

## Watermelon and weight management

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Scientists who carried out the study on mice, which were fed a high-fat diet, found that the fruit halved the rate at which 'bad' low-density lipoprotein (LDL) accumulated. LDL is a form of cholesterol that leads to clogged arteries and heart disease. Researchers from Purdue University in the United States also found that eating watermelon regularly helped to control weight gain and results in fewer fatty deposits inside the blood vessels.

They believe the secret to watermelon's health-boosting properties lies in citrulline, a chemical found in the juice.

Although the latest investigation showed no significant effects on blood pressure, it did reveal watermelons had a powerful impact on other heart risk factors.

Researchers fed two groups of mice a high-fat diet but gave one, water to drink and, the other, watermelon juice. "We didn't see a lowering of blood pressure. But these other changes are promising," the *Daily Mail* quoted research leader Shubin Saha as saying.

"We know that watermelon is good for health because it contains citrulline. We don't know yet at what molecular level it's working and that's the next step," he added.

## Watermelon and weight

STUDY Watermelon helps prevent heart attacks and weight gain



for weight loss Watermelon

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Fatty diets, lack of exercise and smoking are all key risk factors. Cholesterol is a type of fat produced by the liver that is essential to help the body produce hormones, absorb vitamin D and make bile to digest foods. It is transported in the blood by tiny 'couriers', called lipoproteins.

LDL carries cholesterol away from the liver and dumps it in major blood vessels, where it can cause a life-threatening blockage. High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) has the job of transporting cholesterol back to the liver to be safely disposed of.

The latest study suggests that watermelon juice could help. Researchers fed two groups of mice a high-fat diet but gave one, water to drink and, the other, watermelon juice.

They tracked their health for several months and at the end of the experiment found that the mice given watermelon juice had 50 per cent less LDL than those on water despite eating the same diet. They also weighed an average of 30 per cent less, but their blood pressure was no different.

“Research leader Dr Shubin Saha says: “We know that watermelon is good for health because it contains citrulline. We don’t know yet at what molecular level it’s working and that’s the next step,” he added.

### **New farmers and a ‘nalla’ idea**

At a time when farmers are quitting agriculture and heading to cities in search of jobs, these young men have turned their backs on corporate jobs and city life and turned farmers. This innovative farming venture Nallakeerai has facilitated many farmers in the Melappedu village to switch to organic farming; meanwhile, it has drawn city folk into the organic food habit, thanks to its weekly, door-delivery service of organic produce to residences in the city.

Nallakeerai includes a group of unlikely agriculturalists — R. Jagannathan, formerly a business manager with a city-based firm, Gowtham Balaji, a former financial analyst with an MNC who now handles marketing for Nallakeerai, Venkatraman, a software architect who splits his time between agriculture and software, Viswanathan, an engineer with a car firm, Punitha, a professor at Pondicherry University; Shyam, a management consultant, Dr. Salome Yesudas, who has worked with Sustainable Food and Agricultural Systems, agricultural consultant Radhakrishnan, Rajamurugan, researching on South Indian traditional foods, Thirumalai, who did his MBA at IIT Madras, Arivarasan, who is also a programme director with Swabhimani Bharat, which is giving science education to children in villages, and Raghuvaran, a gold medallist in M.A. Economics. But of course, traditional farmers like Karuppuswamy are involved too.

Nallakeerai is an idea that crystallised when Jagannathan conducted a survey in his native village Melappedu, near Thirunindravur. “I found that the 240 farmer households in this village actually spent about Rs. 40 lakh a year in buying pesticides and fertilizers,” he says, and points out, “If this money is retained and rotated within the farm, farmers would be making bigger profits, and agriculture would actually be an attractive proposition.”

## Farming hubs

In the anvil is Nallasandai, a comprehensive, organic agricultural system that links cattle rearing with organic agriculture of a variety of crops — the way it was in ancient times. “Cow dung is a crucial ingredient for rich manure and is an organic pesticide too; so when you have cattle alongside, you get free manure; and cow’s milk yield augments the farmer’s income,” says Jagannathan. Nallakeerai helps farmers persist with organic farming by linking them to a direct and assured customer base in the city. Jagannathan started with spinach farming, as spinach requires a very short growth period and gives quicker returns, which eases the transition to organic farming.

If the pricing of organic food is to become attractive to the consumer, organic farming has to go large scale. So Nallasandai is working to create 20 hubs of organic farms each about 15 acres in size and producing 5,000 bundles of greens and other produce every day. Nallasandai is looking to network people interested in establishing such hubs. “Organic food can be a win-win situation for both the farmer and the consumer. Even now, our organic spinach farm is profitable through weekly door-delivery of organic greens to residences and apartment complexes in the city,” says Gowtham Balaji. Well, maybe soon, Chennai will have organic milk and vegetables door-delivered, while in the villages, farmers find agriculture a secure and profitable profession. Nallakeerai can be reached at 99626 11767/98406 14128.

## Unravelling biodiversity

Chat Conservation expert Martin Kaonga says that formulating effective policies and including local communities in decision-making is essential for conservation



ONE BIG MISTAKE Most governments feel insecure delegating responsibility to locals, believes Kaonga  
Photo: Murali Kumar k.

Consider this: forests are not far removed from our urban realities. They are not just beautiful landscapes to which we escape during holidays. Apart from the fact that more than a billion people depend directly or indirectly on them, forests support myriad life forms and work as a perfect regulatory mechanism. Martin Kaonga, who has worked on climate change migration and biodiversity conservation in Africa, last week gave a talk on Tropical Rainforests in Bangalore, as part of Wildlife Week Celebration.

He convincingly expounded on the importance of protecting forests.

### **Helping climate regulation**

“Forests contain a variety of biodiversity, from plants and animals to micro organisms and fungi. They also provide food, medicine and construction material. Forests aid in ecological processes, such as nutrient and water cycling and perform regulatory functions. They help reduce loss of soil and act like a sponge that absorbs water and gradually releases it into river systems, which ensures a perennial rather than seasonal water supply,” says Kaonga, adding that they also help in climate regulation, as they capture carbon dioxide and lock it within the system, which balances the carbon concentration in the atmosphere. “This function keeps temperatures lower than 15 degrees of what we experience.” says Kaonga

Kaonga, who is the director of science and conservation of A Rocha International, contends that “a strong policy is essential for any conservation project to succeed”, and stresses that appropriate funding is another requisite for biodiversity conservation.

Kaonga argues that the decline of India’s natural forest is a cause for concern.

“India’s net forest growth is good, but there are more planted than natural forests. In Karnataka, for example, natural spaces are declining due to urbanisation, which has led to man-animal conflicts. Formulating and implementing the right policy can help curb this phenomenon.”

Evicting tribals to protect forests, Kaonga points out, is an erroneous belief. The Green Belt Movement, for instance, was successful only because its initiator Professor Wangari Maathai involved the local community.

“A major problem is that the Government has not always worked together with local communities. When you look at the conservation models that have been applied in the past, Governments always left out local communities from decision making, thinking that their contribution is meagre. They feel insecure delegating responsibility to the locals. But local communities play a very important role in conservation.”

Kaonga cites case studies from his own experiences in which the Government and the local community worked successfully together.

“In one case, there was a problem with poaching and timber extraction. It was later found out that the local communities resorted to these practices because it was part of their tradition. But the practices reduced when the Government and the local communities together analysed the importance of conservation. The Government evolved models which included the locals in the decision-making process. So what we need is not an exclusively conventional or exclusively indigenous knowledge, but a combination of both.” A PhD in environmental science, Kaonga, who comes from a mix of disciplines, from forestry to environment development, says that every ecosystem is important for it supports different kinds of species, including agricultural land supports its own set of biodiversity.

“Agriculture has been looked upon as the most destructive land-use system, but depending on the way you practice agriculture, it also tends to bring its own unique biodiversity components, so we are now beginning to look at some of these areas.”

Kaonga has worked with farmer unions, dealt with water harvesting in drought-prone and dry areas and looked at sustainable agriculture, which ultimately led him to probe deeper into biodiversity issues. At present he is on the Darwin Expert Committee which advises the UK Government on conservation of biodiversity.

Kaonga has achieved a lot in his career, but among his most treasured experience is when he discovered 200 new species during two major studies in the forests of Papua New Guinea.

### **A tribal farmer raises 40 varieties of biodiversity plantation**



Tribal farmer Killo Dombu and his land cultivated under NABARD's 'Maa Thota' scheme at Anthriguda hamlet in Ananthagiri mandal in Visakhapatnam district.

Killo Dombu of Anthriguda village in Dumbriguda mandal is proud of his achievements. Almost every plant is productive on his one-acre plot which yields cash crops. The innovative methods of cultivation adopted by him are a big draw today.

He is growing 40 varieties of horticulture plants, using bio-pesticides and adopting totally organic methods of cultivation. The crops being raised by him include vegetables, fruit plantations, forestry species, creeper vegetables, floriculture, tubers, oilseeds and medicinal plants. He has a bio-mass based manure pit in one corner of his plot. He also has cattle which give milk, cow dung and the stuff required for producing organic manure.

Dombu advocates growing multiple crops instead of mono-crop. His plantations include 40 plants each of mango, chiku, acid lime, red sanders, teak, bamboo, fish tail palm, jack, jamun, cluster apple, guava and Bahumia. Creeper varieties are pumpkin, beans, bottlegourd and ridgegourd. His plantation is fenced with trees such as euphorbia, agave and jetropha. Vegetables including brinjal, green pepper, chilli, pepper, rajma and cabbage are being grown as inter-crops along with medicinal plants.

P. Viswanatham, chairman of Vikasa, an NGO working to propagate organic farming among tribal farmers, told *The Hindu* that Dombu had been a source of inspiration to other 'Maa Thota' farmers. Dombu says that he is earning Rs.50,000 per year on the crop yield. Besides, the millet crops cultivated in his land take care of daily bread of his family members. A beaming Dombu shares his success story with his co-farmers and asks them to adopt his methods of farming. His wife, daughter and son-in-law together work in his 'Maa Thota' supported by NABARD. Not many visitors understand what he tries to communicate in chaste Odisha but the smile on his face and his green garden speak volumes for his achievement.

### **Synergies launches plantation drive**

Synergies Castings launched a massive tree plantation programme on the company premises here on Thursday. About 350 saplings were added to the already existing green belt.

Launching the programme Synergies vice-president (production) B.S.N. Raju said that planting trees and ensuring their survival and growth was part of the programme. Posters highlighting the importance of trees were released and a signature campaign launched with each member pledging to plant more trees and take care of them. Environmental engineer V. Jankiram coordinated the event. Synergies is 100 per cent export-oriented world class aluminium alloy wheel manufacturing company established in the city.

### **Maize crop in Agency area more profitable: scientists**

Scientists and officials, who participated in a special camp on maize in I. Polavaram on Thursday, advised tribal farmers to increase maize production in their areas as the corn products are having great demand in the market. They also asked them to take advice from the Agriculture Technical Management Agency (ATMA) to raise good varieties of maize in the Agency areas.

YSR Horticulture University, Hyderabad, Directorate of Maize Research, New Delhi, Krishi Vignan Kendra, Pandirimamidi, and ATMA jointly organised this special camp for I. Polavaram and Bandapalli farmers who grow the crop more when compared to other areas.

Addressing the camp, ATMA project director K. Seetharama Raju said that the agency was acting as a link between farmers, shepherds, poultry farmers, fishermen, and horticulturists.

He said the agency would take 25 shepherds to filed visit to Uttar Pradesh and Madurai in December for exposure and also to Marteru Agriculture Extension Centre.

There were enough funds with ATMA to disburse loans and subsidies to farmers who take up cultivation in groups. He said that Nandi Foundation and Global Livelihood Network jointly planted 20 lakh horticulture saplings in Paderu and the ATMA also assisted the farmers in the venture.

#### **Good varieties**

Dr. Soujanya, scientist from Maize Research Centre, suggested that there were two varieties (DHM 117, HQPM 1) of rich protein maize which have demand in the market and asked the farmers to grow the same varieties in Rampachodavaram area.



Agriculture Assistant Director B.K. Mallikharjuna Rao, KVK programme coordinator A. Srinivas, horticulture officer Ch. Srinivasulu and others spoke.

### Need to protect traditional crops stressed

A sure way to preserve traditional foods and crops rich in nutritional value is by linking them to national and cultural pride, says Dr. Pablo B. Eyzaguirre, senior scientist of Bio Diversity International, Rome.

