

TNAU prediction for NE Monsoon



Western Tamil Nadu will receive normal to above normal rainfall during the North East Monsoon in October-December.

According to the Agro Climate Research Centre of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, the three spells of heavy rain that Coimbatore has witnessed is the withdrawing of the South West Monsoon.

Enayath Shah, Professor at the centre, told *The Hindu* that the onset of the North East Monsoon was expected in the next three days.

Cultivation pattern

“The normal time frame is between October 15 and 29. This monsoon is expected to be like any other standard North East Monsoon throughout the State. As the Khariff season (June-October) is giving way to the Rabi season (November-February), farmers can plan their cultivation pattern according to this pattern (see map),” he said.

Among the Western districts, the Long Period Average Rainfall (mm) in the Nilgiris and Dharmapuri was expected to be normal, while Krishnagiri, Namakkal and Tirupur were expected to be slightly above normal.

Normal

Coimbatore and Erode would receive above normal rainfall, while the rainfall in Salem would be heavy.

While farmers could go ahead with an assurance about the rainfall for cultivation purpose, the centre officials said that it was difficult to predict whether the rainfall would be distributed over three months or would be concentrated in a particular phase.

This was because of the changing temperatures and climate change effects.

Focus on agriculture sector growth

A draft report of the district panchayat's Plan projects for the 12th Five Year Plan period and for the current financial year, which was released here on Tuesday, focusses on comprehensive development of the agricultural sector.

The 'Noorumeni' paddy cultivation project is one of the major initiatives in the sector. The project aims at increasing paddy output. An amount of Rs.10 lakh will be earmarked for this every year.

There are plans to rope in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) workers for paddy cultivation, District Collector K.V. Mohan Kumar said.

There are plans to put fallow lands to cultivation in the current year. Another plan is to develop farm tourism programmes centred on big farms at Koothali and Puthuppadi.

Milk farms

Milk farms will be developed in three villages in the current financial year and four more in the next year. An amount of Rs.30 lakh will be utilised this year for the project. Insurance schemes for cattle are planned.

Another thrust area is the development of small-scale industries and expansion in existing industries. Industries involving Kudumbasree workers will be promoted, district panchayat president Kanathil Jameela said.

An area of at least 10 acres will be found in every taluk and handed over to investors, after developing basic infrastructure. Training programmes will be conducted by the Skill Development Centre to equip workers for specific industries.

The highest amount of funds in the service sector will be allocated to the education sector. The 'Vijayotsavam' programme for students from classes 8 to 10 will be expanded to include those from the higher secondary classes. The 'speed' project to promote talented youngsters in different sports will be started this year.

Health schemes

The highlight of the health sector is the 'Snehasparsham' programme, which provides Rs.2,000 a month each for 500 kidney patients to conduct dialyses. The 'Jeevethaalam' project will provide free cancer check-ups for women.

In the area of environment conservation, steps will be taken to protect mangrove forests.

Mr. Mohan Kumar said only five months were left in the current year for completion of the projects. So, it was important to concentrate on projects that could be completed within this time period and take care of the spillover projects next year.

Off with vegetables



Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan flagging off the Kairali Queen Haritha Kalavara of Horticorp at the Central Railway Station in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday.— Photo: C. Ratheesh Kumar

IVR service launched for farmers

Farmers of the region will now be able to get information on agriculture and allied activities, including prices of commodities, at various markets through Interactive Voice Response (IVR) service launched by mobile services provider Airtel.

Addressing presspersons here on Tuesday prior to the launch of awareness campaign about 'Nemmadi Jeevana', an IVR-based service launched by Airtel, chief operating officer (Karnataka) of Bharati Airtel Saurabh Goel said the service was meant for farming and allied communities across the State.

He said Airtel customers in rural regions would now be able to get comprehensive information and updates on a wide range of topics, including market prices, agricultural and cropping advisories, livestock advisory, weather and finance. He said the service would come as a package at Re. 1 a day.

Head (Rest of Karnataka) Ramanand Ramanand said to create awareness about the service, mobile units would cover nearly 500 villages in the next 45 days. Later, Police Commissioner B.A. Padmanayana flagged off the Nemmadi Jeevana mobile units.

Farmers protest against irregular power supply



Up in arms: Farmers taking out a protest march in Belgaum on Tuesday.— PHOTO: D.B. PATIL

Farmers, under the banner of the Belgaum taluk unit of the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti, took out a procession here on Tuesday, condemning irregular power supply to villages and irrigation pumpsets.

They submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner in this regard. The farmers demanded the Hubli Electricity Supply Company (Hescom) supply six hours of uninterrupted power during the day. Addressing the farmers, MES working president Manohar Kinekar spoke about the problems faced in rural areas because of frequent load-shedding. He said the Hescom should ensure at least six hours of uninterrupted power supply, from 6 a.m. till noon for a fortnight and the same duration from noon till 6 p.m. the following fortnight.

