



Scientists and farmers groups write to Supreme Court on TEC report on GM crops

Close to 100 scientists from across the country and several farmers groups have appealed to the Supreme Court to accept in toto the interim report of the court-appointed Technical Expert Committee (TEC) in the matter of field trials of genetically modified (GM) crops.

In its interim report submitted to the court, the panel had recommended a ban on field trials of GM crops until the regulatory system was completely overhauled. It also called for a 10-year moratorium on field trials of Bt food crops (which are modified with the *Bacillus thuringiensis* gene, such as the proposed Bt Brinjal), and a complete ban on field trials of transgenics in crops which originate in India.

In an open letter written on Thursday to the apex court, the scientists led by Pushpa Bhargava, Supreme Court-appointed observer in India's apex regulatory body for GM Organisms (Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee), expressed the hope that the court will not overlook important analysis and recommendations of the TEC and would take a prudent, science-based and precautionary approach.

"This is important for upholding the scientific temper in India and most importantly, not losing the vision of humanity while translating science into technologies," Ms. Bhargava said.

Referring to the committee's stress on "precautionary approach" towards GMOs, the scientists said it is completely logical when the TEC recommended that "a comprehensive assessment, including risk assessment, should start with a need assessment of the technology/product and should encompass a socio-economic analysis which looks at its impact on various sections of the society and economy."

"The glaring gaps in the regulatory system; whether it is lack of rationale for deciding on a particular crop or a trait, particular time or location, incorrect sequencing of biosafety assessment, lack of comprehensive risk assessment including long term independent testing besides serious issues of conflicts of interest are all real issues that beg for an immediate correction. It is to be remembered that unlike any regulatory mechanism in other sectors, regulation here deals with living organisms that can contaminate, reproduce, spread and remain in the system for ever. Hence utmost care needs to be put in place in keeping them contained, until and unless, based on a credible set of biosafety assessments, one can say with confidence that these novel organisms do not pose a threat to health of humans or environment, now or in future," the scientists said in their letter.

Signatories to the letter include Vice-Chancellor of Kolkata University R.N. Basu, Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapeeth Sudarshan Iyengar, former chief economist (forestry department) FAO, Kerala CTS Nair, Department Head Community Medicine of AIIMS Chandrakant Pandav and retired Deputy Director National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad Veena Shatrughana.

Several farmers unions too have urged the apex court to put an end to field trials of GM crops. "The interim report on field trials of GM crops was submitted by the TEC on the October 7 and in the last hearing on the October 29, the Court said it wanted to hear the views of stakeholders like farmers' unions," said S. Kannaiyan, Coordinator of the South Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers Movements in the letter written on Wednesday.

The matter of the TEC recommendations on GM crops is coming up before the Supreme Court on Friday.

SRI paddy cultivation to be taken up in 8,000 hectares in Karur



Ear to ground:Collector S. Jayandhi inspecting the paddy field at Veerarakkiam village in Karur district on Thursday.

: Paddy is to be cultivated under the innovative and water saving System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method in over 8,000 hectares during the current samba season, Collector S. Jayandhi said at Veerarakkiam village near here on Thursday.

Speaking after planting paddy saplings to mark the commencement of SRI farm activity for the current samba season in the district, Ms. Jayandhi said in all around 17,500 hectares would be brought under paddy in the district.

Of that Samba paddy season (starting October-November) accounted for a major chunk of 16,000 hectares while farmers preferred Navarai paddy, with planting in January and harvest by April, in only 1,400 hectares, she said.

The old Amaravathy ayicut abutting Karur town would account for the balance 100 hectares and that too only when water was made available.

Detailing the block-wise target for SRI method in the district during the current year, Ms. Jayandhi noted that the Department of Agriculture has planned to raise paddy under SRI method in 420 hectares in Karur Block, 810 hectares in Thanthoni, 40 hectares in Aravakurichi block, 520 hectares in K. Paramathi block, 2,140 hectares in Kulithalai bock, 1,760 hectares in Thogamalai block, 680 hectares in Kadavur block and 1,630 hectares in Krishnarayapuram block.

With the State government rooting for the SRI method of cultivation to overcome several problems farmers faced, a total of 34 villages have been declared as SRI villages in the district

and the method has received good response in those villages. A lot of awareness programmes on popularising SRI method of cultivation was being undertaken in the district, Ms. Jayandhi said.