Food culture is a pilgrimage and the disappearing diversity of food culture is a shame. With the loss of food culture, people did not even know how to ask for such traditional foods. The traditional knowledge about crops and their value was passed down the generations through songs by farmers while working in the fields. “You lost the songs and so you lost the traditional crops,” he explains.

Local foods, their quality and nutritional value need to be linked to appreciate their positive impact on health, Dr. Eyzaguirre said speaking to *The Hindu* at a CPO-11 Satellite event at National Institute of Nutrition here. With the massive shift in preference of consumers towards rice and wheat, there had been corresponding decline in the production of traditional foods and crops. As a consequence, food grains and pulses rich in nutrient value became expensive now. “Ironically food of the very poor got transformed to food of elite while the poor with no access to traditional food crops, were now falling prey to diabetes, once a lifestyle disease of the rich,” he observed. Thankfully with growing awareness about health food from elite, middle class to the poor, now people are more concerned about what they consume and want to know from where the food came from.

“This welcome change needs to be promoted with education and publicity through media”, he says. Dr. Eyzaguirre, who was involved in launching a public movement in East Africa for preservation and conservation of lot of indigenous vegetables and fruits, said farming systems, which produced nutrient foods needed to be supported. “India has rich source of pulses such as lentils, pigeon pea, chickpea. Every country needs to pay attention to its own food space,” he said.

## **Farmers demand enhanced MSP for cotton**

About 200 cotton farmers from Talamadugu mandal on Thursday staged a rally and dharna in front of the Collectorate demanding the enhancement of minimum support price for cotton to Rs. 6,000 per quintal. The farmers said investment had reached a peak this season owing to pestilence and increase in prices of all chemicals.

The farmers came from different villages in the mandal and took out a rally from the agriculture market yards.

### **Memorandum submitted**

They submitted a memorandum to officials in the Collectorate stating the reasons for their demand.

The farmers contended that excessive rainfall had damaged crops in almost all cultivation areas.

The low yield will render the present MSP of Rs. 3,900 incongruous, they added.

## **Uncertainty dogs second crop of paddy in Palakkad**

Shortage of water in irrigation reservoirs, such as Parambikkulam, Malampuzha, Pothundy, Meenkara, Chulliyar, and Walayar, has put a question mark on the cultivation of the second crop of paddy in the district.

An advisory committee meeting of the irrigation projects held at the Collectorate here on Thursday said that owing to the shortage of water in the reservoirs, water could be made available only to half the ayacut areas of these dams.

This means more than half of the 50,000 hectares of paddy land in the district will have to be kept fallow during the second crop for want of water. This will affect the paddy production in the State, as Palakkad produces nearly half the total paddy in Kerala.

The meeting cautioned paddy farmers on sowing the second crop of paddy owing to the shortage of water in the major irrigation dams on account of the failure of the southwest monsoon and anxiety about a shortfall in the rain during northeast monsoon.

K.V. Vasudevan, Additional District Magistrate holding the charge of Collector, told the meeting that the irrigation reservoirs of the district did not have even half the water they had during the corresponding period last year.

He said that under the inter-State Parambikkulam-Aliyar Project (PAP) agreement between Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the Chitturpuzha irrigation scheme should get 6.2 tmc ft water for the second crop of paddy. But the dam did not have enough water for Tamil Nadu to meet this commitment.

### **Short-duration crops**

He said the Joint Water Regulatory Board for PAP, comprising top officials of the Kerala and the Tamil Nadu governments, would meet at Coimbatore on October 16 to take a final decision on the quantity of water that could be released into the Chitturpuzha to take up the second crop of paddy in Chittur taluk.

The Deputy Director of Agriculture told the meeting that farmers should go for short duration crops (90 days' duration) since water could be supplied only till January 31 as against March 31 (120 days' duration) during a normal monsoon.

Desheeya Karshaka Samajam general secretary Muthalamthode Mani said that if the cultivation in the ayacut areas was reduced to half, the farmers would sustain huge losses and paddy production would come down sharply as the short-duration crops would reduce the yield.

He said that in the Chittur taluk, paddy was cultivated on 18,000 hectares.

But if there was no water from the PAP, no cultivation was possible.

The information received from the PAP officials was that it would not be possible to release more than 2 tmc ft water from Parambikulam for Chitturpuzha, he said.

## Fresh hope for 'kaipad' farming

The Fisheries Department's pilot project to revive 90 hectares of 'kaipad land' (brackish-water area) for traditional paddy and shrimp farming in Kasaragod, Kannur, and Kozhikode districts has given an impetus to the practice.

The district was estimated to have 2,500 hectare of 'kaipad' land under rice farming about four decades ago. According to figures available with the Agriculture Department, the 'kaipad' area in the district under

cultivation at present was 580 hectare. These brackish water areas were in Ezhome, Cherukunnu, Pattuvam, and Kannapuram grama panchayats. This excluded the vast extent of 'kaipad' land on either side of the Kattampally river.

The project, if extended to the Kattampally 'kaipad' lands, could revive 800 of the total 900 hectare of 'kaipad' paddy fields in the area.

The Fisheries Department had initiated rice-cum-shrimp farming on 40 hectare 'kaipad' land in the Kattampally basin through six beneficiary groups. Under the district panchayat's initiative, paddy cultivation was being taken up on in 200 hectare of 'kaipad' land in the area. The Agency for Aquaculture Development, Kerala (ADAK), was the implementing agency.

ADAK Deputy Director and Project Manager Dinesan Cheruvat said traditional brackish water rice-shrimp cultivation could be revived in 1200 hectares of 'kaipad' land, including the Kattampally basin spread across nine panchayats. Shrimp-growing along with rotational and simultaneous paddy cultivation would be an additional incentive for farmers, he said. Studies conducted by the Kerala Agricultural University had proved that rice-fish sequential farming was economically viable for both small and large 'padashekharams.' Also, the project would protect wetlands.

There was 1,240 hectare of 'kaipad' land in the district, excluding the Kattampally wetland region. Of this, 520 hectare could be revived while 580 hectare was under cultivation.

There was 150 hectare in Ezhome, 140 in Cherukunnu, 100 ha in Pattuvam, and 50 hectare in Kunhimangalam, according to estimates.

## Rubber prices through SMS

The Rubber Board has launched a subscription-based service to provide details of daily rubber prices through mobile phone messages.

According to a press note, the service is available for subscribers who register with the Board by paying an annual subscription of Rs.338 or a half-yearly premium of Rs.169 (inclusive of service tax). The international prices will be sent to the subscribers at 11 a.m. and domestic prices at 4 p.m. every day

Those interested in registering for the service can send their request with relevant details, including name, address, pincode and their mobile phone number, to the Deputy Director (Marketing), Market Promotion Department, Central Lab Building, RRII campus,

Kottayam-9 along with the demand draft in favour of Rubber Board payable at Kottayam.

Details can be had on phone: 0481 – 2353311 (Ext 302/341).

## Cashew processing capacity not used fully'

Only 70 per cent of the cashew processing capacity in the country is getting utilised, and hence steps are needed to enhance domestic cashew production, said Sanjeev Chopra, Joint Secretary, Agriculture, Government of India, here on Thursday.

He was addressing a two-day international conference on “Sustainable Cashew Production — Challenges and Opportunities,” in the city.

Earlier, Jharkhand Minister for Agriculture Satya Nand Jha inaugurated the conference in the presence of Goa Minister for Tourism Dilip Parulekar and Venkatesh N. Hubballi, Director of Directorate of Cashew nut and Cocoa Development. N.P. Singh, Director, ICAR for Goa; Harikrishanan R. Nair, Chairman CEPCI; V. P. Rao, Secretary for Agriculture, Goa; and S.S.P. Tendulkar, Director of Agriculture Department, Goa; attended the conference, which has been organised by the Directorate of Cashew and Cocoa Development in association with Department of Agriculture, Goa, and ICAR for Goa.

“Our emerging challenge is to produce sufficient quality at competitive price through productivity enhancement measures,” said Mr. Chopra, who is the Mission Director, National Horticulture Mission.

### **Cash crop**

Mr. Parulekar said cashew crop, introduced in Goa by the Portuguese, to control soil erosion, has now become an important cash crop of the State. In Goa, the cashew crop was cultivated on 55,000 hectares of land. He said Goa had more land under cashew than any other State.

Mr. Jha said, like Goa, the financial ability of the farmer and their social standing in village was mostly determined by his cashew production in Jharkhand.. He said cashew crop needed encouragement and research for increasing the production and productivity to meet the growing demand worldwide.

Special Awards were presented to Balasaheb Rane, Santa Maharana, Sharad Morajkar, K.V. Behara Tripathi, Nilesh Rawale, Jairam Kindia, and Kuldeep Raj for their contribution towards cashew production.

The two-day conference is attended by agricultural producers and cultivators, scientists, government officers and others from cashew plantation parts of the world.

### **Credit off-take slowing down in Goa, says report**

A Special Task Force (STF) on improvement of the credit-deposit ratio formed by the State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) in 2010, in its latest report to the SLBC submitted early this week, has said that the uncertainty over resumption of activities in the mining and export sectors would have an adverse impact on the credit off-take and quality of credit.

Heavy influx of deposits, including deposits by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), slow growth, delay in implementation of projects under public private partnership (PPP) mode as per projections earlier made, continue to contribute to the declining trend in the CD ratio in the State, said the report. The CD ratio in both the districts of the State and the State as a whole was below 40 per cent. The STF has projected the deposit growth of 14 per cent and advances growth of 30 per cent over the previous year.

The advances level as on December 31, 2011 was Rs. 10,715 crore and as on March 31, 2012 was Rs.11, 818 crore as against Rs. 11,121.79 crore as on March 31, 2011. This meant advances level had increased marginally by Rs. 1,103.62 crore during the quarter. On the other hand, the level of deposits as on March 31, 2012, rose to Rs. 44,594.84 crore as against Rs. 40,821.91 crore as on December 31, 2011 and Rs. 34,134 crore as on March 31, 2011. The level of deposits thus increased by Rs. 3,772.93 crore during the quarter and by Rs. 10,430.30 crore up to the quarter.

### **STF's estimate**

The STF had estimated that Rs. 2,599 crore needed to be disbursed for three years to achieve 10 per cent growth in CD ratio.

However, the actual growth during 2011-12 was 22 per cent in deposits and 4 per cent in advances as against the projections of 14 and 36 per cent, respectively. Average growth of deposits was more than two-and-a-half times the average growth in advances during the last five years. Consequently, the CD ratio was low at 32 per cent in March 31, 2011 which slipped to 27 per cent as on March 31, 2012.

### **Micro credit**

The task force has also pointed out that micro credit has not picked up in the State.

It has also pointed to the absence of a State Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank, an apex cooperative bank along with reactivation of primary agricultural credit societies to improve cooperative structure across Goa. At present, the State's apex cooperative bank was Goa State Cooperative Bank which was governed by the Multi-State Cooperatives Act, 2002.

The STF has recommended that "a special dispensation is required from the State government in the matter".

### **Use nanotechnology in silk production**

Mysore University Vice-Chancellor V.G. Talawar has stressed the need for exploring the possibilities of using nanotechnology to enhance the quality of silk production.

He made these remarks after inaugurating a conference on nanotechnology and its application in sericulture at the Central Sericulture Research and Training Institute (CSR&TI) on Wednesday.

Mr. Talawar called upon scientists to bridge the gap between China and India in silk production and felt that nanotechnology could help in narrowing it to some extent.

#### Compliments

He complimented the institute for its initiative in exploring the potential of nanotechnology in sericulture and said that it could take up collaborative projects with the departments of science and technology and bio-technology and various universities.

S.M.H. Qadri, Director, CSR & TI, said nanotechnology had already made inroads into agriculture and now it the sericulture sector should explore its possibilities for development of silk industry.

Dr. Qadri said the institute was planning collaborative studies with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, for adopting nanotechnology in sericulture sector.

K.S. Subramanian, Professor and Head, Department of Nano Science and Technology, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore; S. Chidananda Sharma, Professor and Chairman, Department of Microbiology and Biotechnology, Bangalore University; A.R. Phani, Director, Nano-RAM Technologies, Bangalore; and Anuya Nisal of National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, spoke.

Around 150 scientists and researchers from various institutes and universities participated.

#### **Vegetable production to get more sap**

Under the National Vegetable Initiative Programme, as many as 100 farmers from the Koliyanur block in Villupuram district have been trained in profitable vegetable growing practices, according to K. Veerasamy, Assistant Director of Horticulture.

Mr. Veerasamy told *The-Hindu* that vegetables held the major chunk of the horticulture market, to the extent of 60.8 per cent. However, the farmers were unaware of advanced farm



techniques, post-harvesting methodology, suitable marketing strategy and so on. The objectives of the programme are to enhance vegetable production and productivity by imparting due training among the farmers.