Finding a solution to the problem of acid soils

A five-day seminar on the subject will begin tomorrow at UAS-B



(From left) M.S. Badrinath, Leon V. Kochian and K. Narayana Gowda at a press conference in Bangalore on Tuesday.— Photo: K. GOPINATHAN

After drought, if there is a problem that affects agriculture globally, it is acid soils, which comprise almost 50 per cent of the world's potential arable land. To address the problems associated with acid soils and discuss possible solutions, the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore, and the International Steering Committee are jointly organising the '8th international symposium on plant soil interactions at low pH' here from Thursday.

Acid soils are believed to have lower productivity.

The five-day event, to be held on the UAS campus, will be inaugurated by Kirti Singh, former chairman, Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board, New Delhi. At a press conference here on Tuesday, soil scientist R. Siddaramappa said there were several districts in Karnataka where acid soils were prevalent — mainly in districts that received heavy rainfall. The list covers almost a 3-lakh area of cultivable land.

M.S. Badrinath, president of the Bangalore-chapter of the Indian Society of Soil Science, said the focus would be on commercial, export-oriented crops affected by the problem such as rubber and coffee. "The only chemical application that has worked in correction is lime," he said.

Leon V. Kochian, chairman of the International Steering Committee, said around 40 papers would be presented on breeding of a new genotype that could substitute the application of lime.

UAS-Bangalore, Vice-Chancellor, K. Narayana Gowda, said recommendations from the conference would be forwarded to Krishi Vigyan Kendras from where training will be imparted to farmers on soil management.

Shortfall of 20 tonnes?

Mr. Gowda said the shortfall in foodgrains production this year, owing to the "worst drought in 40 years", was expected to be around 20 tonnes.

"The production last year was around 120 lakh tonnes. This time it could be less than 100 lakh tonnes," he said.

Mettur water level

Rain in the catchment area has improved the inflow as the water level in Mettur Dam stood at 63.53 feet on Tuesday at 4 p.m. against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 15,621 cusecs and the discharge 16,115 cusecs.

Choose short duration crops and adopt SRI technique, farmers told

10,000 out of 15,162 ha brought under direct sowing method in coastal areas



Picture shows women labourers transplanting samba seedlings at a field near Sathiyamangalam.

With just 15,162 of the normal 91,000 hectares having been brought under samba so far this season, the Agriculture Department has appealed to farmers to go in for short duration variety, especially after the third week of this month when the monsoon is likely to be in its peak.

Even out of the 15,162 hectares brought under cultivation, only 5,162 hectares was in areas where farmers were assured of irrigational facility through their bore wells.

The remaining 10,000 hectares had been brought under direct sowing method, particularly in the coastal regions of Avudaiyarkovil, Aranthangi and Embal.

The Agriculture Department has suggested paddy farmers to adopt System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique and raise short-duration varieties, says S. Sivasankaran, Joint

Director of Agriculture. Of the 5,162 hectares in Kundrandarkovil, Karambakudi, Pudukottai, Arimalam, Annavasal and other blocks in the district, 3,015 hectares had been brought under SRI technique. The varieties raised were BPT-5204, ADT-39, CR-1009 and improved white ponni.

With the delayed monsoon, the department has suggested SRI technique as it minimises period of raising nursery from the usual 30 days to just a fortnight.

SRI technique also minimised the need for water for irrigating the fields and cultivation cost and labour was far less. The short duration variety recommended included ADT-37, ADT-45 and ADT-36 varieties. "We do not recommend ADT-43 variety this season. Though a short duration crop, ADT-43 is prone for pest attack during December due to fog," the official said.

Sure of achieving target

The official was confident of achieving the normal area of 91,000 hectares in course of time. Parts of Avudaiyarkovil and Aranthangi blocks have been experiencing moderate showers in the past few days, brightening the prospects for the crop. Coastal belts were noted for raising late samba.

He also said that adequate fertilizer, urea and complex had been stocked at the private and cooperative societies in the district.

Warning to dealers

S. Sivasankaran, Joint Director of Agriculture, has warned fertilizer dealers not to sell fertilizers over and above the MRP rates. He said that the dealers should prominently display the availability of fertilizer along with the prices. Receipts should be issued to the farmers. He warned that the licences would be cancelled, if the dealers were found resorting to any violation of the norms.

He has also advised farmers not to go in excess use of fertilizer.

Farmers could contact the official's assistance by dialling 04322-221666, during working hours, a press release said.

Agri Dept. gears up for Samba cultivation

Following the failure of South West Monsoon and reduction in cultivable area in the district, the Agriculture Department has devised a plan to offset some of the production loss in the Samba season.

According to sources, the Department is focussed on making good the loss of yield from paddy from 3,400 ha by encouraging farmers to go in for paddy. The target it has set is 1,175 ha, concentrated mostly in the Anamalai Old Ayacut area. It is also targeting farmers in Thondamuthur to take up paddy cultivation.

They say that the district ought to have seen cholam cultivation on over 22,500 ha but the poor show by monsoon has reduced it to 6,500 ha. The effort will be to make it up with maize cultivation on over 15,000 ha. As far as cotton is concerned, there has been no major impact because the area under cultivation has over a period of time come down. Cotton cultivation, they say, is largely confined to pockets in Pollachi.

