shoot system for both control and contaminated (550 Bq/kg to 1720Bq/kg (3 times) for control;5180Bq/kg to54,000 Bq/kg (9.5times) for contaminated. How do you explain this?”

Dr Hajduch thus responded to the query:

“The biochemical pathways of radio-nuclides within the plants are still not well understood. Different levels of Sr-90 and Cs-137 accumulation in soybean are due to different biochemical properties of these radio-nuclides.”

"Will the energy absorbed from Sr-90 by the seeds during their storage dramatically affected its behaviour during its growth during the second generation?"

"There was probably some minor effect of accumulated radioactivity on the seeds during the storage. However the effect was not big, because mature seeds are not biologically active tissue. This is also documented by the fact that seeds were able to germinate," he clarified.

Scientists measured Cs-137 and Sr-90 in the shoot system (entire plant without roots and seed pods) and in the seeds. They found that the shoot system accumulated more radioactivity than seeds. This may be nature's scheme to resist further damage by limiting accumulation of radioactivity in seeds.

In an interesting study published in *PLoS ONE* Journal in 2009, Dr Sher Ali and his co-workers from the National Institute of Immunology, Delhi showed some evidence that while natural background radiation may be responsible for varying alterations, it leaves the DNA of the vital germ line intact. Nature's inexplicable schemes save all living things from extinction.

GM crops should go back to the lab



As they do not spell increased crop production, new long-term scientific research on health impacts should involve extensive trials

Some weeks ago, I was addressing students of molecular biology at the Kerala Agricultural University campus in Thiruvananthapuram. During the question-answer session, I asked how many of them would like to take up agricultural biotechnology as a career. To my surprise, only a couple of hands went up.

The answer I got probably points to the future of agricultural biotechnology in India. Most students wanted to go into animal biotechnology and human genetics, but not into crop biotechnology. The reason they gave was that they did not see a future for crop biotechnology, given the social backlash against it. Well, I am aware that this class is not an exact representation of the national mood among students, but surely it tells us a lot about the way society, more importantly the younger generation, perceives genetic engineering.

So, when the Supreme Court-appointed Technical Expert Committee (TEC) recommended a 10-year moratorium on all field trials of GM food crops, I was not surprised. The expert panel had merely echoed the concerns and apprehensions that society at large has towards such crops.

Knowing the casual manner in which large-scale field trials are held across the country, the absence of a regulatory mechanism, and the failure to document the damage transgenic crops have inflicted on humans and the environment during, before and after such trials, the committee has called for invoking the “precautionary principle.”

Report’s recommendations

A few months ago, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture tabled on August 9 its report *Cultivation of Genetically Modified Food Crops: Prospects and Effects*. After an exhaustive interaction with stakeholders, and considering the impact genetically modified food crops have on biodiversity, human health, the environment and the future of farming, it recommended: “for the time being all research and development activities on transgenic crops should be carried out only in containment, the ongoing field trials in all States should be discontinued forthwith.” In a way, the Parliamentary Standing Committee and TEC are saying the same thing.

In support of GM

Three years after Bt Brinjal — which, if allowed, would have been India’s first GM food crop — was put on indefinite hold, the reports of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture and the TEC are pointers to swelling opposition to the manner in which GM crops are being pushed. Although many State governments have already refused permission for field trials of GM crops, I don’t understand why Food and Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar is time and again appealing to Chief Ministers to put GM research back on the agenda. Chairman of the Science Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (SAC-PM), Dr. C.N.R. Rao, too has lamented the lack of a “science-informed, evidence-based approach” in the debate.

In a desperate bid to support GM crops, it is often said that conventional agriculture technologies may be inadequate to meet India’s food security challenges. The other objection is that the debate is not “science-based.” Let us look at both arguments. As far as the role of GM crops in boosting food security needs is concerned, this argument is not “evidence-based.” First, there is no GM crop anywhere in the world which increases crop productivity. In fact, even the U.S. Department of Agriculture acknowledges that the productivity of GM soya and GM corn in the U.S. is less than the conventional varieties. Moreover, the prevailing drought in the U.S. has conclusively shown that it is only non-GM crops that have withstood the vagaries of weather.

In India, on June 1, a record 82.3 million tonnes surplus of wheat and rice was stored. This surplus existed at a time when an estimated 320 million people went to bed hungry. Mr. Pawar is making all efforts to export a large chunk of food stocks or make open market releases, but no serious effort is being made to feed the hungry. In fact, since 2001-03, India has been holding on an average anything between 50 to 60 million tonnes of foodgrains and yet its ranking in the Global Hunger Index shows no improvement.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity, therefore, is not the result of any production shortfall. To ensure that farmers do not produce more, and thereby add to existing storage problems, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) has frozen the wheat price at last year's level. Paying more to farmers would entail more production. This does not make any economic sense. After all, the farmer too is impacted by rising inflation. Why penalise farmers for the government's inability to handle and store surplus foodgrain?