Such a measure would not only lead to nutrient security but would also give income support to the farmers. It also aims at establishing effective supply chain so the produce would be made available at the right place at right time and at right price. Mr. Veerasamy said that though vegetables were considered to be seasonal crops these could be raised year-round under protective environment such as green houses, shade-net houses and so on.

He further said that the farmers drawn from the villages such as Sithathurthirukkai, Panampattu, Arasamangalam, Pidagam-Nathamedu and Thenkuchipalayam underwent the training in production aspects, safety standards and direct marketing in urban areas.

The issues relating to primary processing, sorting, grading, washing, packing and value addition too were discussed in detail. Doubts raised by the farmers about post-harvest handling, storage and transport network too were clarified.

Then the farmers were taken on a field visit to Sithathurthirukkai and Veliampakkam to study the farm-related problems in regard to brinjal and bhendi (lady's finger) crops.

The officials with inputs from the farmers had charted out an action plan for the production of both the crops in the area. Those who participated on the occasion included Deputy Director of Horticulture K. Rasu, NABARD Assistant General Manager Vikraman, and Central Bank of India Senior Branch Manager K. Ramamoorthy.

### Collector distributes sprinklers to farmers



The Nilgiris Collector Archana Patnaik giving away sprinkler to a farmer in Ooty on Thursday.

As part of the scheme facilitated under the National Mission on Micro Irrigation and implemented by the Department of Horticulture, the Nilgiris Collector Archana Patnaik distributed sprinklers to 100 small and tiny farmers here on Thursday.

Pointing out that the scheme with a 100 per cent subsidy was sponsored on a 50-50 basis by the Centre and the State, she urged the farmers to make the optimum use of it.

With the rain having become erratic, sprinklers would be of considerable use. They would help the farmers use the available water judiciously, she added.

Stating that a sum of Rs. 112 lakh had been earmarked to cover 560 hectares in the district, the Collector added that the distribution had commenced in July.

So far, 260 hectares had been covered and sprinklers distributed to 273 farmers.

They would come in handy during the irrigated crop season when the rainfall was scanty, Ms.Patnaik said.

She added that normally about 1,000 hectares were brought under annual crops such as potato, carrot, cabbage, raddish, beetroot, beans and cauliflower at that time.

Joint Director of Horticulture G.Mohan and Assistant Directors N.Mani and T.J.Meerabai were present.

### **Samba harvest: tail-end areas facing bleak prospect**



In dire need:A parched field at Mayiladuthurai awaiting the Cauvery water.

As the Cauvery water has not reached the tail-end areas, the samba crops that have come up due to direct sowing are in danger of withering shortly, says Aarupathi P.Kalyanam, general secretary of Federation of Farmers Associations of Delta Districts.

The tail-end areas could not get water because the maximum quantum that has been released from the Mettur dam is around 18,000 cusecs so far since the dam was opened for irrigation on September 17.

Despite the promise of the Chief Minister to ensure power supply for agriculture for 12 hours a day “we do not get power even for a few hours.” Thus even the transplanted seedlings are facing a bleak prospect.

He told *The Hindu* that it is imperative that at least about 24,000 cusecs (two thousand million cubic feet) is released daily from the Mettur dam for the next 40 days.

At the same time, the promise of 12-hour power supply should be honoured in letter and spirit. “Otherwise samba cultivation is going to be extremely difficult,” he added.

Referring to the refusal of Karnataka to release water to Tamil Nadu as directed by the Cauvery Monitoring Committee on Thursday, he said the Central government is now left with no other option but to invoke Article 355 to force Karnataka to comply with the order.

Or if that were also to prove ineffective it should invoke Article 356 and dismiss the Karnataka government.

All the Karnataka reservoirs should be brought under the control of the Central government in a bid to ensure water for Tamil Nadu.

**Stop buying rice**

**from Karnataka**

Tamilaga Eri Matrum Aatrupasana Vivasayigal Sangham has appealed to the State government and rice merchants to avoid buying rice from Karnataka in order to express farmers' protest

against the intransigent attitude of the Karnataka government in releasing water to Tamil Nadu for samba cultivation.

In a statement here, State president of the association P.Viswanathan has also urged all the farmers' associations to stage demonstrations in front of all the Central government offices in the State in a bid to force the Central government to ensure water for delta irrigation.

Recounting how Karnataka refuses to pay heed even to the Supreme Court and the Cauvery River Authority headed by the Prime Minister, he has asserted that the Central government is left with no other alternative but to invoke Article 356 and dismiss the Karnataka government.

Besides, army should be deployed to release water from Karnataka to Tamil Nadu. He demanded that at least two thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) water be released to Tamil Nadu for the delta irrigation from October 15 to November 15.

He suggested that the electricity generated at Neyveli and the lignite produced there should not be provided to Karnataka so as to make it understand that the national assets are not the property of any single State but should be shared by all.

### Sapling planting campaign at OFT



root of growth:M.K.Mishra, General Manager, OFT, planting a sapling at OFT estate on Tuesday. A.V.Venkatachalam, Conservator of Forest, is in the picture.

Ordnance Factory, Tiruchi (OFT), in association with the forest department has launched a mass sapling planting campaign at OFT estate here on Tuesday.

A.V.Venkatachalam, Conservator of Forest, was the guest of honour, and he underlined the importance of increasing the green cover for protecting and maintaining environment.

He said trees played a key role in reducing the temperature, arresting soil erosion, and maintaining the water table to a big extent.

M.K.Mishra, General Manager, OFT, presided over the function and inaugurated the campaign by planting a few saplings.

He commended the support extended by the forest department for the mass sapling planting campaign. He urged the employees to participate in the campaign wholeheartedly to ensure a better environment for our future generation.

I. Anwardeen, District Forest Officer, and Nihar Ranjan, District Forest Officer (social forestry) were present on the occasion.

Other officers, president and members of the Women's Welfare Association, employees and students of the schools situated in the OFT campus, and members of the Lions Club of Mathur planted saplings.

Over 4,000 saplings, including 200 fruit bearing plants, were planted at different dedicated locations at the OFT estate.

### **Poultry farmers want egg consumption to be promoted by highlighting its nutritious value**

Steps will be taken to promote egg with advertisements, promotional campaigns: NECC chairman



Poultry farmers want egg to be promoted by highlighting its nutritious value, and add it to the daily diet. World Egg Day was first celebrated on October 12, 1996, to highlight the role of egg in people's diet across the globe. "World over it is celebrated in many countries with events like cookery competitions, but there is no such activity in India," poultry farmers here said.

### **Statistics**

Data from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Statistics Division, as on 2009, shows that India is the third largest egg producing country in the world with five per cent of the total production.

China tops the list with 37 per cent, followed by the United States with nine per cent.

India is followed by Japan and Mexico that are in the fourth and fifth place with a total production of eight per cent of the total egg production – with four per cent each. All the other countries put together account for the remaining 41 per cent production but many of them have better per capita egg consumption, compared to India. Egg consumption in India is no where near its ranking in terms of production.

### **Survey**

The International Egg Commission (IEC) ranks India 27<sup>th</sup> in a survey it conducted among 28 select countries in terms of eggs per capita – as on 2007.

China is on the top of this list too with an average consumption of 349 eggs per person annually, followed by Mexico (345), Japan (323) and Denmark (300). Ten countries have an average per capita consumption of 200 to 299 eggs per year.

According to the IEC the per capita consumption in India was just 38 in 2006, which witnessed a sharp increase to 47 in 2007. Industry sources said that it was only around 20 eggs per person per year about two decades ago. "It has now increased to 52 eggs", Dr. A. Natarajan, who is attached to the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, said.

### **Awareness**

It was learnt that the consumption in India has increased due to its low cost compared to other protein sources and not due to awareness on its nutritious value. Poultry farmers felt that lack of awareness of its nutrient was the reason for India lagging behind many countries in terms of poor per capita consumption.

### **Noon meal**

“We are glad that the Government of Tamil Nadu has realised the nutritious value of egg and added it as part of the everyday diet of lakhs of children under the Nutritious Noon Meal Scheme”, farmers here said.

Poultry farmer P. Manimohan expressed the need to advertise egg and promote its nutritious value. “There has not been any promotional activity by organisations for poultry farmers,” he added.

Chairman of the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), Namakkal Zone, Dr. P. Selvaraj said that steps would be taken to promote egg with advertisements and promotional campaigns.

### **Area under cultivation may dip in Erode**

The total area of cultivation in Erode district is likely to witness a 20 to 30 per cent drop this year following poor rainfall and long hours of power outage.

The farming community in the district cultivate crops in more than 2 lakh hectares of land. Paddy, sugarcane, banana, maize, turmeric, gingelly and groundnut are the major crops cultivated in the district.

The normal acreage under paddy is little over 40,000 hectares, while sugarcane is grown in about 35,000 hectares.

The normal acreage of turmeric is about 9,500 hectares.

“But this year, only about 7,000 hectares are brought under paddy. The area under turmeric, banana and many other crops also witnessed a significant fall. Water shortage is the main reason that has forced many farmers to reduce the area of cultivation,” sources in the agriculture department say.

The Bhavanisagar reservoir, which is the primary water source for more than 2.5 lakh acres of land in the district, has very little water.

Farmers also face problems in utilising the ground water due to the frequent disruptions in power supply. The long hours of power cut turned the situation from bad to worse. Most parts of the district get just three hours of three-phase power supply. This has left the farmers with no option but to reduce the total area of cultivation, sources here say.

“Most of the farmers have abandoned the cultivation of water intensive crops such as paddy, banana and turmeric. Instead, they have taken up maize and other short-duration, less water-intensive crops. If the district receives good rainfall in the coming weeks, more farmers may go for maize and other short-duration crops,” a senior official here points out.

“Even if the district receives rain, farmers cannot risk by cultivating the entire area available for them due to the acute water and power shortage. If the government could ensure continuous power supply for at least eight hours in a day, it would help farmers with borewells to irrigate their lands,” says Lower Bhavani Farmers Association President S. Nallasamy.

“We agree that the government cannot do anything about the water shortage. But it can help us utilise the ground water effectively by ensuring power supply for eight hours without a interruption,” he adds

### **Farmers' relief is fertilizer industry's disappointment**

Even as farmers heaved a sigh of relief, the fertilizer industry is disappointed with the meagre increase in price of urea announced by the Central government on Thursday.

Industry sources pointed out that the increase is just Rs.50 per metric tonne (Rs 2.50 per bag of 50 kg).

According to Rajachidambaram, general secretary, Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham, who has expressed relief over the minor rise in price of urea, farmers of Tamil Nadu do not use urea as much as those in northern States.



However, he is extremely critical of the Centre for having hiked the price of DAP, potash and complex fertilizers a few months ago and wonders whether farmers would be able to continue their avocation in such a scenario.

He points out that the price of DAP and complex fertilizers has been substantially hiked during the past two years.

Price of DAP which was Rs.486 per bag before April 1, 2010, shot up to Rs.1200 this year. Similarly, potash which was quoted at Rs.232 per bag skyrocketed to Rs.840. Price of complex fertilizers also trebled.

Official sources, who requested anonymity, said there was no other go except to hike price of materials like DAP, potash and complex fertilizers because of “high international prices and depreciation of rupee against fixed rate of subsidy.”

But price of urea was not revised for the past two years, they added. Now the price of urea per metric tonne (MT) is Rs.5362 (Rs.268 per bag).

Sources said of the total 555 lakh tonnes of fertilizers consumed in the country, more than 200 lakh tonnes is urea.

“The most deleterious effect of such a huge consumption of urea is that there is an imbalance in the application of fertilizers,” they lamented.

Sources also said consumption of nutrients (NPK) had slipped. It was 28.12 million metric tonnes during 2010-11 but only 27.64 million metric tonnes next year.

However, consumption of nitrogenous fertilizers alone had increased by 4.5 per cent in 2011-12.

For healthy consumption of fertilizers, nitrogen (urea), potash and complex fertilizers should be applied in the ratio of 4:2:1 (NPK).

“Unfortunately the ratio has become so imbalanced that urea has reached a very high proportion (6:2:1).

This has seriously hurt soil health. In 1980s when we provided one kg of nutrient we used to get 17 kg of food grains. Now we are unable to get even eight kg.”

### **VS flays cattle feed price hike**

Leader of the Opposition V.S. Achuthanandan has asked the government to order immediate rollback of the hike in the price of cattle feed.

In a statement here on Thursday, Mr. Achuthanandan said the decision of the Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (MILMA) to raise the price of cattle feed by Rs.200 a sack was totally unjustifiable.