Farmers in the district ought to have cultivated sugarcane on over 1,500 ha but managed to raise it on over only 300 ha, thanks, again, to the monsoon. There is no possibility of farmers going in for the water-intensive crop in the second season. Next to paddy, one of the areas of concentration will be pulses cultivation. Having achieved 6,500 ha as against the target of 19,500 ha, the Department is hopeful of raising another 6,500 ha of pulses and adding more during the third cultivation season. Another area of concentration will be groundnut, where again the Department hopes to achieve the target of 12,500 ha by encouraging farmers to take up the cultivation on over 6,000 ha in two seasons.

Tamil Nadu agrees to release 1.25 tmcft from PAP for Kerala



K. Ranganathan (second from right), Chief Engineer of Water Resource Organisation, PWD, at the 93rd Joint Water Regulation Board meeting held in Coimbatore on Tuesday.— PHOTO: S. SIVA SARAVANAN

The official level 93rd Joint Water Regulatory Board (JWRB) talks between Tamil Nadu and Kerala was smooth and the meeting ended with a decision on Tamil Nadu agreeing to release 1.25 tmcft of water from Parambikulam — Aliyar Project (PAP) for the irrigation needs of Kerala's northern districts.

Kerala was represented by Lathika, Chief Engineer of Irrigation Department, Viswanathan Nair, Chief Engineer of Kerala State Electricity Board both from Thiruvananthapuram along with 30 engineers.

Tamil Nadu represented by K. Ranganathan, Chief Engineer, K. Tirupathi and S. Sivalingam, Assistant Executive Engineer of Water Resource Organisation (WRO) of Public Works Department besides 30 engineers.

The JWRB talks were convened to finalise the water release/supply pattern from Tamil Nadu to Kerala in the wake of the south west monsoon's failure and absence of distress sharing formula between Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the PAP accord.

As per the PAP agreement, Tamil Nadu was supposed to release 12.3 tmcft of water from Sholayar and another 7.25 tmcft of water from Aliyar through Manacadavu weir for irrigation needs of Palakkad and Chittor districts in northern Kerala. The release pattern will have to be between July 1 and June 30, considered the water year in the PAP. The water is expected to benefit the second crop in about 20,000 hectares in two districts of Kerala.

The meeting first discussed the failure of the south west monsoon (July, August and September) and the resultant grim situation faced by the farmers in both the States. Hence, it was agreed to "share the water as well as the distress caused by the monsoon failure." It may be recalled that a similar grim situation and distress was witnessed during the period 2002-03 and the same was repeating exactly after one decade.

Taking into account, the symptoms of north east monsoon, the meeting first decided to arrive at an ad hoc water release/supply schedule. It was mutually agreed for working out a schedule for

the period October 15 to December 15. During this period i.e., second half of October, two halves of November and first half of December, Tamil Nadu will release 1,250 mcft (1.25 tmcft) from Aliyar via Manacadavu weir.

After another round of review meeting in mid-December to take stock of the benefits of north east monsoon on either side, the next schedule of water release for the period December 15 to June 30 will be decided, officials said.

WRO officials pointed out that in the event of an average rainfall or near average rainfall during south west monsoon or north east monsoon, water sharing will never be a problem. This time, it became necessary only because of the failure of south west monsoon.

A normal or near normal rainfall during October, November and December would help Tamil Nadu in honouring its commitment and resolve the issue for both sides without any heartburns, officials said.

Chief Minister dedicates 1,141 godowns for farmers

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa has opened 1,141 godowns constructed by the cooperation department at a cost of Rs. 97.20 crore enabling additional storage of about 1.30 lakh tonnes of agri-products.

According to an official release, the cumulative storage capacity of the cooperative godowns in the State was eight lakh tonnes and the government had ordered construction of 1,116 godowns in 29 districts with 100-tonne capacity, 16 godowns with 500-tonne capacity, seven with 1000-tonne and two godowns with 2,000 tonne capacity in 2011-12.

All these godowns had been constructed with Rural Infrastructure Development Funds pushing the storage capacity up to 9.30 lakh tonnes.

These godowns, opened by Ms. Jayalalithaa at the Secretariat on Tuesday, will prevent the farmers from going for distress sale of agricultural products by storing them at the cooperation godowns and obtaining loans to 60 to 80 per cent value of the grains stored.

The government has also made provisions for farmers to store grains up to one month from the day of auction till the traders pay the full amount.

The Chief Minister also inaugurated two schemes at a cost of Rs. 19 crore to be implemented under India — Israel bilateral agreement to establish special production centres to grow vegetable and flower seedlings at Dindigul and Krishnagiri districts respectively.

She also launched a Rs. 14-crore technology-driven infrastructural development scheme to produce quality saplings at the 56 government horticultural farms and released a coffee-table book on the history of horticulture and a monthly magazine.

The Chief Minister also opened renovated parks in Kodaikanal and Yercaud.

Hullabaloo in the banyan tree

Have you ever noticed how many birds make their homes on some ancient trees in your city ?



I stand under a banyan tree in Perur, sipping coconut water, when I hear them. Is it the cuckoo? Or the myna? I can't figure it out; but it sounds like all the birds in the city have decided to sing their hearts out. The sounds get louder as dusk sets in, and the entire area is engulfed in the music. "They gather here every day," says Nagathaal, the tender-coconut seller. "Don't we all go home after work? It's the same with birds. This is their home."