The fact remains that food production is being deliberately kept low, and only enough to meet basic food security needs. Provide market price to wheat and rice growers, and I am sure production will go up manifold.

SAC-PM is a committee made up of distinguished scientists. Although the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) had given the green signal for commercial cultivation of Bt Brinjal, the SAC-PM should take note of the 19-page submission by the then Minister for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh; the analysis is the best "science-based" justification for stopping GM food crops.

Findings

Even when the Bt Brinjal debate was hot, I had pointed out the inability of the scientific community to conduct long-term feeding trials on rats. Internationally, the practice is to have 90-day feeding trials, which corresponds to 24 years of human lifespan — and that's what the GEAC followed. I had always wondered why the industry as well as the scientific community was not conducting feeding trials for two years, which means the entire human lifespan. Professor Gilles-Eric Séralini, professor of molecular biology at the Caen University in France, finally did it. He recently published the findings of the two-year study on the long-term toxicity of GM maize NK 603, engineered to resist Roundup herbicide — and as expected the industry was up in arms.

In these first-ever long-term feeding trials on rats, published in the scientific journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology*, Prof. Séralini and his team observed that "females developed fatal mammary tumours and pituitary disorders. Males suffered liver damage, developed kidney and skin tumours and experienced problems with their digestive system." The team also found that even lower doses of GM corn and Roundup weedicides resulted in serious health impacts. Moreover, 50 per cent male and 70 per cent female rats died prematurely. The tumours were 2.5 times bigger than what would normally appear in the control population.

As expected, the study was branded "bogus," "inadequate" and of course "unscientific." Séralini answered the industry's main criticism pointing out that the species of rat used was the same that the biotech giant Monsanto had used in its research trials. Moreover, the sample size was as per the recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) protocol for GM food safety toxicology studies. Séralini's experiment has amplified the need for long-term human safety trials, which I think the SAC-PM should be primarily asking the Department of Biotechnology to focus on. SAC-PM needs to review more scientific literature before making any broad and sweeping assertions.

At a time when GM crops hold no promise of higher crop production, the latest long-term scientific research on the impacts on health warrants repeated trials under all environments. As

suggested by TEC and the Standing Committee, more experiments are needed on farm animals.

Since science is answerable to society, and cannot be allowed to operate in a vacuum, this is the least India can do to dispel any fear.

25,000 acres of dryland in Haveri district to be irrigated

Lift irrigation scheme with sprinkler system to be inaugurated tomorrow



Water lifted from the Varada flowing into a sump constructed under the scheme near Bankapur in Haveri district. The sprinkler irrigation system is functioning in the background.— Photo: Girish Pattanashetti

Nearly 25,000 acres of dryland in Shiggaon, Savanur and Hanagal taluks of Haveri district are all set to be irrigated by sprinkler irrigation system with the commissioning of the Shiggaon Lift Irrigation Scheme on Friday.

The government will be responsible for the maintenance of the sprinkler systems installed on farmland for two years.

Under the Shiggaon Lift Irrigation Scheme with Sprinkler Irrigation System, 1.5 tmcft of water will be diverted from a diversion weir constructed across the Varada, near Halasur village, in Savanur taluk (where the Varada joins the Dharma) and lifted to irrigate 9,900 ha (24,463 acres) of land at higher altitudes.

Under the project, 1.36 tmcft of water will be utilised for irrigation and 0.14 tmcft for pumping water to five minor irrigation tanks. The total cost of the project is Rs. 238 crore and the administrative approval for the project was given in January 2009.

30 villages

When the project is fully commissioned, it is expected to irrigate 4,945 ha of land in Shiggaon taluk, 2,575 ha in Savanur taluk and 2,380 ha in Hanagal taluk, covering 30 villages in all. Also, five minor irrigation tanks in the surrounding areas will be filled.

Nearly 90 per cent of the work has been completed so far. The remaining work pertains to installing overhead sprinklers on over 2,000 acres of land in Hanagal taluk. The work has been delayed as sugarcane crop on these farmlands is yet to be harvested.

The project will be formally inaugurated by Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar and the former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa on Friday at Bankapur.

'A first'

Water Resources Minister Basavaraj Bommai told *The Hindu* over phone from Bankapur, "While individual farmers have had sprinkler irrigation system since several decades, such controlled sprinkler irrigation on a large scale, aided by a lift irrigation scheme, is being done for the first time. About 2.6 tmcft of water is required to irrigate 25,000 acres under a conventional scheme. By sprinkler irrigation system, only 0.9 tmcft of water will be required to irrigate 25,000 acres."