It had done so after hiking the price of milk by Rs.5 a litre to pay the dairy farmers Rs.4.60 on every litre. This amounted to taking with one hand what was given by the other, he pointed out.

Mr. Achuthanandan said the government should compensate MILMA the loss, if any, it suffered by producing and selling cattle feed. He also wanted MILMA to come clean on the quantity of milk it procured from dairy cooperatives and state whether it was selling milk produced using imported milk powder.

### **Tamil Nadu reiterates demand for 47 tmcft of water**

Rejecting the contention of Karnataka that it would release 38 tmcft of water till January 31, 2013, Tamil Nadu reiterated its demand in the Supreme Court for 47 tmcft to save the standing samba crop.

In its rejoinder to Karnataka’s application, Tamil Nadu said, “Karnataka is not entitled to re-determine the requirements of Tamil Nadu unilaterally to suit its wilful appropriation of maximum waters of the river Cauvery as if the waters belong to it, though it is an inter-State river.” It said making good the shortfall of 47 tmcft of water as per the distress sharing formula at the rate of 2 tmcft a day forthwith was absolutely essential so that Tamil Nadu would have sufficient storage to sustain the samba crop during the current year. The suggestion of Karnataka that it needed 140 tmcft for irrigation and drinking purposes was without any basis and was only to boost its requirement “The need projected by Karnataka is wholly unsustainable, contrary to records and are extravagant.”

The case comes up for further hearing on Friday.

## weather



The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st October.

### Dry weather

The withdrawal line of southwest monsoon continues to pass through Raxual, Varanasi, Jabalpur, Hosangabad, Badodara and Porbandar latitude 21 deg. North/long. 67 deg. East and latitude 21 deg. North/long. 60 deg. East.

**RAINFALL:** Rain/thundershowers have occurred at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand . Weather was dry over rest of the region.

### TEMPERATURES :

**MAXIMUM:** The maximum temperature fell in east Uttar Pradesh and changed little elsewhere. They were below normal in east Uttar Pradesh and normal in the rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 38.0°C recorded at Phalodi (Rajasthan).

**MINIMUM** : The minimum temperatures changed little over the region. They were below normal over in Jammu and Kashmir and west Rajasthan and normal in the rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 15.9°C recorded at Sarsawa (Uttar Pradesh).

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 13th OCTOBER 2012:** Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh . Weather would be mainly dry over remaining parts of the region.

**FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 13th OCTOBER 2012:** Mainly clear sky.

### **Court bars adjusting crop insurance sum towards loans**

The Madras High Court has said that authorities should not adjust the insurance sum to be paid to farmers for crop loss towards loans they have obtained, pending the hearing of a writ petition by an agriculturists association's Cuddalore district unit.

The First Bench, comprising Chief Justice M.Y. Eqbal and Justice T.S. Sivagnanam passed the interim order on a writ petition by C. Arumugam, district secretary, Thamizhaga Uzhavar Munnani, Chidambaram.

The petitioner said that all primary agricultural cooperative (PAC) banks were affiliated to the Cuddalore District Central Cooperative Bank (CDCCB), which alone provided funds to them.

Agriculturists obtained policies from the Agricultural Insurance Company of India (AIC), Chennai, for possible crop loss, either due to bad weather or other natural calamities.

The premium payable would be deducted from the loan amounts being advanced by the primary agricultural cooperative banks to farmers. The premium would be paid to the AIC.

Whenever crops failed, the insurance sum would be paid to farmers through the respective PAC banks.

Mr. Arumugam said that the entire Cuddalore district was devastated by the cyclone 'Thane', in December 2011. Cash crops and short-term crops were completely damaged.

The AIC assessed the loss and fixed the insurance sum payable to farmers. The CDCCB had received the sum given by AIC. Instead of directing the disbursement of the compensation, the CDCCB had directed all its constituent PAC Banks to debit the insurance amount towards discharge of the farmers' loans.

The petitioner said this was totally in breach of trust and to the detriment of farmers in distress. The association had requested the authorities to take action for releasing the insurance sum. The repayment of the loan itself is to commence only after December 31 this year. Thus the CDCCB had committed an illegality, he said.

The petitioner asked the court to take action against the district cooperative bank for withholding the sum and a consequent direction to release the compensation.

The Government Pleader sought time to get instructions. The Bench ordered that the matter be posted after three weeks. In the meantime, pending the hearing of the writ petition, the authorities should not adjust the insurance sum towards the loan, it said.

### **India lags behind Bangladesh in improving Global Hunger Index despite economic growth**

India has lagged in improving its Global Hunger Index (GHI) score despite strong economic growth, according to the 2012 Global Hunger Index report released for the seventh year by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Welthungerhilfe, and Concern Worldwide.

The 2012 index -- The Challenge of Hunger: Ensuring Sustainable Food Security under Land, Water, and Energy Stresses — points out that Bangladesh, India and Timor-Leste have the highest prevalence of underweight children under five, more than 40 per cent in each of the three countries.

Yet, the report suggests that Bangladesh has overtaken India on a range of social indicators, including how fast it has reduced child mortality.

In India, 43.5 per cent of children under five are underweight, which accounts for almost two-thirds of the country's alarmingly high GHI score. From 2005-2010, India ranked second to last on child underweight — below Ethiopia, Niger, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

Bemoaning the absence of up-to-date information, the report says that though India has worked to improve food security and nutrition in recent years through government's nutrition-relevant social programmes, the effectiveness remains uncertain for lack of updated data.

On the other hand, China has lowered its levels of hunger and under-nutrition through a strong commitment to poverty reduction, social security networks, nutrition and health interventions, and improved access to safe water, sanitation, and education.

The report, released worldwide on Thursday, says that South Asia has the highest regional 2012 GHI score -- 22.5 -- thus the highest hunger levels of the regions covered in the Index. Yet compared with the region's 1990 GHI score, its 2012 GHI score is 26 per cent lower, indicating improvement in the region's hunger situation.

It finds hunger inextricably linked to growing pressure on land, water and energy resources. "Growing scarcity and degradation of farmland, rapidly rising incomes and changing consumption patterns, have contributed to a growing number of international land investments, or land deals. Many of these deals have targeted Sub-Saharan Africa, where land rent is lower, regulatory systems weaker, and levels of hunger higher," it says.

"Large-scale foreign investments in land should be closely monitored. Local organisations are needed to secure transparency and the participation of smallholder farmers whose livelihoods are impacted by land deals," said Welthungerhilfe President Bärbel Dieckmann.

Water scarcity is exacerbated by climate change, especially in the severely water-stressed areas of the world, which are home to more than 2 billion people. Floods, drought, and environmental degradation threaten the farm sector in parts of the world.

Rising global energy prices are a serious threat to food security, as also increasing demand for agricultural land and water for irrigation which, in turn, push up food prices.

Higher energy prices is observed to increase agricultural input costs including cost of fertiliser and groundwater pumping and machinery, putting further pressure on prices, it adds.

The report suggests long-term availability of natural resources as crucial for food security and human well-being.

“If local, national and international natural resource policies focus on sustainable, long-term gains, if policies are coordinated and tradeoffs among land, water and energy policies minimised, we can strengthen the global food system while preventing resource depletion,” points Claudia Ringler, IFPRI Deputy Division Director.

### Ensure transparency in implementing samba package'

Ensure transparency in the implementation of special package announced by Chief Minister for samba , said Shiv Das Meena, Commissioner of Agriculture, here on Tuesday.

Touring the tail-end areas of the district , Mr. Meena inspected the fields from Keezhvelur to Kollidam to ascertain the extent of community nurseries and areas brought under direct seeding.

The comprehensive package of Rs.70 crore was announced by the State government for encouraging a slew of measures including raising of community nurseries and direct sowing, wherever possible, to manage cultivation in the backdrop of water shortage. The scheme envisages a subsidy of Rs.19,000 per acre for community nurseries, Rs.480 per hectare for direct seeding for plough, and Rs.750 per hectare towards seed subsidy for direct sowing.

Under the special package, the district has been allotted Rs.4.71 crore for raising community nurseries. Direct seeding support also entails de-weeding subsidy of Rs.500 per hectare.

Inspecting the fields at Koothur and Pattamangalam in Keezhvelur the Agricultural Commissioner instructed officials to ensure transparency in the disbursements of subsidies and benefits under the package.

Speaking briefly to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the review meeting at the conclusion of the tour, Mr.Shiv Das Meena said that the purpose was to review the implementation of the special package, ensure transparency, and ascertain the extent of works take up on the fields with special focus on community nurseries.

According to official figures, 37,681 hectare were brought under direct sowing, and 2,588 acres have been brought under community nurseries to raise samba crop in 25,880 acres. As of date,

only 229 acres have been transplanted. Officials were also instructed to ensure agricultural inputs including fertilizers were distributed to meet the requirements of farmers.

Further, in a bid to simplify procedures for disbursement of subsidies under special package, a consolidated list of farmers would be vetted by the VAOs concerned. This would help in avoiding delays in clearances and resultant subsidy disbursements.

The beneficiaries dependent on community nurseries are not required to submit their sitta/adangals as proof of their land. However, the cultivators of community nurseries are expected to produce their proof of land ownership.

### **Rain boosts farming activities in Bijapur district**

The Agriculture Department has fixed a target of 6.23 lakh ha for rabi cultivation



Back to work: Copious rain during the past fortnight in Bijapur district has brought cheer to the farming community.

After a prolonged dry spell that virtually destroyed the entire kharif crop this year, the copious rain that the drought-hit Bijapur district has been receiving for the last fortnight has cheered up the farming community. Farming activities have picked up raising the hopes of farmers of recovering the kharif loss in the rabi season.

According to the Meteorological Department, as against the average expected 600.6 mm rainfall in the period between June and October, Bijapur district received 359 mm rainfall, and most of it during October.



“Though the rainfall received is 50 per cent less than the average expected rainfall, it has given the much needed moisture to standing kharif crops that include bajra, maize and sugarcane, and will help farmers get a good yield of rabi crops”, an official said.

The Agriculture Department has put the loss suffered by farmers during the last three seasons at nearly Rs. 1,695 crore. According to official records, in the kharif season this year, farmers incurred a loss of around Rs. 870 crore, while the loss during last year’s kharif and rabi seasons was put at Rs. 825 crore.

According to an official, the government had fixed a target of 4.3 lakh ha for kharif cultivation, sowing was taken up only on 2.69 ha due to scanty rainfall.

However, with the onset of the northeast monsoon, farmers hope a better harvest this rabi in comparison to that last year during the same period.

An official of the Agriculture Department said that during this rabi season, sowing is expected to be taken up on larger areas compared to that done during the last rabi season.

Though the Agriculture Department had fixed a target of 5.23 lakh ha for rabi cultivation, to recover the loss suffered during the kharif season, the target area for rabi has now been fixed at 6.23 lakh ha.

“As of now, sowing has been completed on 1.18 lakh ha of which 67,000 ha, which is 28 per cent of the total sown area, is under jowar. The total targeted rabi jowar area is 2.36 lakh hectares, Bengal gram 2.7 lakh hectares, sunflower 83,000 hectares and wheat 66,000 hectares”, the official said.

He added that the department expected good yield of rabi crop in general and a bumper crop of red gram in particular.

### **Strike balance between growth and biodiversity conservation: Purandeswari**

Union Minister of State for Human Resources, D. Purandeswari has called for striking a balance between economic growth and biodiversity conservation and said there should be no negative impact on the livelihoods of coastal people due to development.

Participating in a side-event on “ Sustainable management of coastal and marine biodiversity” at the ongoing COP 11 here on Thursday, she said that 167 crop varieties were grown in India and around 5,000 flora species were endemic to India.

Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity based on local knowledge was not new to Indian ethos, the Minister said.

Pointing out that coastal areas were not only rich in biodiversity wealth, but also play a key role in weather and hydrological cycle, she said a major challenge was to put in place a mechanism for equitable distribution and benefit-sharing of biodiversity resources.

Another huge challenge was effective implementation of various laws relating to biodiversity by harmonising them.

Expressing concern that large-scale development activities were undermining survival of coastal and marine eco-systems, she called for coordination between various departments as there was no point in working in water-tight compartments.

Eminent agricultural scientist, M.S. Swaminathan said that sea water comprised 97 per cent of world water resources. The fishing community did not receive the attention it deserved for long time and said that a high-level expert panel had recommended scientifically-designed sea water farming movement.

Y.S. Yadava from UN's Bay of Bengal Programme, an Inter-Governmental Organisation, called for sustainable use of resources so that they could be passed on to future generations in pristine condition. Good governance and application of technology were needed to maintain sustained use of resources.