The tree must be way over 100 years old. Its branches spread out like an umbrella and the thick canopy casts a cool darkness below. Nagathaal's shack is right next to the trunk. She has been waking up to the sound of the birds every morning for the past 35 years. "They come at around dusk and chatter till 11 p.m. They are up by 3 a.m.," she says, speaking of her bird-neighbours.

There are many trees in the area, but none of them is as alive as this one; mynas and crows seem to have a special liking for it.

“Birds are attracted to huge, old trees,” says bird expert A. Sukumar. “They roost in their branches in the evening. Dense canopies protect them from predators.” Sukumar says that many species of birds prefer banyan and peepal trees since they can feed on their fruits.

These trees are like an apartment complex where a variety of birds co-exist. They fly to their branches hoping for a good seat for the night. There is competition, which sometimes leads to squabbles. But most of them are settled amicably. After all, they are old neighbours. “There is an understanding between them,” says Sukumar. The evening cacophony has a lot of meaning to it, he adds. “A bird might be saying to its partner, ‘Come soon, it’s getting dark.’”

Sukumar says that some peepal and banyan trees can house up to ten species of birds. “Crows will roost in the top floor and mynas will take the middle floor. Smaller birds will occupy the lower floors,” he says. Many other places in the city have massive trees where birds roost in their hundreds. For example, the banyan tree at VOC Park, the one near Vasantha Mill in Singanallur and the one near Kurichi tank.

“The banyan tree is a sanctuary,” says M. Gunasekaran, an independent bio-diversity researcher. “We can sight a variety of bird species on its branches. Fruit-eating birds, hole-nesting birds...the tree is a multi-dimensional attraction.” Gunasekaran has spent long hours admiring the birds that come to roost in the banyan tree in Perur.

It’s interesting to observe them, he adds. “Like men who rush to catch a seat for themselves and their family when a bus pulls over, birds fight it out for a comfortable branch.” They must have worked hard all day, looking for food, giving predators the slip...a few hours of rest will do them good. No wonder their chorus dies down a little after dusk — their day begins at dawn and they cannot afford to be up all night.

Retired zoology professor K. Rathnam explains the 6.30 p.m. commotion. “For some 15 minutes, there is a racket, and then they settle down. Birds travel long distances to reach these trees, most of which are in places they find safe.” Crows, cuckoos, sparrows...they can all be heard, but it’s the myna that’s the loudest of them all, adds Rathnam.

Resting as a group gives birds peace of mind, since there are multiple eyes looking out for danger, says bird enthusiast K. Mohanraj. He says that around 15 years ago, there was a strapping *vaagai* tree in Ramnagar from which you could hear the loud 'quack quack' of wetland birds. Sadly, the tree is not there anymore.

Now that there is the promise of rain, cuckoos will be in the mood to sing their best songs, he says. Ace photographer and writer M. Krishnan poetically titled one of his books *Mazhai Kaalamum Kuyilosayum* (The rainy season and the cuckoo's song). Mohanraj adds that urban-dwellers could hear the bird song in their backyards, if they planted bushes.

Release foodgrains from godowns: Bhojan Yatra activists

On Tuesday, Bhojan Yatra, a campaign demanding a comprehensive food security bill, reached here after travelling through Bihar, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal.

In a rally, organised from Bistupur to Ram Mandir maidan, Right to Food (RTF) activists demanded that the proposed National Food Security Bill (NFSB) give universal access to food instead of capping it at 67 per cent of the population.

They demanded that 8.2 crore metric tonnes of food grains lying in government storage be distributed through the Public Distribution System (PDS). In Jharkhand, in public meetings in 60 villages in 17 districts, the campaign demanded better implementation of nutrition-related schemes.

In 2009, the Jharkhand government reduced the price of rice to Re.1/kg and entitled families with Antyodaya cards to get rice for free. But the distribution of Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards continues to be based on a survey by the Bihar government 15 years ago, and many poor families are still excluded from PDS. The government did a fresh survey last year, but the date for issuing fresh ration cards based on this survey had been shifted thrice this year.

In districts adjoining Ranchi, including East Singhbhum and Lohardaga, which are among 35 districts most affected by Left Wing Extremism and have been identified by the Central government for "focused development," a majority of villagers still don't have ration cards.

“Even one family doesn’t have a ration card. They did a survey in our village last year, but none of us got a ration card,” said Kanhu Hembrom, gram pradhan of Musabani, a hamlet of 70 households adjoining the CRPF Battalion 193 camp in Ghatshila in East Singhbhum. In Kekrang village in Lohardaga district, parts of which lie in the hills and are accessible only on foot, only 20 out of 110 households have a ration card. “We don’t grow enough rice to last us through the year. We are tired of asking the panchayat officials to give us ration cards. Everyone got an MGNREGA card but the officials keep the work site open only for 10-15 days,” said Bifan Nagesiya (25) in Kekrang village.

Nagesiya says he migrated to work in a brick kiln in Tripura for one year, but returned when he earned only Rs. 6,000 after working for eight months. In a 2011 survey done in the districts of Dumka and undivided Ranchi, only 25 per cent of households surveyed said they were getting their full PDS entitlement. More than a quarter of the households reported that one family member missed meals in the previous three months, and 12 per cent said that they hadn’t consumed dal even once the previous week.