Under the National Agricultural Development Programme, the district has been allotted a sum of Rs.Nine lakh to be disbursed to farmers who raise paddy under the SRI method in their demonstration fields at Rs.3,000 per hectare per farmer. Of that Rs.1,000 would be in kind in the form of agricultural input and the balance Rs.2,000 would be given as back ended subsidy, M. Jayandhi said.

Joint Director of Agriculture M. Deivendran noted that under the SRI method, paddy farmers could increase their productivity from 7,500 kg per hectare on an average to a remarkable 8,930 kg per hectare.

Besides farmers could also benefit from frugal water and agricultural input requirements for crops under the method, he said. Assistant Director of Agriculture Sivanandam, Krishnarayapuram Tahsildar Mookkan were present on the occasion.

Flood-affected paddy crop management campaign

: The Agriculture Department has launched a “paddy crop mitigation technology campaign” in the rain water-inundated areas of Tiruvarur district.

According to a release from T.Natesan, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Thiruthuraipoondi, after the flood water has receded, farmers are advised to thin the excess seedlings and plant the same in the gap which was caused due to stagnation of flood water.

Then top dressing should be undertaken with 22 kg of urea mixed with four kg of neem cake, 18 kg of gypsum and 17 kg of potash for every acre. In some pockets, micronutrient deficiency was noticed due to inundation.

In order to alleviate the deficiency, two kg of urea, one kg of zinc sulphate, 150 gm of copper sulphate and 100 gm of Borax should be dissolved in 200 litres of water and sprayed over one acre of paddy crop.

In a bid to focus on these, the Department has planned to organise a village-level flood- affected paddy crop management campaign in all the villages.

On Wednesday, K. Elangovan, Joint Director of Agriculture, Tiruvarur, participated in the campaign organised at Thiruthuraipoondi in which more than 200 farmers were present.

He explained the technology and the special package programme introduced by the Chief Minister Jayalalithaa for the benefit of Cauvery delta farmers.

Deputy Director of Agriculture, Tiruvarur, K. Mayilvahanan, also took part in the campaign.

Farmers advised to thin excess seedlings and plant the same in the gap caused due to stagnation of water

National Mission on Food Processing set up 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. Further details can be had by contacting Deputy Director of Agriculture (Agri Business), Pudukottai, the release added.

Focus of the mission will be on enhancing farm productivity and farmers' revenue

Poultry farmers seek laboratory in Namakkal

"The government should establish a state-of-the-art High Security Animal Disease Laboratory (HSADL) in Namakkal on a par with the only laboratory in the country in Bhopal," Mohan Kumaramangalam, Honorary President of the Livestock and Agri Farmers Trade Association (LIFT) told newsmen here on Wednesday.

Mr. Mohan said that establishing the laboratory here will enable quicker analysis and early confirmation of any outbreak bird flu – or that this region is safe from the outbreak – and help the farmers to begin quarantine works immediately.

“It will also avoid the heavy loss suffered by farmers when products from this region are banned even when there is no outbreak in this region.

The lab will play a pivotal role in avoiding sudden bans being imposed on poultry products from Tamil Nadu by other States or countries importing those products from us.

We will also urge the Union Government to divide India into smaller trade zones – each State as a separate zone – to ensure that export of poultry products is not banned from across the country when there is an outbreak in other States,” he added.

Former General Secretary of the All India Youth Congress Jothimani, who helped farmers from Namakkal to make a representation to the Chief Minister of Kerala to lift the ban, told reporters that poultry farmers here are unorganised. “Had they been united the ban could have been lifted much earlier, averting everyday loss to the tune of Rs. 15 crore that was suffered by the egg and broiler industry,” she noted.

Focus

Secretary of the association Dr. P.V. Senthil said that focus will now be on lifting the ban on eggs from India that was imposed by nine countries in the Gulf following the bird flu outbreak in January 2006.

“Indian export market is worth Rs. 50,000 crore but the contribution of the poultry sector is less than two percent. Increasing exports will contribute to the growth of the export market and the industry as well,” he said.