Dr. V. Selvam from M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) said there was a need for a paradigm shift in the policies from wean away to sustainable livelihood approach to supporting traditional system of biodiversity management in coastal areas.

### **Maize crop in Agency area more profitable: scientists**

Scientists and officials, who participated in a special camp on maize in I. Polavaram on Thursday, advised tribal farmers to increase maize production in their areas as the corn

products are having great demand in the market. They also asked them to take advice from the Agriculture Technical Management Agency (ATMA) to raise good varieties of maize in the Agency areas.

YSR Horticulture University, Hyderabad, Directorate of Maize Research, New Delhi, Krishi Vignan Kendra, Pandirimamidi, and ATMA jointly organised this special camp for I. Polavaram and Bandapalli farmers who grow the crop more when compared to other areas.

Addressing the camp, ATMA project director K. Seetharama Raju said that the agency was acting as a link between farmers, shepherds, poultry farmers, fishermen, and horticulturists.

He said the agency would take 25 shepherds to filed visit to Uttar Pradesh and Madurai in December for exposure and also to Marteru Agriculture Extension Centre.

There were enough funds with ATMA to disburse loans and subsidies to farmers who take up cultivation in groups. He said that Nandi Foundation and Global Livelihood Network jointly planted 20 lakh horticulture saplings in Paderu and the ATMA also assisted the farmers in the venture.

### **Good varieties**

Dr. Soujanya, scientist from Maize Research Centre, suggested that there were two varieties (DHM 117, HQPM 1) of rich protein maize which have demand in the market and asked the farmers to grow the same varieties in Rampachodavaram area.

Agriculture Assistant Director B.K. Mallikharjuna Rao, KVK programme coordinator A. Srinivas, horticulture officer Ch. Srinivasulu and others spoke.

### **Appointment of VC**

The State government has informed a Division Bench of the Kerala High Court that appointment to the post of Vice Chancellor of Kerala Agriculture University will be made only in accordance with the provisions of the university statues, rules, and regulations. The government made the submission while disposing of a writ petition seeking to appoint the Vice Chancellor in terms of the UGC regulations. The petition was filed by K.D. Prathapan, an assistant professor at the university. — Special Correspondent

### More urea allotted for district

An additional 2,000 tonnes of urea has been allotted to the district, according to Minister for Infrastructure and Investments Ganta Srinivasa Rao.

This followed representations to the minister during his tour in the district.

Mr. Srinivasa Rao took up the issue with the Agriculture Commissioner and Agriculture Minister leading to the additional allotment, an official statement said on Thursday.

The minister directed officials to distribute it in all the mandals and by forming mandal-level task force committees to prevent any irregularities.

# Hindustan Times

TODAY FARM NEWS

12.10.2012 A.M

## Weather

Chennai

### Chennai - INDIA

#### Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Oct 12

Max Min

35.0° | 24.2°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:58

Sunset: 05:51

Barometer: 1010

#### Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Saturday, Oct 13

Max Min

32° | 25°

#### Extended Forecast for a week

| Sunday<br>Oct 14   | Monday<br>Oct 15   | Tuesday<br>Oct 16          | Wednesday<br>Oct 17 | Thursday<br>Oct 18 |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                    |                    |                            |                     |                    |
| 31°   26°<br>Rainy | 32°   25°<br>Rainy | 32°   25°<br>Partly Cloudy | 31°   24°<br>Rainy  | 30°   25°<br>Rainy |

#### Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:20

Humidity: 73

Sunset: 05:54

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1010



# THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

11.10.2012 P.M

12.10.2012 A.M

**Gold seen steady; USDA report could drive agri commodities higher**



Gold is likely to rule steady on Friday in spot and futures with the yellow metal opening unchanged in Singapore and the dollar holding on to its one-month gain.

With the rupee rising back to the 52-mark against the dollar, the pressure on gold could ease. Any fall in the rupee value will make gold import costlier, thus leading to rise in its price.

## **OTHER FACTORS**

Agricultural commodities could see gains following a bullish US Department of Agriculture (USDA) report on crop estimates for wheat, corn and soyabean.

The lower than expected projection of the corn crop and tight supplies are likely to result in consolidation of the commodity prices.

The benchmark December corn futures on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) increased 4.95 per cent on Thursday to close at \$7.7325 dollars a bushel. This, in turn, could result in industrial maize prices gaining on the NCDEX.

The USDA report has also projected lower wheat supplies globally, estimating drop in Australian, Europe and Russian wheat production. This helped in wheat for delivery in December rising 1.87 per cent to \$8. 86 a bushel on the CBOT.

Domestic prices in the spot and futures markets are likely to gain strength from this trend.

Though the US has projected a higher soyabean production, data of higher crushing and rising exports have rendered the counter bullish. The benchmark soyabeans for delivery in November increased by 25.25 cents to \$15.485 a bushel.

With crude palm oil futures opening higher at 2,523 ringgit in Malaysia on Friday morning, it is bound to reflect in domestic oil and oilseeds market, spot and futures.

The increasing tension between Syria and Turkey is set to keep the crude oil market boiling. In early trading, November NYMEX crude futures increased to \$92.32 a barrel. On Thursday, prices increased by \$1 a barrel.

While all crude oil-related counters could gain, natural rubber prices could also reap gains as a result.

Sugar prices, however, could be pressured by drop in raw and white sugar prices.

Raw sugar for delivery in March on the ICE slipped to a month's low of 20.45 cents a pound. In London, white sugar to be delivered in December dropped to \$568.4 a tonne on the Liffiee.

11<sup>th</sup> oct 2012 P.M

### Grapes make you healthy



Consumption of grapes and grape products is associated with healthier dietary patterns and increased nutrient intake.

Grape consumption in the form of fresh grapes, grape juice and even raisins can increase your nutrient intake and help you maintain a healthy lifestyle, a new study has claimed.

Researchers looked at the association of grape consumption in its non—alcoholic forms with the diet quality of a nationally representative sample of US children and adults.

The study found that consumption of grapes and grape products is associated with healthier dietary patterns and increased nutrient intake.

Researchers analysed the diets of more than 21,800 children and adults using data from the 2003—2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) and found that consumers of grapes and grape products had increased intakes of total and whole fruit, as well as dietary fiber, calcium, magnesium, potassium and vitamins A, C, and Bv(6), versus non-consumers.

Adult grape and grape product consumers also had increased intakes of vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds along with lower intakes of total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, versus non-consumers.

The results of the study were presented at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Food and Nutrition Conference and Exposition (FNCE) in Philadelphia.

“It is interesting to note that not only did grape consumers have increased intakes of healthy foods, critical vitamins and minerals but grape consumers also ate less of the unhealthy foods, specifically solid fat and added sugars,” said presenter Carla McGill.

“It reinforces the association between grapes and a healthier diet, which is good news for consumers,” said Jean—Mari Peltier, Executive Director of the National Grape and Wine Initiative (NGWI).

### **Finding takers for locally grown vegetables**

It was a gathering of some like-minded vegetable growers in a remote village.



Driving down to that place was a challenging task for many due to the uneven mud roads on a hilly terrain in a remote place of Dakshina Kannada district (almost 60 km from Mangalore).

However, these factors did not deter the farmers in meeting and discussing vegetable crops. No, the gathering was not to discuss the usual varieties available in the market.

More than 25 farmers surrounding the house of the host, M. Shankaranarayana Bhat, near Punacha village, had brought more than 100 varieties of locally available vegetables to the event. In fact, the host has been growing different vegetables for the past several years.

The meeting stressed the need to focus on market creation for the locally available vegetables in villages.

A.P. Chandrashekar, a farmer from Mysore, said: "If you begin consuming the vegetables available locally, that is the first step of creating market for your produce. Lesser known or little known vegetables would be popular in a few years, if you start using them."

Narrating an incident that took place in a function at his home recently, A.P. Sadashiva from Puttur taluk said he used the locally available colocasia plant for a dish. Sadashiva said he was happy to overhear a snide remark which literally meant "Was there a famine in the local shandy?" from a person who attended the function. The first objective was achieved for him.

It is not that the market is created only at farmers' level for self consumption.

D.C. Chowta, a farmer from Meeyapadavu village in Kerala, said that earlier plantain stems were hardly used as a vegetable in his village. Now when he harvests banana in his farm, plantain stems are in good demand in his village market, which has a few hundred houses. He gets enquiries even from the neighbouring villages too.

Skyrocketing vegetable price is a reason for this trend. In fact, the local variety of okra (ladies finger) commanded a price of Rs 120 a kg in the Mangalore market recently during a festival.

Lancy Crasta from Takode near Moodbidri town said that direct marketing at the doorsteps of customers fetches farmers a good price. Crasta - who grows vegetables such as ivy gourd, ridge gourd, spinach, amaranthus and cowpea on 0.20 acre of land - has captive domestic customers in Moodbidri town.

He takes vegetables in his three-wheeler to the doorsteps of more than 50 customers once in two days, and clears the stock in a few hours.

C.R. Shivakumar from Madikeri in Kodagu district said that he and three other partners are growing fruits and vegetables in Madikeri and Periyapatna. Usually, they take their produce in their vehicle on Saturdays. The stocks get cleared by the time they travel the 50-km distance from Madikeri to Periyapatna.

Not only preaching. The event host made it a point to serve dishes from the locally available vegetables for the lunch. Of them, many were not considered as dishes for social functions.

### **Renegotiation of maize export deals likely as global prices slide**

A nearly 15 per cent drop in global corn (maize) prices in the last few weeks is leading to renegotiation of export contracts of the coarse grain from the country.

“Prices have dropped sharply after running to record highs in the global market. This is forcing renegotiations,” said A. Rajkumar of Alagendran Group of companies that exports agricultural produce.

### **Corn prices**

Corn had run up to a record high of \$8.49 a bushel (\$334 a tonne) on August 10. Since then, it has been on a decline.

On Thursday, corn for delivery in December gained 26-1/2 cents to \$7.63-1/4/bushel (\$300 or Rs 15,805 a tonne) on the Chicago Board of Trade.

Corn prices are dropping in view of the crop being harvested in the US. Though US suffered from the worst drought seen in five decades, the crop is now estimated to be higher than what it was initially estimated.

“Chances of prices dropping more are less.

“Therefore, enquiries are coming in and demand seems to be setting in,” said Rajkumar. “It is natural for prices to drop given the trend in the global market.

“They could come under further pressure,” said Amit Sachdev, India representative of the US Grains Council.

Indian maize is currently quoting at \$280-85 a tonne from \$315 a couple of weeks ago.

“The volatility in the currency is also not helping. Earlier, rupee had gone up sharply against the dollar. It created problems for us. Now, it is dropping,” said Rajkumar.

A drop in the rupee could be advantageous for the exporter but the exporting community sees rupee strengthening in the days ahead.

### **Fall in demand**

The drop in corn prices is leading to another problem of fall in demand for Indian wheat in the global market. Indian wheat was in demand, especially for feed purpose, as corn prices ran to a record high.

In fact, the demand helped the private trade to export 2.5 lakh tonnes of wheat.

On the Chicago Board of Trade, wheat edged up to \$8.84 a bushel (\$325 or Rs 17,125 a tonne). During the June-August rally, it had nearly touched \$10 a bushel (\$360).

In the domestic market, maize is quoting at Rs 1,340 a quintal at Davangere in Karnataka, while wheat is ruling around Rs 1,450 a quintal in Etawah, Uttar Pradesh.

This is far lower from the Rs 1,600 witnessed for both the cereals during July-August.

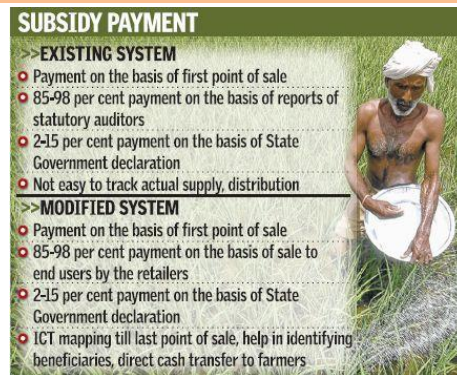
On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for delivery in December quoted at Rs 1,544 a quintal and maize for December delivery ruled at Rs 1,324.

According to Rajkumar, maize is being delivered in Chennai at around Rs 1,380 a quintal.

“Prices may drop to levels of Rs 1,350-60. A fall further from that level is unlikely,” he said.

Though arrivals of kharif corn has begun, this year arrivals have been delayed. Besides, inflow in the market will be different from State to State and this is likely to keep prices stable.