As it was controlled irrigation, a specific crop pattern could also be maintained and that would give scope for development of agro industries in the neighbourhood, he said, and added that this scheme was modelled on an Israeli sprinkler irrigation system.

Assistant Executive Engineer of Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Ltd. Bhimappa B. Battur said the nigam, through the contractor, would maintain the system for the next two years. Farmers in the region had been briefed about the crop pattern that they need to follow, he said.

"Soon after the commissioning, farmers in 23 villages will be able to use the facility. The remaining seven villages will be covered soon. After two years, maintenance of the system will be handed over to the users' committee."

Mr. Battur said that as part of the project, a barrage would be constructed across the Varada at a cost of Rs. 31 crore. The work would begin soon.

How it works

The total area to be irrigated (9,900 hectares) has been divided into 119 blocks of about 80 to 85 ha. Each block has been provided with a portable overhead sprinkler irrigation system connected to a sump. Water from the 119 sumps will be supplied to 10,912 sprinklers (through 10-hp pumps) to irrigate 154.69 ha in one hour. The sprinkler irrigation system will be operated for 16 hours a day so as to cover an area of 2,475 ha. And in four days, 9,900 ha will be irrigated. The cycle will start again on the fifth day.

Endosulfan: State wants polluter to pay compensation

Describing that the health problems caused to people in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts from the use of endosulfan are "next only to the Bhopal gas tragedy", the State government on Wednesday submitted to the Karnataka High Court that it was time to make the polluter to pay compensation in such cases.

Submission in this regard was made before a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Vikramajit Sen and Justice B.V. Nagarathna during the hearing of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition, initiated *suo motu* by the court, on the issue of sufferings of the people affected by the use of endosulfan in two districts. The PIL petition was initiated following a letter written by K.L. Manjunath, a judge of the High Court.

Government counsel Raveendra G. Kalle said that though the sale of endosulfan in India was banned following to an order of the Supreme Court, many other pesticides containing the same chemical components that were in endosulfan were being marketed under different brand name.

At this stage, Ms. Justice Nagarathna pointed out that the mothers of children affected by the use of endosulfan would rather see them (the children) die than suffer.

Mr. Kalle said the government had announced compensation to those who were suffering but the payment of compensation was stayed as the Endosulfan Manufacturers' and Formulators' Welfare Association challenged it for putting the blame on use of endosulfan for the disabilities caused to the people in these districts.

Meanwhile, the Bench permitted the association to be a respondent in these proceedings. Association's counsel S. Sriranga claimed that endosulfan does not affect health in such a manner as it was a mild insecticide.

The Bench adjourned further hearing asking both the State and Union governments, and the association to file their responses.

National Mission on Food Processing established in Pudukottai

: The Centrally-sponsored 'National Mission on Food Processing' (NMFP) has been established jointly by the State government and Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries. The objective of the programme is decentralisation of implementation of schemes through participation by State governments.

In a press release issued here on Wednesday, C.Manoharan, Collector, said the NMFP would focus on food processing for enhancing farm productivity and farmer's revenue. The State government would be facilitated in addressing both institutional and infrastructural gaps along the value chains. An efficient supply chain for farm produce would be created. It would also promote initiatives for skill development, training and entrepreneurship in post-harvest management and food processing industry. The food processing industry would be assisted to meet the standards in terms of food safety laws and market demand – both domestic and international.

Entrepreneurship development programme would be taken up. A sum of Rs.2 lakh up to each EDP would be provided. Setting up of food processing training centre, single product or multi-product line centre with a revolving seed capital would be some of its salient features.

With a view to promoting human resource development activities, the scheme facilitates creation of infrastructure for offering degree, diploma certificate in food processing technology.

A maximum of Rs.75 lakh would be available for providing the infrastructure such as technical, academic books, laboratory equipment and pilot plant.

Technology upgrading, setting up of new, modernisation or expansion of food processing industry would be permitted with a sanction of 25 per cent of cost of plant and machinery and civil work. The ceiling would be Rs.50 lakh. Cold chain facility, Reefer vehicles would also be permitted.

It would also provide for promotional activities such as seminars, workshops, studies, surveys up to 50 per cent of the cost or a maximum of Rs.3 lakhs. Exhibition and fairs would also be conducted depending upon the merit of the proposal, the release added. Interested persons could submit applications to State Mission Director through District Food Processing Mission Committee, led by the Collector.



Farmers to get interest-free loans for Rabi

Chief minister c on Wednesday launched the distribution of interest-free cooperative loans to farmers for Rabi crop in the state. On the occasion, Gehlot emphasized on holding cooperative societies elections on time and urged people to work with the motive of "one for all and all for one".