Representatives of LIFT, National Egg Coordination Committee and the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers’ Association thanked the efforts taken by the Chief Minister of Kerala, officials in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Union Government and the Namakkal district administration for the efforts taken by them to lift the ban that was imposed by the Kerala Government.

3 lakh mango nurseries to be raised through grafting



Awaiting harvest:Collector C.Manoharan looking at the mango nurseries at the State Horticulture Farm at Vallathirakottai village in Pudukottai district.

The State Horticulture Farm at Vallathirakottai village near here has been preparing the mango nurseries under grafting methods to be distributed in three months.

The main nurseries raised here under the National Horticulture Mission programme are Bangalora, Himayuvin, Banganapalli and Alphonso. About 2,500 mother plants are being utilised and about three lakh nurseries would be raised through grafting, according to P.P. Sampathkumar, Assistant Director of Horticulture (planting materials), at the farm .

Explaining the activities at the farm to C.Manoharan, Collector, on Wednesday, Mr. Sampathkumar said that the mango nurseries would be raised through 'approach graft' and 'scion' techniques. Distribution of nurseries would commence shortly after obtaining orders from the State government, he said.

He explained the method being adopted for raising cashew and jack fruits in the farm.

During an interaction with workers, the Collector listened to their grievances and assured them of constructing a new work shed for them.

“Do not set up poultries near bird sanctuaries”

To protect the domesticated birds from avian influenza (popularly known as bird flu) the poultries should not be located closer to the sanctuaries frequented by the migratory birds, said V. Sampath, District Collector.

He was addressing the officials on how to prevent bird flu here on Thursday. Mr. Sampath said that the breeders should also desist from bunching together the bird species such as wild turkey, geese and chicken.

The intermingling of fowls from other places should also not be allowed, he said. Those interested in setting up poultries should get the brood stocks from the government farms and should avoid, as far as possible, procuring them from the open market.

Mr. Sampath called upon the breeders to use masks while handling the big bamboo baskets used for keeping the birds. They should also use footwear while entering the poultry farms. Before and after handling chicken, hands should be thoroughly washed. The Collector categorically said that consumption of raw and half-boiled eggs and uncooked chicken should be avoided.

The Collector said that to inspect the poultries, taluk-level monitoring committees headed by Assistant Veterinary Doctors had been formed in the district. Regional Joint Director (Animal Husbandry) K. Alagarasan and others participated.

A gooseberry farmer sprouts a business



Entrepreneur now:Farmer V. Narayanaswamy at his gooseberry plantation in Jangamasigehalli, Chickballapur district.

Cultivate the sour gooseberry and experience the sweet after-taste that the fruit is famed for. This was the mantra that turned a farmer into a businessman in drought-prone Sidlaghatta taluk in Chickballapur district .Farmer V. Narayanaswamy, who used to be involved in the less-lucrative rearing of silkworms, now earns lakhs of rupees annually from his five-acre dryland in Jangamasigehalli.

Planting free gooseberry saplings under the watershed development project paid him rich dividends. “I planted 180 saplings in 2003. Although the fruit yield began from 2007, quality yield started in 2010,” said Mr. Narayanaswamy, who has now turned entrepreneur using his earnings judiciously. He began pumping his crop income into a small enterprise and now owns a distribution agency of reputed mattresses in Chintamani.

The farmer, who studied up to fifth standard, earned Rs. 6.9 lakh this year by marketing gooseberry, jamun and tamarind fruit. But most of his farm income comes from gooseberry planted over three acres of land.

A project that worked

Things have begun to change for the better for farmers like Mr. Narayanaswamy, with the implementation of the National Bank for Agricultural Rural Development (NABARD)-aided Watershed Development Project (Rs. 79.26 lakh).

The project was implemented by the State government in five drought-prone villages in Sidlaghatta taluk through the Navachaitanya Urban and Rural Development Society, said NABARD officials S.S. Tayde and Arun Tallur. “Planting gooseberry was the turning point in my life. With no investment, I am now earning over Rs. 6 lakh a year from my farmland,” said the farmer. While other small and marginal farmers planted cashew and mango saplings and earned less, Mr. Narayanaswamy’s success is evident.

Award too

He bagged the Progressive Farmer Award in 2010. He harvests the crop twice in a season, during October-December and in April-May. The crop is auctioned every year and the merchants pay him money in advance.