“Jharkhand has the highest levels of malnourishment after Madhya Pradesh. The Central government allots rations, categorising 46 per cent of the State population as BPL. The Jharkhand government includes another 20 per cent from its own funds, but 13 to 14 per cent of the State’s poor population is still left out. The proposed law will leave even more people out,” said Gurjit Singh, convener, RTF campaign in Jharkhand.

Farmers pin hopes on Central team

The forthcoming visit of the central team to assess the drought-hit areas of Marayur and Kanthalloor on Wednesday has raised hopes among farmers who suffered heavy losses in the current season. Kanthalloor is a cool season vegetable cultivating village and Marayur is a sugarcane cultivating area. Farmers in Kanthalloor are preparing the land for sowing seeds in the coming season after suffering nearly 40 per cent damage to the vegetables in the last season. The main crops destroyed were carrot, beans and garlic.

“Farmers not only suffered loss due to drought but also from fall in prices and lack of storage facility for vegetables,” Kanthalloor grama panchayat president S.Madhavan told *The Hindu* over phone. Ramakrishna Puthoor, a farmer, said garlic was sold at a loss. Local residents say that they had never experienced a drought like this for more than three decades.

In Kanthalloor, cultivation of potato, beans, carrot, garlic and cabbage had been affected in nearly 1,400 acres of land. Vattavada was also hit by the drought, though not as severe as that of Kanthalloor.

In Marayur, sugarcane cultivation in the uplands had considerably dried up. The Central team will meet farmers and collect details of how the erratic monsoon hit their crops.

Hills give way to fields in Adilabad

Rise in tribal population has resulted in demand for cultivable land



Decreasing biodiversity: Tribal people have converted hillocks into agricultural fields in Adilabad.- PHOTO: S. HARPAL SINGH

A sharp rise in the tribal population in Adilabad in the last decade seems to have given rise to an equally sharp demand for cultivable land, which has put the district's biodiversity in great peril. Encroachers have not spared even pristine hills, repositories of invaluable species of flora, while clearing forests for expansion of agriculture fields.

Tribal population in Adilabad district, 4.16 lakh according to the 2001 Census, has recorded a steep rise of about 2.5 lakh (much of it attributed to addition of migrant plains tribes) during the ten years until the 2011 Census. The extent of land under agriculture, however, has expanded rather disproportionately at over 50,000 hectares (on the 1.73 lakh hectares of total cultivated land in the agency area in 2001) following the government's recognition of rights of tribal people

on forest lands under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

Adilabad has always been recognised as a prime biodiversity centre, yet there are hardly any studies which can help assess the loss in terms of environment. “Deforestation continues as tribal people are in search for livelihood opportunities,” observes Mesram Manohar, a Pardhan lecturer at Utnoor who has studied the phenomenon from close quarters.

“Pastures have shrunk considerably, some hill streams are no more and use of chemicals in new fields has poisoned grass and other flora. The impact of rising pollution on the behaviour of birds and other animals and health of tribal people also needs to be studied thoroughly,” he adds.

“The incorporation of new agricultural lands has not created livelihoods for tribal people as intended. Tribal youth migrate to urban centres in search of jobs,” points out Thodsam Chandu, a former official of Utnoor’s ITDA, as he talks about the futility of the government’s move in recognising rights on forest land.

“The comparatively ‘unresourceful’ primitive tribes continue to be deprived of their rights on forest lands. Most of the deforestation has been done by migrants belonging to plains tribes,” an official of ITDA dealing with land issues adds.

Cotton to be raised in 2.10 lakh hectares

Cotton crop is being raised in 2.10 lakh hectares in the district this year. An yield of one lakh metric tones is expected, officials of the Marketing Department said at a meeting of the chairmen and secretaries of Agricultural Market Committees with S. K. Panigrahi, general manager, Cotton Corporation of India (CCI). District Collector N. Mukteswara Rao was present.

Mr. Panigrahi said the CCI would purchase the cotton produced in the district at seven centres in Bhongir, Valigonda, Nakrekal, Mothkur, Tirumalgiri, Suryapet and Mallepalli. He released a publicity poster.

The Collector urged the CCI official to open two more purchase centres in the district, in view of the anticipation of increased crop yield this year. He called upon the Market Committee

chairmen and secretaries to enlighten farmers on the need for bringing dry and quality cotton to the yards for getting a good price.

Call for increasing food production

Farmers hold discussion with agricultural, horticultural, veterinary experts



World Food Day:Seer of Pushpagiri Mahasamsthana Somashekhara Shivacharya Swami inaugurating a programme organised by All India Radio, Hassan, at Pushpagiri in Belur taluk on Tuesday.

Seer of Pushpagiri Mahasamsthana Somashekhara Shivacharya Swami has said the future generations may face food crisis if measures are not initiated to increase food production.

He was speaking after inaugurating an invited audience programme on 'Food and agriculture' organised by All India Radio, Hassan, at Pushpagiri in Belur taluk on Tuesday to mark World Food Day.