To keep the democratic [essence](#) of the cooperative societies in the state intact, Gehlot stressed on the timely elections of these societies. While addressing a gathering at Nivaru, Gehlot said: "We have to ensure time to time elections and for that we amended the Act in our last government. With that, these institutions have been able to come out from the chuckles of inspector raj and today working committees have become empowered." Rajasthan has 30,000 cooperative societies with more than 1 crore members.

On the occasion, the chief minister also distributed cheques of Rs 1 lakh to 18 farmers. The state government is disbursing the interest free loans to farmers for Rabi crop. Framers who have been paying their loans regularly will not have to pay interest on the amount up to Rs 1 lakh. The government has made provision of Rs 262 cr for such purpose in the budget. The amount sanctioned for providing loans for all crops too have been raised from Rs 8,000 cr to Rs 9,431 cr.

Newly appointed Union minister of state for rural development and MP from rural Jaipur, Lalchand Kataria too addressed the rally and urged farmers to make use of the government schemes. Apart form giving crop loan, government also allotted a loan of Rs 7 lakh to five self

help group of women. He also announced to upgrade the primary school at Nivaru to secondary.

Wheat gains as weather conditions threaten supply

[Wheat](#) rose in Chicago and Paris on Wednesday on speculation that global supplies will tighten as crop conditions deteriorate in the US because of dry weather while rain delays planting in many parts of Europe.

About 39% of the US winter wheat crop was in good or excellent condition as of November 4, the worst for the week since record-keeping began 27 years ago, the [US Department of Agriculture](#) said November 5.

The French soft wheat crop was 64% planted as of October 29, compared with 88% last year, crops office FranceAgriMer said November 2. In the UK, about 70% to 75% of wheat has been planted, according to crop-quality service CropMonitor.

"The wheat market now looks to have a clear sense of direction and could grind higher with poor winter wheat crop condition in the US and delayed French and UK plantings providing a supportive backdrop," Jaime Nolan-Miralles, an INTL FCStone commodity risk manager in Dublin, said on Wednesday in an emailed report.

"The macro uncertainty surrounding US elections will now dissipate." Wheat for delivery in December rose 0.6% to \$8.825 a bushel by 4:38 am on the [Chicago Board of Trade](#), after climbing to \$8.83 a bushel, the highest since October 25.

In Paris, milling wheat for January delivery gained 1% to 274.25 euros (\$352.47) a tonne on [NYSE](#) Liffe, after touching 274.50 euros, the highest ever for the contract.

Corn for December delivery rose 0.3% to \$7.4325 a bushel in Chicago and soybeans for January delivery were little changed at \$15.1525 a bushel. Prices also climbed on expectations Barack Obama's re-election as president means the [Federal Reserve](#) will continue monetary stimulus, weakening the dollar and boosting demand for commodities, said [Michael Creed](#), an agribusiness economist at [National Australia Bank](#).

"We'll likely see the continuation of a loose monetary policy," Creed said by phone from Melbourne. "That pushes down the value of the dollar and raises risk appetite, which generally is supportive of commodities."

However, in India, wheat output may remain stable this season due to remunerative prices and sufficient water availability. The output will be closer to previous year's 93.90 million tonne.

According to [InduBSE -0.38 %](#) Sharma, head of Karnal-based [Directorate of Wheat Research](#),

wheat acreage in some parts of the country might increase owing to good availability of water and favourable weather.

36th annual congress of Indian Society for Veterinary Surgery held at Anand Agriculture University

Thirty-sixth annual congress of the [Indian Society for Veterinary Surgery](#) (ISVS) and the International Symposium on 'Ruminant surgery in polyclinics, co-operative dairies and shelters: Perspective 2020' was organized at [Anand Agriculture University](#) (AAU) recently.

The congress was organized by the Department of Surgery and Radiology of AAU's College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry where state-of-the-art technical presentations were made by experts from respective fields.

Before the international symposium, a pre-conference workshop on 'Hands on corneal suturing and B Scan ocular sonography' was also held on October 31 which was attended by more than 40 participants.

The international symposium was attended by more than 450 delegates from different parts of the country. Besides the theme session over 12 lead papers and scientific abstracts and posters were presented while a progressive dairy farmers and 'panjrapole' managers meet was also organized during the symposium.

The symposium was inaugurated at the Sardar Patel Memorial at Karamsad where director of the National Dairy Research Institute Dr A K Srivastava was the chief guest while AAU vice-chancellor Dr A M Sheikh presided over the ceremony.