Superior quality gooseberry fetches Rs. 25 a kg while the inferior ones are dried and sold at Rs. 15 a kg.

Horticulturists say gooseberry requires less water, and maintenance is almost nil. It can survive even in extreme drought conditions.

Besides chutney and pickles, an array of dishes and ayurvedic medicines are made from gooseberry.

From zero investment to earnings of Rs. 6 lakh a year

‘Collection of minor forest produce is the right of tribal people’

Rameshwar Oraon to hold talks with Chief Secretary today



Traditional:Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes Rameshwar Oraon being welcomed by tribal people at Sahakara Bhavan in Mysore on Thursday.— PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM

Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes Rameshwar Oraon said on Thursday that tribal people had every right to collect minor forest produce (MFP) and sell them. No one could interfere with this right, he said.

He was addressing members of the tribal communities at B.R. Ambedkar Bhavan in Hunsur after visiting several haadis (tribal settlements) in H.D. Kote taluk of Mysore district, an official press release said here. The Union government was taking steps to fix a minimum price for the MFP to avoid middlemen from exploiting tribal people. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 made all tribal people living in the forests eligible for title deeds to their land. Adivasis should come forward to take the benefits due to them, Dr. Oraon said. He elicited the opinion of tribal people and others who participated in the meeting on whether they were getting the benefits given over by the Centre.

If land allotted to tribal people would have to be acquired for any government purpose they could be given compensation four times higher than the existing value of the land. The Centre was planning to bring legislation in that regard, he said.

Many replied that they were being denied benefits such as schools, anganwadi centres, drinking water, electricity and ration under the public distribution system when Dr. Oraon made discreet enquiries.

He assured the gathering that he would take up the issue with the State Chief Secretary at a meeting scheduled to be held in Bangalore on Friday. The matter would also be discussed with the Mysore Deputy Commissioner and the Chief Executive Officer of the Mysore Zilla Panchayat. Commission members K. Kamala Kumari and B.L. Meena, H.D. Kote MLA B. Chikkanna, commission official Aditya Mishra, Deputy Commissioner P.S. Vastrad, and zilla panchayat Chief Executive Officer Ajay Nagbhushan were present.

Seminar on IPR in bioinformatics held

A seminar on the importance of intellectual property rights in bioinformatics was held here on Thursday. It was jointly organised by the JSS College of Arts, Commerce and Science and the Association of Microbiologists of India, Mysore Chapter.

Stakeholders called for the promotion of innovations in the field aided by intellectual property laws. In his keynote address, K.K. Narayanan, managing director of Metahelix Life Sciences Ltd., Bangalore, delved into the different perspectives one can take in looking at a genome and how technology and the law can foster the same.

He said the trend had shifted from a reductionist approach to biology to looking at the genome as a whole.

Steps to popularise coir fibre production

The Coir Board will involve voluntary organisations in the Malabar region in its efforts to popularise the mini de-fibering machines it has developed with the objective of increasing availability of coir fibre and production of coir products in the region that accounts for 50 per cent of coconut production in the State.

Announcing this at a press conference here on Thursday, Coir Board Chairman G. Balachandran said that the coir industry in the State was concentrated in some areas in the southern parts of the State, though the northern districts of Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode, and Malappuram accounted for 50 per cent of coconut production. Only less 25 per cent of total coconut husks available in the State was being used for coir production. The industry in the State was now procuring fibre mainly from Tamil Nadu. The mini de-fibering machine was expected to increase fibre production and meet the requirements in the State. The Board had initiated steps to introduce mobile de-fibering machines in different parts of the State, he said.

Mr. Balachandran said the motorised coir ratt developed by the Board would be a boon at a time when the coir sector was witnessing decline in the number of workers. He said the coir composite board that could replace wood would be popularised. Plywood manufacturers in Kannur and Kozhikode districts would be roped in for manufacturing boards using coir. The coir geotextiles was being increasingly used for road constructions.

Sugarcane ryots stage protest in Bodhan

Sugarcane farmers staged dharna and rasta roko in Bodhan on Thursday demanding the government announce Rs. 3,000 minimum support price per tonne as the present price of Rs. 2,400 is not remunerative.