Food prices have gone up in the recent years following a decline in production. "Several years ago, when computers used to cost nearly Rs. 1 lakh vegetables were available at Rs. 8 a kg. Now the prices of computers have come down significantly, while vegetables cost Rs. 80 a kg. This is due to a decline in production," the seer said.

He cautioned the public about food adulteration.

AIR, Hassan, had also organised a discussion of farmers with progressive farmers and experts from the field of agriculture, horticulture and veterinary sciences. L. Narayana Reddy, noted

progressive farmer; A.P. Chandrashekar, writer and farmer; Vijayalakshmi, assistant professor from the Hassan Agricultural College, and Wilfred Ruban, assistant professor at the Hassan Veterinary College, took part in the programme.

Drain it, lose it,' says new wetlands economics report

A major report that will help countries understand the economic value of inland wetlands, which cover a vast area of the earth's land surface and provide key ecosystem services, was released at the conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity here on Tuesday. The message of the report is simply, 'drain it, lose it.'

Inland wetlands cover at least 9.5 million sq km of the earth's surface, and together with coastal wetlands, 12.8 million sq km. Restoration of this particular type of ecosystem is the most expensive. These water bodies provide clean water for drinking and agriculture, cooling water for the energy sector; they also regulate floods. Agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors depend heavily on the health of wetlands.

"In 100 years, we have managed to destroy about 50 per cent of the world's wetlands, which is a stunning figure," said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, at the release of the final consultation draft of the report titled "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands" (TEEB for wetlands). The perception that wetlands are not essential to the functioning of societies and economies, contributes to their destruction. The TEEB report has been commissioned by the Ramsar Convention. India, a signatory to the Convention, has 25 wetlands listed under the covenant (such as Chilika) and about 150 identified wetlands of national importance. The country is being persuaded by international monitors to put in place management plans for the protected sites. Progress in this regard is "partial," according to Ritesh Kumar, conservation programme manager of international NGO Wetlands International – South Asia.

According to him, the conservation approach in India has to move from a 'puritanical' one, to one that emphasises economic value and its vital link to human survival.

Professor Nick Davidson, Deputy Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, said the final TEEB report was scheduled to be released on February 2, 2013, coinciding with Wetlands Day.

Flood plains are being built over in many places, resulting in losses to people when there is natural movement of rainwater across these sites.

India's challenge is to define wetlands on sound lines, and apply the rules it issued in 2010 for conservation and management of these water bodies. Building activity in fast-expanding cities is draining wetlands, and many are also being filled with garbage. There is almost no conservation response from local and State governments, an activist said at the release of the report.

A wild harvest with a difference

Namibia, the country with the 'world's oldest desert' and two global biodiversity hot spots, is pursuing an uncommon conservation model— one that sets wild species survival quotas for local communities and allows 'cropping' of surplus animals.

A country of 2.1 million with a land area of about 800,000 sq km, Namibia has its entire 1,500 km-long coastline and 44 per cent of the land mass under conservation management. National parks constitute 17 per cent of the land. In contrast, India with its dense population has about 4.7 per cent of its total geographical area under a protected area network.

"Communities have understood the value of conservation. By devolving the rights over wildlife and forest resources to the lowest levels, indigenous and local communities are now driving conservation. They ensure there is no poaching," Namibia's Environment and Tourism Minister Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah said here on Tuesday.

When the communities generate a population surplus of wild species, they are allowed to "harvest some game, and sell meat."

Namibia allows legal hunting, using a system of concessions. In 2012, the country concluded 72 joint ventures involving conservation areas and private sector operators, including 42 hunting concessions and 30 lodges. Communal conservation areas generated \$ 6 million in 2011.

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The Minister was speaking to the media at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on Tuesday.

So successful has been the effort, the Minister said, that the levels of human — animal conflict had also gone up. The government's response was to strengthen insurance schemes for losses.

In response to a question from *The Hindu* Ms. Nandi-Ndaitwah said the government was keen on conservation, but continued to seek investment from China and India, in both mining and tourism. It has signed the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing with communities for use of genetic resources and will ratify it when legislation is passed soon.

A wild harvest with a difference

Namibia, the country with the 'world's oldest desert' and two global biodiversity hot spots, is pursuing an uncommon conservation model— one that sets wild species survival quotas for local communities and allows 'cropping' of surplus animals.

A country of 2.1 million with a land area of about 800,000 sq km, Namibia has its entire 1,500 km-long coastline and 44 per cent of the land mass under conservation management. National parks constitute 17 per cent of the land. In contrast, India with its dense population has about 4.7 per cent of its total geographical area under a protected area network.

"Communities have understood the value of conservation. By devolving the rights over wildlife and forest resources to the lowest levels, indigenous and local communities are now driving conservation. They ensure there is no poaching," Namibia's Environment and Tourism Minister Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah said here on Tuesday.

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Heavy rain increases inflow into KRS

The level has risen by nearly two feet in the last 48 hours



welcome news: Inflow into the reservoir was at the rate of 6,678 cusecs on Tuesday, pushing the water-level to 106.26 ft.

The water-level in the Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir (KRS), the lifeline of the Cauvery basin, has been rising steadily thanks to the heavy downpour in the last three days.

The level has risen by nearly two feet in the last 48 hours.