Farmers introduced to tech, schemes for better yield

With the objective of promoting sustainable technologies for improving agriculture in state, PHD Chamber of Commerce along with [Punjab National Bank](#) on Wednesday organised a seminar attended by hundreds of farmers from across the state. These were selected on the basis of outstanding endeavors and productivity. During the programme, agriculture minister Kunwar Anand Singh distributed [Krishi cards](#) to some of the farmers.

The minister said the Mandi Samiti should analyse why farmers get low value for their agricultural produce and why middlemen take away the major chunk. He emphasised promotion of bio-fertilisers and upgraded technologies to increase productivity of agricultural land. The other speakers comprising professors from reputed agricultural research institutes and IIM, director of horticulture O N Singh, director of Rajya Krishi Utpadan Parishad Rajiv Agrawal and other dignitaries spoke on challenges faced by the sector. While O N Singh said farmers should grow more fruits and vegetables than cereals for better returns, executive director of PNB Usha

Anant Subramaniam highlighted various bank schemes and how PNB had taken the lead in promoting technology among farmers in the state. The bank set up a 'farmers Training College' at Saifai farmers were being trained free in technologies and marketing of produce.

Farmers were introduced to various mobile technologies and helplines, mobile platforms for buyers and sellers, mobile payment systems and traceability and tracking systems. They can also access information about seeds, fertilisers and new machines on their mobile phones. Focus was on enhanced customised and localised content for relevant agricultural extension.

Chairman of Mahakalweshwar Smile Parks Enterprises, Kuldeep Tiwari, said, "Sustainable technology is the only way to improve agricultural produce in UP and stress has to be on food and fruit processing section by developing micro industry sector all over the state." He also said that more investments and resources were required to supporting the activities. Another aspect discussed was reduction of food wastage and creation of proper storage houses for crop yields.

HindustanTimes

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Thursday, Nov 8

Max 32.2° | Min 24.1°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:05

Sunset: 05:40

Barometer: 1011

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Nov 9

Max 34° | Min 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

**Saturday
Nov 10**



35° | 23°

**Sunday
Nov 11**



32° | 25°

**Monday
Nov 12**



32° | 25°

**Tuesday
Nov 13**



32° | 25°

**Wednesday
Nov 14**



32° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Overcast

Overcast

Overcast

Overcast

Airport Weather

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:38

Humidity: 88

Sunset: 05:31

Delhi

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1012



Global warming could dry up Indian monsoon

Indian summer-monsoon rainfall is likely to fail much more frequently under global warming in the next two centuries, new research suggests.

The effects of these unprecedented changes would be extremely detrimental to India's economy which relies heavily on the monsoon season to bring fresh water to the farmlands.

Researchers at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Potsdam University found that as we move towards the end of the 21st, and into the 22nd, century, increasing temperatures and a change in strength of the Pacific Walker circulation in spring could cause more frequent and severe changes in monsoon rainfall.

The Walker circulation usually brings areas of high pressure to the western Indian Ocean but, in years when El Niño occurs, this pattern gets shifted eastward, bringing high pressure over India and suppressing the monsoon, especially in spring when the monsoon begins to develop.

The researchers' simulations showed that as temperatures increase in the future, the Walker circulation, on average, brings more high pressure over India, even though the occurrence of El Niño doesn't increase.

These failures of the monsoon system – defined in the study as a 40 to 70 per cent reduction in rainfall below normal levels – were unprecedented in the researchers' observational record, which was taken from the India Meteorological Department and goes back to the 1870s.

"Our study points to the possibility of even more severe changes to monsoon rainfall caused by climatic shifts that may take place later this century and beyond," lead author of the study, Jacob Schewe, said.

The study was recently published in the journal Environmental Research Letters.

Ban goes, TN poultry trucks enter Kerala

Following the lifting of ban on transportation of poultry products from Tamil Nadu by the Kerala government, trucks carrying eggs and broiler chicken started moving into the neighbouring state from Tuesday noon.

“Our trucks carrying eggs and broiler chickens have been permitted to enter Kerala since Tuesday noon”, said Dr. P Selvaraj, Chairman of National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), Namakkal Zone.

However, truckers would have to produce a duly attested certificate from the Animal Husbandry Department at the check posts, he said.

Kerala imposed a ban on transportation of poultry products from TN and Karnataka on October 29 following the outbreak of avian flu at a government run turkey farm near Bangalore.

The president and the secretary of Livestock and Agri Framers Trade Association (LIFT) Mohan Kumaramangalam and Dr P V Senthil, met Kerala CM Oommen Chandy and Minister for Animal Husbandry K P Mohanan on Monday and urged them to relax the curbs. “We had a meeting with both the CM and the Minister to explain them the safety of TN poultry products. Subsequently, they discussed the issue with officials and lifted the ban”, Mohan Kumaramangalam said.