First, they staged dharna before the main gate of the Deccan Sugars Limited factory and continued their protest for three hours.

Later, they held the rasta roko at Shakkarnagar Chowrasta on Bodhan-Nizamabad road for one hour resulting in traffic jam. The farmers withdrew the agitation when Tahsildar Rajeswar arrived at the spot and promised them to bring their demand to the notice of the government.

The farmers' representatives said that last year they were paid Rs. 2,200 per tonne, while this year it was increased to Rs. 2,400. However, they say that it is not profitable as all input and labour rates have increased. Transportation has become a problem with increase in price of diesel.

After Nilam, a tough season awaits cotton farmers

Officials say crop on more than 75,000 acres damaged



In troubled waters: Farmers showing damaged cotton balls at Venigalla village in Pedakakani mandal of Guntur district. —Photo: T. Vijaya Kumar

Cotton farmers have a tough season ahead due to the crop loss inflicted by heavy rains that accompanied cyclone Nilam. It is officially estimated that cotton crop on more than 75,000 acres has been damaged and the extent of loss is likely to rise further.

The average yield of 10 quintals per acre is bound to come down significantly because of the calamity.

The Cotton Corporation of India has only recently opened procurement centres to buy the 'white gold' from farmers at the stipulated price of Rs 3,900 per quintal thereby help them in deriving minimum returns but their hopes of a good harvest were dashed by the torrential rains.

Cotton crop grown in black soils require moderate rains, which turned out to be a deluge in just a couple of days after Nilam made the landfall off Tamil Nadu coast.

It was a twist of fate that brought misery to the farmers who were fighting for their share of water from Nagarjuna Sagar dam for giving just two wettings to their crop. Then the downpour came jeopardizing the prospects of a bumper crop.

Tenant farmers were particularly hit hard by the rains across the district. A conservative assessment pegged the loss per acre at minimum Rs 15,000 on an investment of Rs 40,000 to Rs 50,000.

The crop might appear to be normal on a quick glance but a closer look unveils the true picture.

By the time the sheets of water disappeared from the fields, cotton bolls (seed-bearing capsules) up to 1.5 to 2 feet of a plant that grows to a height of 4 to 4.5 feet have worn out into dark black, spotted pieces of moist fibre.

Nearly 50 bolls are estimated to have been lost per plant and the number of plants in a single acre range from 6,000 to 8,000.

This gives an idea of the magnitude of the disaster with which the farmers are yet to come to grips.

Kolli Ranga Reddy, a farmer of Venigalla village near Pedakakani, told *The Hindu* that cotton is grown in about 3,000 acres spanning 14 villages in the mandal and most of the area was partly inundated by water for two to three days and that was enough to cause a substantial loss.

Cotton is grown by him in about 3 acres.

The Government should buy the damaged crop on liberal terms lest the farmers should incur an irreparable loss, he demanded.

Government will extend all help to farmers: Minister



Stock-taking: Union Minister P. Balaram Naik and Pinapaka MLA Rega Kantha Rao visiting cyclone-hit areas at Sitharampuram in Khammam district on Thursday.— PHOTO: G.N.RAO

Union Minister of State for Social Justice P. Balaram Naik has said that he would take up the issue of the crop damages suffered by the farmers due to the recent heavy rain with the union minister concerned for ensuring purchase of the damaged paddy and cotton produce by the agencies concerned. Mr. Naik visited the paddy purchase centre at Burgumpadu on Thursday, according to sources.

Responding to the pleas made by the rain-hit farmers, he said the government would extend all possible help to the distressed farmers to help them dispose of their damaged paddy and cotton produce for tiding over the crisis situation. He called upon the farmers to muster courage and face the adversity with the support of the government. He also interacted with the farmers at rain-affected areas in Burgumpadu, Pinapaka, Manuguru and Aswapuram mandals. Pinapaka MLA Rega Kantha Rao was present.

Give attention to marketing, Collector tells cotton farmers

District Collector Darez Ahmed has urged farmers to accord some attention to marketing too.

Speaking at the pre-season camp organised to enlighten farmers on new technologies at the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Bank at Kurumbalur here on Tuesday, he pointed out that the agriculturists tend to lose out on substantial profits because they choose to sell their produce in a hurry. For instance, he said, Perambalur district contributed 30 per cent to the State's cotton production.