Inflow into the reservoir was at the rate of 6,678 cubic feet per second (cusecs), pushing the storage level up to 106.26 ft at 6 a.m. on Tuesday. It was 104.85 ft on Sunday.

However, the outflow was restricted to 800 cusecs because of good rainfall at the Cauvery basin and in the downstream of the reservoir.

The maximum water-level of the KRS reservoir is 124.8 ft.

Good rain

The district has received at least 200 mm rain since October 8 after a long period, sources at the Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Ltd. (CNNL) told *The Hindu* here on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Irrigation Department has decided to stop releasing water to Chikka Devaraya canal, Virija canal, Bangara Doddi canal, Visvesvaraya canal, Right Bank Low Level canal (RBLL) and Left Bank Low Level canal (LBLL) and other canals in the district as the areas are receiving good rainfall at a few places and moderate rainfall at others.

“The recent rainfall can meet the requirement of the standing crops for the next three days, so we have restricted the outflow to 800 cusecs from Monday night,” an irrigation official said.

Kharif yield likely to be down by 50 per cent

‘Sowing for current rabi season has not crossed 20 p.c. mark’



Sunflower is among the crops which are withering due to lack of rain in Bellary district.

Farmers in the rain-fed areas of Bellary district are likely to suffer a huge loss during the current kharif season on account of scanty rainfall.

The yield of major crops, including maize and groundnut, is estimated to be about 50 per cent less than the normal.

This is the second year in succession that farmers are facing a loss. Last year, the kharif loss was put at about Rs. 127 crore.

This year, sowing was delayed. It picked up gradually, but rainfall was scanty and deficient. Meanwhile, crops sown earlier started withering and yield was affected considerably. The loss was put at Rs. 153.15 crore.

Sources in the Department of Agriculture told *The Hindu* that the yield of various crops on 55,314 hectares, out of the total 3.72 lakh hectares sown during the kharif season had come down by about 50 per cent. Maize was the worst affected, followed by groundnut, cotton, toor, bajra, sunflower, jowar, minor millets, green gram and paddy.

But for rain during August (109 mm rainfall as against the average of 90.8 mm), and some rainfall during September, which was again 50 per cent less (70.1 mm rainfall recorded against the normal of 141.4 mm), the loss would have been much more. "Most of the crops in rain-fed areas recovered slightly with the rainfall in August and September," sources said.

Rabi sowing affected

Sowing for the current year's rabi season has been severely affected by the failure of post-monsoon rains. During October, as against the average normal rainfall of 104.8 mm, the district received 12.9 mm till October 15. As of now, sowing for rabi has not crossed the 20 per cent mark, sources said.

Rise in dam level cheers farmers

Water level rose by two feet in the Periyar dam on Tuesday, thanks to good inflow to the dam. Sharp increase in the inflow cheered farmers in the Cumbum valley. Storage in other dams also went up sharply.

Water level in the Periyar dam touched 119.50 feet (Total permissible height 136 feet) with an inflow of 1,651 cusecs. Discharge was 400 cusecs for irrigating both first and second crops in the double cropping areas of the district.

Similarly, storage level in the Vaigai dam too rose to 35.27 feet. Inflow suddenly shot up to 641 cusecs and the discharge restricted at 60 cusecs.

Water level in the Sothuparai dam too rose to 72.49 feet.

Inflow was 103 cusecs and the discharge three cusecs. With no inflow and discharge, the Manjalar dam has 27 feet of water.

Continuous rain paralysed the routine life in the district in the last 48 hours.

The district recorded 277.8 mm rainfall and the average rainfall was 23.15 mm.

Rainfall recorded at various places in the district at 8 a.m. in mm on Tuesday: Andipatti 2, Aranmanaipudhur 28.8, Bodi 18, Goodalur 20, Manjalar dam 18, Periyakulam 52, Periyar 5.2, Sothuparai 42, Thekkadi 21.8, Uthamapalayam 12, Vaigai dam 6 and Veerapandi 52.

Dindigul

Except Kodaikanal, rain was nil in other parts of the district.

Kodaikanal recorded 6.2 mm rainfall and Kodaikanal Boat Club registered 7.2 mm.

Total rainfall was 13.4 mm and the average rainfall was just 1.3 mm only.

Centre urged to ease fertilizer shortage

The Virginia Tobacco Growers' Welfare Association on Tuesday urged the Centre to permit the Gujarat State Fertilizer Company (GSFC) to market its ammonium sulphate to farmers through the Tobacco Board without any further delay.

VTGWA honorary president Chunduru Ranga Rao told a press conference here that delay in grant of permission by the Union Fertilisers and Chemicals Ministry to the GSFC to market its

ammonium sulphate in the State was hurting very much the farmers in Prakasam district who use it cultivating tobacco, chillies, paddy, and vegetable crops.

The permission of the Centre, which extends transport subsidy for ammonium sulphate up to 1400 km from point of manufacture, was necessary to move the fertilizer beyond 1400 km, he explained.

The State government should intervene on behalf of the farmers, who were frantically looking for ammonium sulphate which had to be applied along with super phosphate for a good yield and quality crop at this stage, he said.