## Changing subsidy payment mode, Centre hikes urea price



Farmers will have to pay more for urea, as the Government has raised the maximum retail price (MRP) to implement a changed system for the payment subsidy.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the changes on Thursday as a precursor to direct cash subsidy to the farmers.

Through this, the Government aims to plug diversion of urea for industrial use and accordingly, reduce the overall fertiliser subsidy by at least 20 per cent.

Now, farmers will have to pay Rs 2.50 for a 50-kg urea bag.

The CCEA's decision to increase the MRP by Rs 50/tonne is to provide an incentive to the retailer for acknowledging receipt of fertilisers from the manufacturer/importer or wholesale trader.

### **new system**

Under the new system, "the payment of fertiliser subsidy to companies will be based on the receipt of fertilisers and the acknowledgement of receipt of fertilisers by retailers (last point of sale of fertilisers)," a Government statement said.

It also said that the acknowledgement of the receipt will be tracked on the information and communication technology (ICT)-enabled mobile fertiliser monitoring system (mFMS) and the fertiliser monitoring system (FMS).

A part of the subsidy will be paid on receipt of fertilisers in the district to the companies, it added.

Since retailers will be required to acknowledge the receipt of fertilisers either through the SMS-based application or through the Web application, some incentive is required to be given.

That is why urea MRP has been raised, officials said. Urea is the only fertiliser for which the Government fixes the MRP. The Government provides subsidy for 23 grades of fertilisers (both indigenously manufactured and imported).

There are over 2.3 lakh retail traders to sell fertilisers.

Currently, subsidy is given at the first point of sale.

A senior Government official said that the revised system will need mapping till the last point of sale that will enable implementation of direct cash transfer to the farmers.

The CCEA also approved a pilot project by the Department of Fertilisers, to be implemented in 10 districts, on information visibility of fertiliser sale to farmers.

This will also be tracked through the ICT-enabled tools, and identification of farmers will be done through Kisan credit cards, Aadhaar number, bank account number, etc. The project will start by the end of this year.

### **Coonoor tea turnover up 31% till September**

The cumulative turnover of Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) auctions in the first three quarters of current calendar has increased by 30.68 per cent over the corresponding period of last year.

This has happened because more volumes were sold at a higher price, reveals an analysis of the market reports.

In all, 39 auctions had been conducted in the first nine months of 2012.

A total volume of 4.11 crore kg had been sold against 3.96 crore kg last year.

Helped by the increased demand, the average price rose to Rs 79.70 a kg from Rs 63.30 last year. Consequently, the overall turnover increased to Rs 327.57 crore from Rs 250.67 crore. This increase of Rs 76.90 crore marked a growth of 30.68 per cent. The increased turnover lay spread among growers, factory owners, dealers, buyers, warehouse keepers and workers.

There has been a consistent increase in cumulative turnover in all the months so far this year.

The increase in cumulative turnover, which was Rs 67 lakh (2.39 per cent) in January over the same month of 2011, rose to Rs 4.70 crore (9.26 per cent) in February, Rs 10.31 crore (13.46 per cent) in March, Rs 15.54 crore (15.94 per cent) in April, Rs 20.15 crore (16.66 per cent) in May, Rs 31.09 crore (19.23 per cent) in June, Rs 52.82 crore (27.65 per cent) in July and Rs 68.25 crore (30.44 per cent) in August before peaking to Rs 76.90 crore (30.68 per cent) in September-end.

### **Nabard sanctions Rs 185.35 cr to Punjab under RIDF**

Nabard has sanctioned Rural Infrastructure Development Loan (RIDF) loan of Rs 185.35 crore for extension of Kandi Canal from Hoshiarpur to Balachaur in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar in Punjab.

The project envisages construction-cum-lining of 18 km of main canal, 11 distributaries and around 582 km of water courses in the Kandi area of Punjab, Krishan Jindal, CGM at Punjab Regional Office of NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) said in a release.

He stated with the completion of the project, an additional area of 29,000 hectares in Kandi area of the state would be brought under irrigation.

With the sanction of this project, cumulative sanctions under RIDF stood at Rs 5,309 crore, he added.

Irrigation sector with cumulative sanctions at Rs 2,205 crore has a major share of 41.5 per cent, he said.

Jindal emphasised on the importance of optimising the use of the available water resources by adopting multi-pronged strategies.

For increasing the efficiency of water conveyance systems, ensuring availability of irrigation water to the tail end farmers and checking seepage of water, NABARD has so far, supported lining of canals, distributaries and water courses in various districts of Punjab.

Around 30 projects have been sanctioned benefiting about 8 lakh hectares of agricultural land.

For tackling the problem of water logging in South-Western districts and protection/reclamation of agricultural land from floods/water logging in the Central Punjab, 1,701 projects which would be benefiting 5 lakh hectares of agricultural land have been sanctioned.

As a future strategy NABARD is focussing on encouraging the artificial recharge related activities so as to ensure development of agriculture and allied activities on a sustainable basis in the State of Punjab.

**Want plants to grow quicker? Talk to them... sure they catch your accent!**



Your plants might not understand your language, but they are sure to catch your accent!

A new unique experiment has concluded that plants like being spoken to — and are particularly partial to a Geordie accent.

Essex and Welsh tones also bear fruit, the 'Daily Mail' reported.

The experiment, carried out at an Essex nursery, found that for reasons only known to themselves, plants don't like upper-class accents.

Prince Charles, who in 1986 was widely ridiculed for telling how he liked to talk to his plants, should also perhaps garden in silence, the report said.

Gardening website owner Chris Bonnett began by creating ten groups of bedding plants, each containing around 100 plants, and placing them in different areas of his nursery.

He and his staff started to speak to the plants in a variety of accents.

Appropriate TV programmes and songs were also played. In all, eight UK accents were tried, along with American and Australian ones.

However, it was the Newcastle accent that triumphed, with these plants growing almost 10 per cent more than some others.

“It’s long been thought that plants thrive if you talk to them so we decided to find out once and for all which dialects they respond to best,” Bonnett said.

“After just a few weeks we started to see differences emerging with the Geordie and Welsh groups shooting up while the Chelsea and Mancunian plants seemed to particularly struggle.

“We kept all other variables as constant as possible. So the plants all had the same amount of sunlight, water and nutrients,” he said.

“By the end of the summer it was clear that the accents had a huge effect. There was, more or less, average growth across the Australian, Liverpoolian, Yorkshire and American groups.

“The Geordie and Welsh groups visibly thrived and displayed enhanced growth while the Scottish, Chelsea and Mancunian plants were stunted,” Bonnett added

### **Stocks of rice companies in demand**

Shares of basmati rice exporting companies were in good demand on BSE after an Indian company in the same business listed successfully on the New York Stock Exchange. Amira Nature Foods on Wednesday got listed on NYSE, but closed four per cent lower. The Dubai-based packaged rice selling company had to lower its offer price to \$10 a share from \$13-\$15 due to lukewarm response.



## An indicator

Even though the response for Amira Nature was not that great, it proved to be an indicator on the valuation for Indian company, said an analyst.

Given the closing price of Amira Nature on the NYSE, the BSE-listed LT Foods, Kohinoor Foods and KRBL are trading at a discount in India, he said.

“Global slowdown has no cascading effect on the demand for basic staples. To compound the demand, this year US too is witnessing severe drought, which would affect the other main staple wheat. Hence, we anticipate significant demand shift happening in the rice segment,” said a note from Networth Stock Broking.

Kohinoor Foods products are sold in retail chains such as TESCO, Somerfield and ASDA in the UK, Costco in Canada, Hankyu, Daimaru and Takashimaya in Japan, Coles & Woolworths in Australia, Krogers, BJs and Whole Foods in the US, and Seven Eleven and Mustafa in Singapore.

In India, it is available at Metro Cash n Carry, Walmart, Reliance, Big Bazaar, Spencer's, Vishal, Hypercity, More, Nilgiris in India. Apart from basmati, the company has also made inroads in the ready-to-eat food category.

KRBL is the largest listed player in terms of installed capacity (195 MT an hr). The Company has integrated operations starting from grain production (contract farming) to finished rice production along with full product chains involving productive usage of by-products such as husk and rice-brans to generate power and healthy edible oil.

India exports about Rs 11,000 crore of basmati rice annually. Karnal in Haryana is the main hub for basmati rice trade. Rice worth Rs 1,600 crore is exported annually from this region.

## Soya surge lends a hand to mustard



The uptrend in mustard oil continued on rise in mustard seeds futures that have gone up by Rs 300 a quintal. Besides, strong buying support in soya seeds and oil has also added to the bullish trend.

Mustard oil in Indore mandis on Thursday was up Rs 12 to Rs 759 for 10 kg.

Similarly mustard oil in Neemuch perked up to Rs 760 (up Rs 20), while it was Rs 750 in Moorena (up Rs 20).

In Rajasthan mandis also mustard oil has been witnessing uptrend for the past one week. In Kota, it ruled at Rs 760 (up Rs 10, Ganga Nagar -- Rs 765 (up Rs 13), while in Jaipur it ruled at Rs 780 against Rs 765 yesterday. Similarly, in Gujarat mandis also uptrend continued in mustard oil with its price on Thursday being quoted at Rs 765 (up Rs 25).

Given fast approaching monthly cuts on the NCDEX and rise in mustard seeds futures, the positive sentiment will likely to continue in the coming days, said a trader here.

Mustard seeds in Indore mandis ruled at Rs 4,200-4,250 (down Rs 150-200 from last week), . In Neemuch, mustard seeds ruled at Rs 3,800-4,000 a quintal (up Rs 400 from last week). Plant deliveries in mustard seeds for Jaipur line ruled at Rs 4,240-60 a quintal (up Rs 200 from last week).

Mustard seeds futures in the past one week have also gone up by over Rs 300 a quintal on rise in buying support in the futures.

October and November contracts on the NCDEX closed at Rs 4,040 (down Rs 27) and Rs 4,099 a quintal (down Rs 18).

With speculators pushing up the prices, mustard seeds and oil may witness an uptrend in the physical market in the coming days, said Vinod Choudhary, a broker.

Arrival of mustard seeds in the country on Thursday was recorded at 70,000 bags against 40,000 in Rajasthan; 4,000 bags in Madhya Pradesh; 6,000 in UP; 7,000 in Punjab; 3,000 in Gujarat and 10,000 bags elsewhere in the country.

## Drop in offtake forces cut in egg price



To offset the losses incurred due to seasonal uncertainties and clear stagnating stocks, the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), Namakkal zone, has pruned the wholesale egg price by 30 paise to Rs 3.15 this week.

The onset of the austere month and school holidays have resulted in a stagnation of around 12 crore eggs. Of the daily production of 3.25 crore eggs, noon-meal centres in schools consume around 70 lakh a day in Tamil Nadu.

NECC officials said that there is a 15 per cent dip in offtake which has resulted in a pile-up of stocks. An NECC spokesperson said that poultry products could see a bearish trend that is likely to continue till Diwali. The industry usually experiences a temporary lull during the August-October period due to the austere months.

The price of an egg touched a new high of Rs 3.65 on September 20 on account of output cut and monsoon rains lashing North India. But since then, egg prices are on a downward spiral as there was a slowdown in consumption in Karnataka and Maharashtra on account of *Ganesh Chaturthi* and the onset of *Purattasi* month. Karnataka and Maharashtra are the major markets for Tamil Nadu's shell egg and broiler trade.

"Layer rates are almost static as our main consumers - Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh - observe *Purattasi*, the period of abstinence, soon to be followed by *Dasara*. We expect a rise in offtake and prices to perk up only in October-end," said a press release from

NECC. The Committee has raised rates for layer birds to Rs 53/kg (Rs 51), while the Broiler Coordination Committee has trimmed the prices of live chicken to Rs 60/kg (Rs 63).

### **Kerala urged to cut tax on pepper to 2%**

Pepper traders have urged the Kerala government to reduce tax on the commodity to two per cent so as to curb tax evasion and arrest the trend of the trade being transferred to Tamil Nadu.

They said there is no tax on pepper in Tamil Nadu. Interstate dealers buying pepper from Kerala would pay only two per cent CST and take the material out and send it to upcountry destinations.

A dealer in Kerala, on the other hand, has to pay 5 per cent tax, of which he would get 3 per cent refund and two per cent he has to collect from the buyer under Form 'C'. The Kerala government in effect gets only 2 per cent tax.

Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu government also gets two per cent tax on the Kerala produce, they said.

At the same time, the end users who are based in Kerala have to pay 5 per cent tax while their counterparts in the neighbouring State do not pay any tax, they pointed out.