"But since the farmers tend to sell their produce to the traders at the earliest possible opportunity they get poor price apart from suffering from low weighment. Thus they tend to lose the benefit of their strain."

The Collector said the district regulated market at Perambalur had been extremely helpful to farmers and cotton was sold for Rs.4, 500 per quintal last year. Besides, the farmers are provided loan against the produce. Apart from ensuring correct weight , a godown is provided to farmers for storing their produce.

As a number of merchants from various districts take part in the auction, agriculturists are able to get remunerative price . Hence, it is imperative that the farming community should accord some attention to marketing too . Dr.Ahmed appealed to the farmers to adopt drip irrigation for which 100 per cent subsidy is granted. He requested them to visit the fields of those who have opted for this method of micro-irrigation.

For instance, he pointed out that Muthusamy, a farmer, who has adopted drip irrigation is able to make substantial profits .

Those who spoke included Ilambai R.Tamilselvan, MLA, R.Kavimani, head of the Cotton Research Station, Veppanthattai, and P.Marudhai, chairman, Perambalur panchayat union.

Perambalur district contributed 30 per cent to the State's total cotton production

Swarna variety bears the brunt of Nilam cyclone

It became the most sought-after variety within and outside the State for its high yielding trait

The craze for Swarna, a leading variety widely grown in the Krishna-Godavari delta regions, cost the growers heavily in the devastation caused by the current Nilam cyclone.

As usual, the heavy rains, accompanied by gales, flattened the crop, which was in different stages from flowering to grain hardening, all over the delta regions. Later, it continued to remain

in floodwaters for several days which might result in discolouring and germination of the produce. The condition raises serious doubts over the marketability of the produce exposed to floods.

The Swarna, released by the Agricultural Research Station (ARS) at Maruteru in West Godavari district exactly three decades, became the most sought-after variety within and outside the State for its 'high-yielding' trait. Its principal drawbacks to be susceptible to lodging and discolouring at times of rains and incidence of bacterial leaf blight (BLP) pest failed to erode its 'fan base' all these days. Although the demand for release of varieties alternative for Swarna is being voiced by the growers for a long time, the variety is still second to none so far in terms of its sown area. To quote P.V. Satyanarayana, Principal Scientist of the ARS at Maruteru, Swarna was raised in more than six lakh acres out of the total 10.45 lakh acres in the Godavari delta region alone falling under East and West Godavari districts in the current kharif. The government is under intense pressure from the farmers for marketing the produce which is likely to be subjected to discolouring and germination due to the cyclone effect.

M.D. Bharata Lakshmi, Associate Director, ARS, Maruteru, told *The Hindu* that the research station had released new varieties such as MTU-1061, also known as Indra, MTU- 1064 and MTU-1075, also known as Pushyami, some time back for field trials as 'viable' alternatives for Swarna. Of all the new varieties, Indra is proved to be tolerant to salinity and flood conditions in the Krishna-Godavari delta areas, Ms. Bharata Lakshmi said quoting feedback from field trials. However, M.V. Suryanarayana Raju of the Godavari Delta Parirakshana Samithi, said the new varieties were still to go a long way in gaining the confidence of farmers as trusted alternative varieties for Swarna.



Farmers can now get rain alerts every 15 mins

Karnataka's farmers need no longer wait for [radio bulletins](#) or telecasts to know details of rainfall in their area. They can requisition and get micro-level rain details as SMSs on their cell phones.

Thanks to the initiative taken by the Karnataka State Disaster Monitoring Committee (KSDMC), which has decided to replace the existing traditional rain gauges with sophisticated telemetric gauges at all 6,453 gram panchayat headquarters.

Earlier, rain gauges existed at taluk and hobli headquarters and rainfall was quantified on the basis of data received from these mechanical rain gauge centres. But changing rain patterns and receding rainfall sent predictions on the meteorological front haywire. Now, with the establishment of these telemetric rain gauge centres, farmers can receive rain reports on their cell phones every 15 minutes, and base their cultivation on the predictions. Farmers registered with the system will receive messages round the clock with precision details received by the panchayat.