Endosulfan: State asked to file affidavit

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday directed the state government and Central government to file a counter affidavit with regard to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed concerning the plight of endosulfan victims in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts.

A suo motu PIL was taken up based on a letter written by HC Judge Justice K L Manjunath to Chief Justice Vikramjit Sen highlighting the plight of endosulfan victims in these two districts.

The court had earlier ordered issue of notices to Central and state governments as the PIL charged them with not taking any steps to provide medical facilities and rehabilitation measures for endosulfan victims.

Meanwhile, the counsel for Endosulfan Manufacturers & Formulators Welfare Association contended that since its patent had lapsed long ago, the manufacturers do not need not pay compensation to the victims.

In his letter, Justice Manjunath had said, “Endosulfan is a pesticide used mainly by farmers to prevent (attack by) insects, mites, etc... in cashew plantations in boarder areas. Ignorant villagers consumed polluted water which in turn had serious health implications.”

Huge potential for organic farming: Naveen

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday announced that the State Government is planning to set up a separate agency for certification of organic products in the State to promote organic farming which has a great potential in Odisha.

A recent study by ASSOCHAM suggests that Odisha has an export potential of Rs 600 crore from organic farming produce in the next five years. Naveen made the statement while addressing the biennial convention of organic farmers, held by the Organic Farming Association of India. The study further reveals that organic farming can create 80 lakh additional jobs both in farm and non-farm sectors, he said.

The State has formulated a progressive agriculture policy in 2008 under which special focus has been given to organic farming, Naveen said, adding that the policy supports sustainable incentives for farmers harvesting organic certified crops. Organic seed banks will be opened and Organic Farming Association will be promoted, the CM said.

The Odisha State Seeds and Organic Product Certification Agency has recently been accredited as the certifying body for organic product and it is one of the State-owned agencies to have such an accreditation, he added.

Stating that the agriculture policy has a resolution to include organic farming in the syllabus at the school level, Naveen said it will also be introduced as a compulsory subject at both degree and PG levels in the State Agriculture University. The keenness of farmers will lead to a healthy growth of organic farming in the State, he added.

THE HINDU Business Line

Tobacco farmers protest against curbs



Ahead of the crucial Conference of the Parties to the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) meet in Seoul next week, the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA) has opposed curbs on tobacco cultivation.

It alleged that farmers have been kept out of the discussions

Five top tobacco growing countries such as the US, Argentina, Indonesia, Zimbabwe and Malawi have refused to sign the FCTC.

Curbing tobacco in one country is of no use. The smokers would get the products any how, ITGA members have said. "Farming is an identity. It could be lost if the proposed WHO guidelines are adopted and implemented. As the second largest tobacco producer in the world, India is especially at risk," Antonio Abrunhosa, Chief Executive of ITGA, said.

He was here in connection with the launch of the campaign 'Save Our Farms', to alert the leaders about the threats presented by the irrational and extreme curbs on tobacco farming.

The Seoul meeting, scheduled to happen during November 12-17, would discuss proposals on mandating the seasons when tobacco can and cannot be grown; limiting and then reducing the land area where tobacco can be grown; restricting and stopping all financial and technical support for tobacco farming; and pushing FCTC-member countries to reduce tobacco production simultaneously.

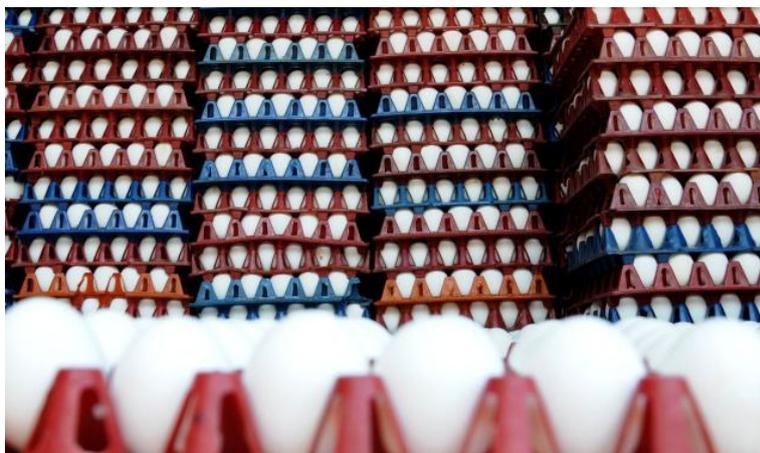
"Bureaucrats with no real farming experience are actually trying to force the seasons when tobacco can and cannot be grown. If implemented this type of dangerous experimentation will devastate the livelihoods of millions," Pammi Badri Reddy, President of the Service and Welfare Organisation for Farmers Development and Member - Tobacco Board of India, said.