When the prices are ruling high there was a tendency to evade tax or under invoice or take out camouflaged as a cheap commodity such as ginger, they alleged.

This anomaly has been there for long and its removal would facilitate entry of more people into pepper trade apart from raising the revenue of the State, they said.

At present, pepper from Wayanad district of Kerala is going to Gudalur while that from Idukki to Thevaram, Cumbum, Bodinayakannur and then to Erode which has become a major hub for pepper trade. Similarly, pepper from Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts goes to Mudurai, they claimed.

There is no export demand as the Indian pepper has become totally out-priced in the international market.

A similar situation prevails in the cardamom trade also. The Spices Board recently urged the State government to reduce the tax on cardamom to two percent saying that the difference in the tax structure is disadvantageous to traders in Kerala.

### **Huge inflows grind jeera**

Jeera prices declined on the spot and futures on increased supply.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives exchange (NCDEX) jeera November contract was down by Rs 115 to Rs 14,315 a quintal with an open interest of 1,218 lots. December jeera contract slid Rs 75 to Rs 14,450 with an open interest of 17,205 lots. NCDEX accredited warehouses jeera stocks gained by 71 tonnes to 9,234 tonnes.

In the spot market jeera medium was down by Rs 20-25 to Rs 2,430-2,530 for 20 kg, NCDEX quality raw quoted at Rs 2,730-2,830 at Unjha market of Gujarat. Arrival stood at 5,000 bags and traded around 5,000-6,000 bags.

Traders said speculators offloaded their positions on the back of subdued demand in the spot market pushing jeera futures down.

According to Kedia Commodity, jeera declined as farmers increased supplies in the spot market, taking advantage of the recent rise in prices, but fresh overseas enquiries supported prices. Total stocks are currently estimated at around 4-5 lakh bags, down almost 3 lakh bags from the same period last year.

### **Stockists curb building sugar inventories**



Sugar prices on the Vashi spot market rebounded on Thursday on the back of sharp increase in Naka rates.

In the physical market, prices went up by Rs 10 a quintal due to routine demand, while naka prices increased by Rs 30-40 on eased selling pressure.

Mill tender rates ruled almost unchanged as producers continued selling.

Lifting pressure for October 10 got over and increase in freight rates kept the sentiment positive. Volumes in physical market remained usual, said sources.

A Vashi-based wholesaler said considering higher free sale quota and ample supply from mills, stockists have preferred limited inventory buying since quota was declared.

As free sale quota is higher, sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market declined by Rs 80-90 this month, while at mill level it dropped by Rs 100-150 a quintal.

Prices may stabilise at current level as festival demand is sure to improve from next week.

In Vashi market, arrivals were about 67-68 truckloads (each of 100 bags of quintal each) and local dispatches were about 67-68 loads.

On Wednesday evening, about 23-24 mills offered tenders and sold 87,000 – 90,000 bags (each of 100 kg) to the local traders in the range of Rs 3,360-3,430 (Rs 3,360-3,430) for S-grade and Rs 3,450 - 3,550 (Rs 3,450 - 3,550) for M-grade.

**The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were:** S-grade Rs 3,522 – Rs 3,581 (Rs 3,512 – Rs 3,571) and M-grade Rs 3,562- 3,701 (Rs 3,562- 3,691).

**Naka delivery rates:** S-grade Rs 3,470 -3,520 (Rs 3,450 -3,480) and M-grade Rs 3,540-3,640 (Rs 3,500-3,600).

### Rice may gain steam on low carryover stocks



With no particular reason, paddy arrivals dropped at the Karnal Grain Market Terminal on Thursday. Low stocks of PR varieties arrived at the market and there is no particular reason behind the fall, said Tara Chand Sharma, proprietor of Tara Chand and Sons. Arrivals will increase in a couple of days, he added. Meanwhile, paddy of Pusa-1121 variety, of around 500 bags, arrived for the first time this season in the grain market.

“Arrivals have started, but we have to wait a little more for them to turn heavy as harvesting of aromatic varieties have not yet started in all parts,” said Mr Sharma.

Traders expect the prices of aromatic varieties to be higher than that of last year on low-yield prospects. Not only the low production but also nil carry forward stocks would boost the market, said experts.

Pusa-1121 (steam) ruled around at Rs 5,800 while Pusa-1121 (sela) sold at Rs 4,720-4,750 a quintal. Pure basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 5,500 while pure basmati (sela) sold at Rs 4,600-4,650 . Duplicate basmati traded at Rs 4,600-4,700 a quintal.

PR-11 (sela) sold for Rs 2,500 while PR-11 (Raw) quoted at Rs 2,500-2,525 . Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,150 while Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,100 . Sharbati (steam) quoted at Rs 3,800 while Sharbati (sela) quoted at Rs 3,700 a quintal.

### **Paddy Arrivals**

Around 1.54 lakh bags of different paddy varieties arrived at the Karnal grain market terminal. About 1.25 lakh bags of PR variety arrived for Rs 1,225-1,300 a quintal, Sharbati arrived with a stock of around 5,000 bags at Rs 1,660-1,750 a quintal while just around 2,000 bags of Sugandha 999 variety arrived and sold at Rs 1,700-1,720 a quintal.

### **Mustard seed futures hit by profit-booking**





After trading in the green for the last three sessions, mustard seed/ rapeseed futures settled down on Thursday by 0.6 per cent on account of profit-booking.

On the NCDEX, mustard for October delivery dropped by Rs 21 to Rs 4,040 a quintal. November and December contracts slid by Rs 21 and Rs 25 to Rs 4,096 and Rs 4,142 respectively.

The prospects for higher acreage under mustard in the ensuing rabi season in the key producer, Rajasthan, aided the negative trend.

Mustard output was lower in 2011-12. However, on the back of higher returns and improved rains, its output next year is expected to be better. Sowing of rapeseed starts from October and Rajasthan is the country's top producing area.

In the spot market also, rapeseed prices showed an easy trend due to slack upcountry demand, with total arrivals in Rajasthan at 25,000-32,000 bags (of 85 kg each). In Jaipur (Rajasthan), the oilseed was quoted at Rs 4,270.65 a quintal.

Rapeseed plant delivery at Jaipur also declined to Rs 4,275-4,280 against yesterday's Rs 4,300-4,305 on lower offtake from millers.

On the global front, the MATIF rapeseed November contract crept up 0.84 per cent to 482 euros a tonne at Paris.

### **It's growers turn now to buy turmeric**



Without sowing turmeric, some farmers have begun to buy the yellow spice.



“Due to the adverse seasonal conditions, farmers have sown turmeric on about 2,500 hectares in the district against the usual acreage of 9,500 hectares. It is due to poor price realisations and also non-release of water in Lower Bhavani Project canal. So some farmers, instead of cultivating turmeric, have started purchasing with an intention to sell the crop in 2014 when they expect good price for the commodity,” said traders.

On Thursday, 2,300 bags of turmeric arrived for sale, of which 60 per cent were procured by stockists and growers. Exporters and bulk buyers said that a few of them have procured 10 per cent of the arrived stock due to its fine quality. In the Regulated Marketing Committee, prices were up by Rs 300 a quintal and in Erode Cooperative Society it was up by Rs 200. In Gobichettipalayam Cooperative Society, due to poor quality, prices declined by Rs 100 a quintal.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,119-5,739 a quintal; the root variety Rs 3,809-5,171 .

**Salem Hybrid Crop:** The finger variety fetched Rs 4,950-6,519; root variety Rs 4,769-5,371. Of the 608 bags that arrived, only 25 per cent stocks were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,531-5,836, the root variety Rs 4,472-5,243. Of the 796 bags on offer, 701 found takers. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 5,011-6,109; the root variety Rs 4,938-5,380. Of the 780 bags put up on sale, 732 were sold. At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,410-5,946; the root variety Rs 4,069-5,202. All the 106 bags were sold.

# Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

12.10.2012 A.M

## Mamata protests rise in price of fertilizer

With the government on Thursday hiking retail prices of urea by Rs 50 to Rs 3,360 per tonne, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she has lost count on how many times the price has been raised and condemned it.



“It is very distressing to know that prices of fertilisers have been further increased. I have lost count of the number of times the prices of fertilisers have been enhanced during the UPA-II regime. I had voiced my protest against such increases every time,” she said in a Facebook post.

“One after another – increase in diesel price, restriction in use of LPG cylinders, introduction of FDI in Retail, in Pension, in Insurance, etc. Are only putting more and more burden on the common people,” she said.

Condemning the hike, she said, “the increase of fertiliser prices will be affecting the poor farmers and also the common people. I strongly condemn this price rise. “The so-called reforms are nothing but measures that would add woes and sufferings to the common people. Let us all protest.”

## Farmers outfit decry release of Cauvery water

The Cauvery Hitarakshana Samithi on Thursday slammed the Cauvery Monitoring Committee (CMC) direction to Karnataka to release 8.75 tmc ft of water to Tamil Nadu and declared “we will not allow the government to release water”.

Reacting sharply to the CMC directive, the Samithi President G Madegowda, who has been spearheading the stir said “the committee has no right to give any direction. At any cost we will not allow the government to release water”.

Flaying the Monitoring Committee decision, he said “injustice is being meted out Karnataka. We will wait for the Supreme Court order”, he said.

The Supreme Court is likely to hear the petitions filed by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on the issue tomorrow. Gowda said farmers will keep a watch on the KRS reservoir and if water was released, they would lay seize to the dam. Meanwhile, protests erupted in Srirangapatna with a group of farmers protesting against the monitoring committee decision which has aksed Karnataka to release water from October 15 to October 30.

### **State asks PM to review CRA decision**

Karnataka on Thursday urged the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to review the decision of the Cauvery River Authority (CRA) by tomorrow. State’s Water Resources Minister Basavaraj Bommai in a letter to the Union Water Resources Minister Pawan Kumar Bhansal, the copies of which was released the press here noted that the Prime Minister who is also chairman of CRA has the powers review his decision under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act.

Karnataka filed its petition seeking review of the September 19 order directing it to release 9,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu on September 20 and also to keep in abeyance the order till review was taken up, but so far no decision has been taken on the matter despite its three reminders, Bommai pointed out. “The power vested to take a decision in the absence of a consensus will give the power to review also”, he said. The supreme court in its October eight order has clearly mentioned that its order of September 28 shall not be an impediment for the chairperson of CRA to take his own decision on the review petition filed by Karnataka.

“Therefore, I kindly urge to take up this matter as a water resources minister and a CRA member to the Prime Minister and appeal to him to take a decision before October 12, since the IA’s of both the states of Karnataka and Tamilnadu will come up for hearing tomorrow”, Bommai said. Former prime minister H D Devegowda took exception to DMK leader M Karunanidhi’s statement calling for invoking of Article 356 of the Constitution on Karnataka and remarked “it is unfortunate that those who opposed article 356 are advocating it. Such a trend is detrimental to federal structure of the nation”.

“It is also unfortunate that we need to seek permission of others to get drinking water”, Gowda lamented while reacting to the Cauvery crisis at a function held in JDS office. KPCC President G

Parameshwara speaking to the press in Hubli slammed the Tamil Nadu leader's statement and said "they should know that Tamil Nadu is also part of the federal structure in the country".

### Fertiliser subsidy payment linked to retailer receipts



The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs today approved a proposal to link the release of fertiliser subsidy to manufacturers and marketers with the acknowledgement of receipts from retailers.

The government also raised urea prices by Rs 50 a tonne (Rs 2.5 for a 50-kg bag) to incentivise retailers to give receipts through the Fertiliser Monitoring System (FMS), which is via mobile phones.

The panel also approved a pilot project to track fertiliser sale to farmers in 10 districts by using kisan credit cards, bank account numbers and Aadhaar numbers. The project would be implemented by the end of the year.

#### SPRAYING IT WIDE

- Rs 50 Per-tonne price increase of urea by the government to incentivise retailers
- 10 Districts will be part of a pilot project to track fertiliser sale to farmers
- 30% Of subsidised fertilisers, mainly urea, gets diverted to non-agricultural use
- 10% Increase in urea prices proposed by the department of fertilisers', and was sent back by the Cabinet earlier
- Rs 5,310 The current price for subsidised urea per

tonne

There was some confusion initially when it was reported in a section of the media that the government would directly transfer the subsidy to retailers. These resulted in a sudden spurt in stock prices of some fertiliser companies by over five per cent.

Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Srikant Jena told Business Standard the subsidy would continue to be given to manufacturers and marketers of fertilisers. The only change was that another level of transparency had been added to the movement of fertilisers, before making payments.