According to [KSDMC](#) sources, already 793 telemetric rain gauges have been set up and 1,500 GPs will be added to the list this year. This replacement will not only eliminate errors in gauging

rainfall, it also allows the government to phase out mechanical rain gauges hitherto managed by the [PWD](#), revenue and statistics departments.

In the past, 25 sqkm was taken as the base for recording rainfall, now it's less than 12.5 sqkm, from macro to the micro level. In addition to these GP centres, 200 rain gauges at the taluk and district headquarters will be replaced with telemetric rain gauges.

KSDMC scientist Puttegowda said software for the functioning, collection, pooling and categorization of data received from these telemetric gauges has been developed and the mother centre has started functioning. These telemetric gauges work on solar power, he added.

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Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Nov 9

Max 34° | Min 24°

Rain: NO

Humidity: 0

Wind: 0

Sunrise: 0

Sunset: 0

Barometer: 0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Sunny

Saturday, Nov 10

Max 31.1° | Min 23.9°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday
Nov 11



35° | 23°

Partly Cloudy

Monday
Nov 12



32° | 25°

Overcast

Tuesday
Nov 13



32° | 25°

Overcast

Wednesday
Nov 14



32° | 25°

Overcast

Thursday
Nov 15



32° | 25°

Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 06:39

Humidity: 64 Sunset: 05:30

Wind: normal Barometer: 1013



Rice procurement tops 10 million tonnes



The Government has procured over 10 million tonnes (mt) of rice in the ongoing kharif marketing season 2012-13.

Till November 8, the procured quantity of rice stood at 10.07 mt against 9.4 mt in the corresponding period last year, according to the Food Ministry data.

The highest procurement has been made in Punjab at 7.6 mt, followed by Haryana at 2.41 mt and Andhra Pradesh at 33,483 tonnes. Procurement in Chandigarh stood at 11,256 tonnes, a Food Ministry statement said. Rice stocks in the Central Pool as on November 1, stood at 28.95 mt, four times the buffer and strategic reserves of 7.7 mt as of October 1.

Similarly the wheat stocks in the Central Pool stood at 40.57 mt, about thrice the buffer and strategic reserve at this point in time.

The total foodgrain stocks in the Central pool stood at 69.52 mt as on November 1.

Global black tea production down 3%



Global black tea production in the first three quarters of current calendar has fallen by 2.85 per cent over last year, reveals our analysis of the data received from different producing countries and traders' bodies.

"According to our compilation, black tea production from January to September dropped to 1,427.49 million kg (mkg) from 1469.29 mkg in the same period of 2011", Rajesh Gupta, Director, Global Tea Brokers and publishers of annual Global Tea Statistical Diary, told *Business Line*.

This reduction of 41.80 mkg marks a decline of 2.85 per cent.

The highest decline of 11.90 mkg has happened in Kenya where the production has fallen to 247.90 mkg.

Closely following this, India has posted a reduction of 10.46 mkg to total 772.60 mkg. Here, South India recorded a decline of 5.28 mkg to dip to 172.41 mkg. North India lost 5.18 mkg to total 600.19 mkg.

Uganda's crop has fallen by 8.98 mkg to total 21.99 mkg while Indonesia's crop has come down by 6.30 mkg to account for 40.20 mkg.

Sri Lanka has lost 3.40 mkg (production: 241.70 mkg), Malawi 1.50 mkg (35.60 mkg), Tanzania 1.43 mkg (20.68 mkg) and Zimbabwe 1.08 mkg (3.19 mkg).

Bangladesh is the only country posting an increase in crop. Its production has risen by 3.25 mkg to total 43.63 mkg.

Over 75,000 hectares of cotton hit by rain; power shortage cripples ginnings



Cotton farmers in Guntur district have suffered a crippling blow as the recent rains damaged the crop on 75,000 acres, according to official estimates. Officials say that the figure may rise further as loss enumeration has not been completed yet. Guntur and Prakasam are the major cotton growing districts in the State. It comes as a double blow to the cotton ginning industry in the State, already in a grave crisis due to acute power crisis.

It is estimated that there may be a steep fall in cotton yields as the crop has been badly damaged in several areas. The average yield is 10 quintals per acre. Cotton Corporation of India has, of late, opened procurement centres to buy the crop at Rs 3,900/quintal, but it is not certain how much will be paid to the damaged cotton, even though Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy has promised cotton farmers in the State that he will prevail upon the CCI to purchase the cotton.