Phasing out

The farmers said there was no viable alternative shown to them to shift.

"The guidelines have taken a new and dangerous direction by suggesting that the government should phase out tobacco crop through extreme regulations before viable alternatives have even been identified," they said.

Egg producers unruffled by Oman ban on Indian poultry products



Egg producers in the South, mainly Namakkal, are unperturbed by the ban imposed by Oman on Indian poultry products after the bird flu outbreak in Bangalore.

According to industry sources, business is usual with negligible/lesser impact on the export front and with Kerala lifting its ban, the trade remains unruffled.

“Now that Kerala has lifted the ban and we are seeing a good consumption in the North, we are least affected by the ban on export front,” said a spokesperson of the National Egg Coordination Committee, Namakkal Zone.

This is the second time this year that Oman has banned import of eggs from India.

The West Asian country accounts for 33 per cent of eggs exported.

He said on a daily basis, at least 10 lakh eggs were being shipped to Oman.

“But Kerala is the second biggest market by consuming close to 1.2 crore eggs of a total production of 3.5 crore eggs a day. Also, with the festival season demand in place, we can offset the losses caused by the ban,” he added.

On Monday, the Namakkal Zonal Committee of NECC, cut the wholesale egg price by 15 paise to Rs 3 a piece.

“This rate cut is to clear the piling up of stocks caused by the Kerala’s ban. But we will raise the prices at least by 10-25 paise tomorrow,” the NECC spokesman told *Business Line*.

Egg trade sources said the resurfacing of bird flu incidents will not impact the Namakkal market, which is far removed from the affected poultry zone.

Exports, however, continue to other markets such as the Maldives, Hong Kong, Afghanistan and the African nations.

Syngenta targets to grow more corn in Vietnam



Multinational seeds and crop inputs company Syngenta will focus on corn crop in Vietnam in the backdrop of downward revision in US' corn output, according to Andrew Guthrie, Regional Director, Syngenta Asia Pacific Pte Ltd.

Rice is the dominant crop in Vietnam, but the area under corn is expanding rapidly as it is a major animal feed crop.

With about 1.2 million hectares under corn cultivation and an average yield of about 4.3 million tonnes, Vietnam also imports over a million tonnes of corn annually. The Government is keen on expanding corn acreage and yield.

Guthrie was addressing a group of reporters from India and the Asia Pacific on a Syngenta-hosted tour to participate in a media workshop to familiarise the journalists on the company's programmes in the region and Vietnam, in particular. His remark comes in the backdrop of reports of a significant drop anticipated in US corn output.

The drop is attributed to droughts in the Mid West which will see a 12 per cent cut to about 330 million tonnes, say reports quoting USDA figures.

The region's gains in corn are an opportunity for Syngenta to expand its business.

The company is present along the entire chain of crops from seeds and seed care to crop protection inputs to enhance yields.

Farmers need inputs that increase productivity and profits.

The agriculture industry is set to grow from a \$70 billion business to over \$250 billion by 2025.

In tandem with this growth Syngenta's sale is expected to grow to over \$22 billion post-2015 from about \$12 billion. Syngenta's share in the \$19-billion market in the Asia Pacific is about 9 per cent and makes it a market leader in agriculture inputs, seeds and crop protection, Guthrie said.

challenges

But the growth will not be without its challenges. Apart from eight million large farmers with land holding more than 100 hectares each, the company has to reach out to over 450 million small farmers who farm on about a hectare each in the Asia Pacific who represent its major customer base.

The company will bring to bear its technological strength, including in biotechnology, global experience and expertise, he said.

Shane Emms, Commercial Unit Head, Syngenta-Vietnam, said economic growth is changing lifestyles in the region.

Demand for corn is being driven by increasing meat consumption. It is expected to increase to about 68 kg a year in 2020 from the present 45 kg.

The company reaches over 200,000 farmers every year to disseminate its technology in seed care and crop protection that have contributed to increasing corn yield to more than four tonnes a hectare from three tonnes earlier.

Cloves may go south with rising inflow



The cloves market in the country is currently steady at between Rs 550 and Rs 680 a kg with indications that any rise in the arrivals of the new crop, expected later this month, might steer the prices towards the south, according to market sources.

Prices in the international market are likely to be in the range of \$8,800 and \$9,300 a tonne.

The new Sri Lanka crop is expected to arrive next month while the crop in Madagascar, Comoros and Zanzibar are in full swing. Now Madagascar new crop is sold at \$9,000 a tonne while that of Comoros at \$8,500 a tonne and Colombo crop expected next week is likely to be at \$7,000 a tonne.