FMS is aimed at plugging the loophole that leads to diversion of fertiliser subsidies for industrial use and smuggling. It is ultimately designed to facilitate direct transfer of subsidy to farmers. Up to 30 per cent of subsidised fertilisers, mainly urea, get diverted to non-agricultural use, Jena said, adding the subsidy would come down indirectly if illegal use was curbed.

Today's move adds retailers to the loop of acknowledgement. Through mobile-based applications or via SMS, they'd have to acknowledge the receipt of fertilisers at their shops. This data would be cross-checked with shipment data from companies by the department of fertilisers. Once the department is satisfied, the subsidy would be released to manufacturers.

Currently, a major part of the subsidy (100 per cent for urea, 85 per cent for non-urea subsidised fertilisers) is released as soon as a company reports dispatch of fertiliser. The rest is released after acknowledgement from the state governments that the fertiliser had reached.

Earlier this year, the cabinet sent back a proposal by the department of fertilisers to increase urea prices by 10 per cent. This meant raising urea prices by Rs 531 a tonne. Currently, subsidised urea is sold at Rs 5,310 a tonne. The prices were revised in 2010.

### **Soybean prices in free-fall, farmers take to the streets**

he issue, however, is likely to take a political turn, since soybean is one of the main drivers of the state economy

Dilip Kumar Jha & Shashikant Trivedi / Mumbai/ Bhopal October 12, 2012, 0:57 IST

Irked by the free-fall in soybean prices this harvesting season, farmers in Madhya Pradesh have started a mild protest across spot mandis, demanding a hike in purchase price from the state authorities. Soybean prices have fallen by a massive 35 per cent in the last three months.

Soybean in spot mandis is traded at between Rs 3,000 and 3,100 a quintal, substantially higher



than the minimum support price fixed by the Union agriculture ministry at Rs 2,240 a quintal ahead of the last kharif sowing season. But, farmers have demanded the state authorities devise a formula through which they can fetch at least Rs 500 more a quintal. State authorities, however, have refused to intervene in the market, so far. Meanwhile, farmers are in the process of organising themselves for a massive protest on

October 21.

The issue, however, is likely to take a political turn, since soybean is one of the main drivers of the state economy. A number of crushing mills have set up oil extraction units to transport refined soy oil, soy meal and other edible grade processed soya food that fetches massive income to the exchequer.

| SOYABEAN BALANCE SHEET |         |              |            |
|------------------------|---------|--------------|------------|
| In million tonnes      |         |              |            |
| Particulars            | 2010-11 | 2011-12      | 2012-13(F) |
| Opening stock          | 0.85    | <b>0.20</b>  | 0.12       |
| Crop                   | 9.80    | <b>10.10</b> | 11.00      |
| Retained by farmers    | 0.85    | <b>1.10</b>  | 1.25       |
| Marketable surplus     | 9.80    | <b>9.20</b>  | 9.87       |
| Crush                  | 9.60    | <b>9.08</b>  | 9.58       |
| Closing stock          | 0.20    | <b>0.12</b>  | 0.29       |

*Source : Solvent Extractors' Association, Nirmal Bang Research*

The major concern of the protesting farmers is the squeeze in their income due to a huge spurt in raw material prices, including labour, fertilisers and other inputs. For example, farmers bought soya seed at Rs 4,400-4,500 a quintal during the kharif sowing season. But, at the time of harvesting the price plunged to a low of Rs 2,600-2,700 a quintal, about a week ago. Although, the price has increased a bit since then due to lower supplies as a result of the ongoing inauspicious shraddh period, experts believe the commodity will decline in the coming days with farmers intensifying harvesting of the standing crop after a week. Labour costs have also increased along with the cost of fertilisers and transportation, adding to the overall input costs by at least by 30-40 per cent.

Currently, soybean arrivals are estimated at 600,000 bags (1 bag = 100 kg) across the country's spot mandis, of which around 400,000 bags could be in Madhya Pradesh alone. But, arrivals may go up to 10 – 11 lakh bags as harvesting peaks, said Rajesh Agrawal, spokesperson of Indore-based The Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA). Soybean output, according to a report by Nirmal Bang, is expected to set a new record at 11 million tonnes as against 10.1 million tonnes reported last year.

SOPA, however, estimates total soybean output at 12.6 million tonnes on better crop prospects due to timely revival of monsoon.

Acreage under soybean is estimated to rise by 3.76 per cent to 106.94 lakh hectares (ha) in 2012 compared to 103.06 lakh ha in the previous season, said Ankita Parekh, research analyst with Nirmal Bang.

Year 2011-12 was an excellent one for soybean growers as prices shot through the roof - rising by almost Rs 1,500 per quintal in just two months. A tight supply and demand scenario both in the domestic and international markets turned the sentiments in favour of the bulls. Weather irregularities added concerns to the already tight domestic scenario. Further, improved meal demand from India at a time of thin supplies augmented the price rise.

### **Jute Commissioner suggests 14% rise in raw jute MSP**

The Jute Commissioner's office has recommended a 14 per cent increase in the minimum support price (MSP) of raw jute for 2013-14 over the existing price, a move that might not go down well with the jute industry that was expecting only a marginal rise.

In 2013-14, price of TD-5 ex-Assam grade raw jute is recommended at a minimum of Rs 2,500 a quintal. Last year, the price was Rs 2,250 a quintal. The MSP of raw jute in 2012-13 was raised by a steep 31 per cent, the highest in two decades.

The industry is in favour of a cut in MSP recommended by the Jute Commissioner's office and is expected to approach the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

"I am not aware if any recommendation has been made for fixing MSP of raw jute for 2013-14. The industry had only suggested that a marginal hike over the existing price would suffice", said Manish Poddar, chairman of the Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA), the apex body for the industry.

West Bengal-based Jute Corporation of India (JCI) and the Centre for Research in Jute and Allied Fibres (CRIJAF) have calculated the cost of raw jute cultivation in 2013-14 at Rs 2,250 and Rs 2,588 a quintal respectively.

Every year, almost 10 million bales (one bale is 180 kg) of raw jute is produced on 800,000 hectares in seven states — West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Andhra Pradesh. Almost 75 per cent of raw jute is cultivated in West Bengal. The yield is 27-29 quintals a hectare.

Almost four million farmers are engaged in jute cultivation. The fibre is produced as an inter-crop between two rice producing seasons. A paltry five per cent of the produce is used as green fibre to manufacture jute bags and other products in jute mills. The rest is consumed as manure and fuel sticks as a replacement for mud oil.

### **Sikkim bites the sugar bullet**

In a first, the Sikkim government has gone ahead with an increase in the price of levy sugar, meant for the Public Distribution System (PDS), even as the Centre continues to mull such a measure.



Levy sugar is fixed by the Centre as a percentage of a mill's supply. The Centre also fixes the price. However, the central responsibility ends with making sugar available to states at the



levy price for distribution under PDS from the mills. From the mills, starting with the transportation, it is for states to fix the pricing and distribution.

According to central government officials, Sikkim has raised the price of levy sugar to Rs 26 a kg as against the central government rate of Rs 13.50. This could set a precedent for others on partial deregulation of levy sugar pricing. The state procures from mills in Uttar Pradesh and transports it by trucks, as there is no rail link.

### FIRST AGAINST THE TIDE

- **Rs 26/kg** Price of levy sugar in Sikkim
- **Rs 13.50/kg** Price of levy sugar fixed by the Centre
- **Rs 30/kg** The market price of sugar
- **60-70%** Lifting of sugar under PDS from mills
- **90-95%** Sugar lifted from mills under PDS earlier



*Data compiled by BS Research Bureau*

*Source: Sugar Merchants' Association of Navi Mumbai*

The Union ministry of food had moved a proposal for the Cabinet to raise the price of levy sugar from Rs 13.50 a kg, fixed since 2002, to Rs 24-26 a kg but a decision has been deferred more than once. The market price is Rs 30 a kg. To cut the subsidy under PDS for sugar to the

states, the central government had asked states to raise the price of sugar for the PDS without waiting for its own decision. Only Sikkim has done so.

Earlier, there was not much difference between the market price and levy sugar meant for the PDS but the difference has been rising over recent years. Since the states are reimbursed to the extent of Rs 13.50 per kg and the market price was around it, supply was not a problem for the PDS. The situation has since reversed and the lifting of sugar under the PDS from mills has come down to 60-70 per cent of the stock as against 90-95 per cent earlier, said officials.

The subsidy is given to states against receipts of distribution of sugar under PDS at the levy price of Rs 13.50 per kg only. For instance, say sources, the Bihar and Chhattisgarh governments have almost stopped lifting sugar from mills for the PDS.

### Goa has more land under cashew cultivation than any other state'

PANAJI: An area of 55,000 hectares of the cashew crop is cultivated in Goa every year and the state has more land under cashew than any other state. This was revealed at an international conference on cashew titled 'Sustainable Cashew Production: Challenges and Opportunities' held in the city on Thursday.

Minister for agriculture, government of [Jharkhand Satya Nand Jha](#) inaugurated the conference in the presence of Goa tourism minister Dilip Parulekar.

Speaking on the occasion, Parulekar highlighted the efforts of cashew producers and cashew cultivators in the state and said the cashew crop which was introduced in Goa by the Portuguese, mainly to control soil erosion, has now become an important cash crop of Goa.

Stressing on the mechanization in farming, Parulekar said the Goa government is taking an interest in the latest trends in mechanization by adopting new techniques. He said several cashew varieties have evolved which are capable of giving a 15kg yield per tree and hence planting of high yielding varieties is a must for attaining high productivity levels.

### Dharwad jail inmates turn horticulturists

HUBLI: Prisoners at the Central jail in Dharwad have initiated into horticulture activities, which helps them spend their time meaningfully and also makes the jail self-sufficient in its day-to-day vegetable needs.

The [Dharwad jail](#) has 20 acres of land in its premises, belonging to the [Central Jail Authority](#). As most part of it was lying unused, around 20 prisoners with agriculture background decided to make the most of it and ventured into growing horticulture crops like maize, soybean, lady's finger, beans, brinjal, radish, tomatoes and pulses.

Vegetables grown in the jail premises are being used for daily consumption of 480 inmates. Their daily requirement is 50 kg per day. After meeting the demand, remaining vegetables are sometimes sold in the market outside. So, except for onion and potato, the prison authorities do not usually have to buy any vegetable from outside. Also, prisoners get the benefit of consuming fresh vegetables every day.

All the 20 prisoners, who are working on the field and growing vegetables, are serving life term for their involvement in different cases including murder. There is scope for every prisoner to reform and lead a dignified life after serving the sentence.

A prisoner who did not wish to be named said, "It was tough for us sitting in the jail without doing anything. We did not know how to kill time. A few months ago, the idea of utilizing the agriculture land in the jail premises struck us and we got permission from the authorities to take up horticulture activities."

Other inmates involved in the activity said that it keeps them busy and helps in protecting their mental and physical health.

Speaking to TOI, jailer Vittal Jadhav said, "We earlier had plans to involve prisoners in some agricultural activities to keep them busy. A group of 20 prisoners volunteered to take up horticultural activities. As they have already displayed good behaviour, we gave them permission to carry out agricultural activities. We are now using vegetables grown here to cook food for the inmates," he said. Each prisoner involved in growing vegetables is given Rs 40 as daily wages. Inmates work for about seven hours on the field. If a prisoner wants his earnings to be given to his family, the jail authorities do it so.

### Assam for 'green roads' by using cold mix technology



GUWAHATI: From Green Buildings to Green Roads, [Assam](#) has begun its [journey](#) towards becoming one of the greenest and cleanest states in the country by using [cold mix technology](#) in which natural rubber latex is blended with bitumen emulsion.

Assam is a pioneering state in the country to have used cold mix technology in rural road construction and has so far constructed about 1500 kms, state [PWD Minister Ajanta Neog](#) has said.

The biggest advantage of the cold mix technology was that on an average in cold mix precious fossil fuels -- approximately 1500 litres of diesel per kilometre -- are saved and if over 1000 km of roads are constructed in a year in each state, the benefits would be enormous.

Assam Public Works Roads Department has launched a unique [Green Roads Mission](#) in association with the New Delhi-based Central Road Research Institute and Bitchem Asphalt Technologies Limited.

The Mission, among others, aims at achieving its objective of sustainable development and harnessing the socio-economic and environmental benefits of cold mix technology for rural roads and state roads to help the country benefit from prospective earning of carbon credits.

The cold mix technology is an impressive option to solve the problems of road connectivity in the state as various factors like heavy rainfall often delay the construction and maintenance of roads, Neog said yesterday.

Using the cold mix technology, the PWRD has developed over 1500 km of green roads in Assam.