According to some estimates, farmers may lose Rs 15,000-20,000 on an investment of Rs 40,000 or so per acre. The position of tenant farmers is more pathetic as they are not eligible for whatever relief is provided by the State Government. Farmers have urged the State Government and the corporation to go to their rescue.

Cotton ginning units in Guntur district, as elsewhere in the State, are in a deep crisis, as the Government is unable to supply power and it is becoming impossible to operate the units, according to sources. According to N. Raghava Rao, Secretary of the AP Ginning Mills' Association, they are able to operate the units for just three days a week, given the power supply position.

"In fact, earlier we decided to close down the units from November 5 in protest against poor power supply, but due to the recent torrential rains we have deferred the move, as we do not want to add to the woes of farmers," he said.

Ginning units are suffering heavy losses and as a result ginning and pressing charges had to be enhanced. Ginning charges for a bale of cotton is at present Rs 1,000 and may go up further. "Some of the ginning mills have invested heavily in modernising and upgrading the machinery and now they are the worst-hit, as they are unable to run the mills even at 50 per cent capacity," he said and pleaded with the Government to rescue the industry.

FICCI to take Food 360 degrees to rural

The Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) is planning to take the Food 360 degrees initiative to rural areas. After two editions of Food 360, both held in Hyderabad, the FICCI would now organise toned-down versions of the initiative in atleast 10-12 locations in the coming months.

“We are encouraged by the response. A huge number of farmers and other stakeholders representing food processing industry attended the two-day event and actively participated in discussions. We now intend to hold discussions on topics that are specific to geographies and crops,” S Sivakumar, Programme Chair of Food 360 degrees, told Business Line.

The Chamber would conduct the deliberations in the local language to help the farmers and other stakeholders to take part, Sivakumar, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of ITC’s Agribusiness division, said.

“We identified specific issues that dogged sectors like dairy and discussed solutions. We would like to take this issue-based approach to the district level events,” Sivakumar said.

Remove curbs to attract investments, say sugar millers



Removal of controls on sugar sector, as suggested by the C. Rangarajan Committee, would trigger fresh investments and boost capacity, millers said on Thursday.

The two major industry bodies – Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) and the National Federation of Co-operative Sugar Factories Ltd (NFCSF) – urged the Government to abolish the regulated release mechanism and remove the system of levy with immediate effect, as recommended by the Rangarajan Committee.

“We urge the Government to withdraw the release mechanism and levy system immediately,” said Jayanti Lal Patel, President, NFCSF, supporting the recommendations of the Rangarajan panel.

Sugar is a regulated sector and the Government decides on the quantity of the sweetener to be sold by the mills in the market every month. Besides, the mills are obligated to sell 10 per cent sugar as levy sales at a cheaper rate to the Government for the public distribution system.

“The removal of levy obligation will benefit the industry worth Rs 3,000 crore annually,” said Gautam Goel, President, ISMA.

“The sugar industry has missed the liberalisation bus, while all other industries that have been liberalised have grown. It is high time the Government removed the archaic controls that the industry is burdened with,” Goel said, adding that such a move would bring in fresh investments and boost capacity.

Pricing mechanism

The sugar industry has the potential to grow from the present Rs 80,000 crore to Rs 1.6 lakh crore, said Abinash Verma, Director-General, ISMA. He ruled out the possibility of cartelisation in the sector, as the industry is fragmented.

Besides removing Government controls, the Rangarajan Committee suggested doing away with the cane reservation area and link the price of cane to the revenue realised by the mills from sugar sale and first-stage by-product. It had also suggested removal of the minimum distance between two sugar mills and exempt the industry from the compulsory packaging order under the Jute Packaging and Marking Act, 1987.

Farmers in North India had urged the Prime Minister to scrap the Rangarajan panel recommendation on abolition of State advised pricing. The panel had suggested that 70 per cent of the sugar price be paid to farmers based on an average of 10.31 per cent sugar recovery. Farmers had said the revenue-sharing formula, as suggested by the panel, was not fair and does not provide for a level-playing field for the Northern States, where the sub-tropical climate influenced the cane recovery and yields.