“New imports into India might cost Rs 550-650 a kg”, they claimed. According to them, “now new crops are coming every two months, Indonesian new crop will start from Feb -Mar and hence the cloves markets are expected to be stable at present with the possibility of easing in March next”.

Prices for cloves of different origins in the domestic markets are Rs 550 for Colombo, Rs 650 for Madagascar, Rs 660 for Zanzibar, they said.

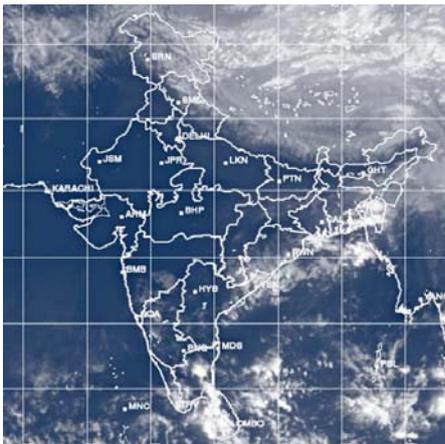
Reduction in duty recently for imports from Indonesia and Brazil also to 7 per cent would aid the price fall further, they said.

A section of trade has made projections for the new crop as Madagascar -15,000 tonnes; Brazil – 6,000 tonnes, Zanzibar 3,000 tonnes, Colombo 6,000 tonnes. According to these projections, there is a likely mismatch in demand and supply with the latter outstripping the former, they claimed.

The group has put the total world production at 74,000 tonnes against a world consumption demand of 1,28,000 tonnes, they said.

Indian production of cloves continued to remain at around 1,500 tonnes as against a national demand of over 15,000 tonnes. India imported 12,175 tonnes of cloves valued at Rs 440.82 crore in the fiscal, 2011-12 as against 7,000 tonnes valued at Rs 153.37 crore in 2010-11, according to official sources.

Rains may linger over south peninsula into next week



The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that an easterly wave traversing the Bay of Bengal will bring rains to south peninsula early into next week. Easterly waves, as in the case of western disturbances in northwest India, carry a rain-head in front, at times morphing into cyclonic circulations or even storms.

FREQUENT PASSAGE

The north-east monsoon witnesses frequent passage of these disturbances across the Bay, bringing rains mainly to Tamil Nadu and adjoining Kerala. The IMD says the easterly wave will expectedly trigger scattered to fairly widespread rainfall over southern peninsula.

US National Centres for Environmental Prediction sees rains erupting over southeast Tamil Nadu coast and climbing over the south-west coast later this week.

Tuesday's cyclonic circulation over Gulf of Mannar moved west-northwest and had lodged itself over coastal Karnataka by Wednesday afternoon. It brought overnight rainfall over coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala, an IMD update said.

TROUGH OF LOW

The trough of low pressure created by a circulation from erstwhile cyclone 'Nilam' is now affecting a region extending from coastal Karnataka to north-east India.

Satellite imagery in the afternoon showed the presence of rain-bearing clouds over parts of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Comorin area.

Occasional rain or thundershowers has been forecast over Tamil Nadu, Kerala, coastal Karnataka and Lakshadweep.

WIND SPEEDS

In the north, prevailing fog to shallow fog conditions are expected to lift from Haryana, Delhi and west Uttar Pradesh as winds build up speed.

Business Standard

Mentha oil rises on industrial demand

Mentha oil prices rose by Rs 7 to Rs 1,215.50 per kg in futures trade today, as speculators enlarged their holdings tracking a rising industrial demand in spot markets against restricted supply.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, the December contract for mentha oil rose by Rs 7, or 0.57%, to Rs 1,215.50 per kg, clocking a business volume of 192 lots.

The November contract traded higher by Rs 6.50, or 0.54%, to Rs 1,201.80 per kg, with a trading volume of 1,020 lots.

Analysts said fresh buying by traders following pick-up in spot demand and lower arrivals from Chandausi in Uttar Pradesh mainly pushed up mentha oil prices at futures trade.

Rising demand from pharmaceutical Industries also kept mentha oil prices higher in the futures market, they said.

Mentha oil falls 0.49% on profit-booking

Mentha oil prices fell by Rs 5.90 to Rs 1,183.50 per kg in futures trade today as speculators booked profits at prevailing higher levels amid a weak demand in the spot market.

Adequate stocks in the spot market following increased arrivals from Chandousi in Uttar Pradesh also put pressure on mentha oil prices.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, the November contract for mentha oil fell by Rs 5.90, or 0.49%, to Rs 1,183.50 per kg, with a business turnover of Rs 535 lots.

The December contract declined by Rs 5.80, or 0.48%, to Rs 1,197 per kg, with a business turnover of 122 lots.

Marketmen attributed the fall in mentha oil futures to profit-booking by speculators and a weak industrial demand in the spot market.