The GSFC had agreed to supply ammonium sulphate at Rs. 445 per bag of 50 kg to the Tobacco Board for supply to farmers as against Rs. 578 per bag quoted by another fertilizer company, the former Tobacco Board member said.

He wanted the Union Commerce Ministry, under which the commodity board functions, to impress upon the Fertilizers and Chemicals Ministry, to release adequate quantity of ammonium sulphate to the State.

Tribal farmers in need of cold storage facility

The tribal community in the Agency areas in the district require cold storage facilities to store forest and agriculture produce. Tamarind, rajma, turmeric, and ginger are some of the products that require the storage facilities. Vegetable cultivation is also ever growing and accounts for about 15,000 hectares in the Agency area.

The Department of Horticulture under the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) is extending 50 per cent subsidy on the project cost to the tribal entrepreneur and 40 per cent to non-tribal entrepreneurs who come forward to establish cold storages. The total cost of a cold storage plant with 5,000 tonnes capacity is Rs.3 crore. Tribal farmers or even societies can establish the same using the 50 per cent subsidy component.

The post-harvest losses of any product account for about 25 per cent to 30 per cent, besides quality of a sizeable quantity of produce deteriorates by the time it reaches the consumer.

This is mainly because of the perishable nature of the produce which requires a cold chain arrangement to maintain the quality and extend shelf life if consumption is not meant immediately after harvest.

In the absence of a cold storage and related cold chain facilities, the farmers are being forced to sell their produce immediately after harvest, which results in glut situations and low price realisation. Sometimes, farmers do not even get their harvesting and transporting costs, not to speak of profits. As a result, their production is not getting stabilised and farmers, after burning fingers in one crop, switch over to another crop in the subsequent year. And the vicious cycle continues.

The tribal farmers continue to remain poor even though they take the risk of cultivating high-value forest products, fruit, and vegetables, including highly nutritious rajma seed and turmeric.

A cold storage facility accessible to them will go a long way in removing the risk of distress sale to ensure better returns.

The estimated annual production of fruit and vegetables in the country is about 150 million tonnes.

This accounts for 18 per cent of our agriculture output. Due to diverse agro climatic conditions and better availability of package of practices, the production is gradually rising. Although there is vast scope for increasing production, lack of cold storage facilities is becoming major bottleneck in tapping the potential.

Collector's assurance

District Collector V. Seshadri told *The Hindu* that he was extensively touring the Agency area and trying to study the problems of the tribal community. He agreed with the suggestion that marketing facilities needed to be created for tribal farmers and cold storages established for them.

"I will take steps accordingly," said Mr. Seshadri.

Assistant Director of Horticulture G. Prabhakar Rao said tribal farmers would be encouraged to use subsidy. A few had recently evinced interest, but they were yet to come up with a proposal, he added.

As gale fear looms, farmers look to insurance companies



A number of banana orchards in Lalgudi taluk have suffered seriously due to the gale that swept the area recently.

K.Muthukumar, a farmer, who has raised banana in two acres in Pinnavasal village (Poovalur panchayat), lamented that almost his entire orchard was devastated causing a loss of about Rs.70, 000-80,000 per acre.

He estimated that at least 300-400 acres in his village should have suffered a similar fate.

Asked about insurance coverage, he said that he could not get even a paisa as the nationalised bank from which he has borrowed has not bothered to collect any premium from him.

Besides, even if he had insured, he is not certain whether he is entitled for any compensation. "The insurance company pays only if the entire firka was affected and not some fields," he contended.

This was the major issue haunting the banana growers of the district, known for its banana quality.

"We live in constant fear of high velocity winds as our survival might be swept out," laments S.A.Sukumar, State president, Tamil Nadu Banana Growers' Federation. It is the summer crop which fetches us good money, but it's also the same season when summer gale could blast our trees out of shape – virtually ruining us, he told *The Hindu*.

“We could not get a paisa from insurance companies despite more than six lakh banana trees, including some orchards completely, being devastated by the summer gale in Thottiam taluk of the district on March 25 last year,” rues G.Ajeethan, general secretary of the federation. Ironically, despite banana being notified for insurance coverage in the area, most of the banana crops were not covered under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS).

“Though banks used to deduct five per cent of the loan towards insurance premium they rarely gave us any compensation whenever our orchards suffered due to gale,” they alleged.

“We do not want compensation per taluk or block. We want individual compensation even if a few trees are damaged,” they pleaded.

Farmers prefer open-well cultivation

Have you ever come across open-well cultivation after having entered the age of bore-well based cultivation? In some parts of Medak district, farmers still prefer open-well cultivation rather than depending on bore-wells.

Meet Chavan Surya, a resident of this tanda, about 100 km from the district headquarters. Till 2010, Mr. Surya used to cultivate dry crops in his six acres of farm as there is no irrigation facility. But the idea of having an open-well for cultivation dented his mind after he saw it in the neighbouring villages.

He got an open-well dug at his farm that was six diameters and 12 metre deep. The result was so overwhelming that three-fourth of the well was filled with water. The recent rainfall that took place in this area was attributed as one of the reasons for the success, though the water level has never dried up since it was dug in November 2010.

Considerable profit

Mr. Surya cultivated his six acres of area under sugar cane and ginger. He was sure of making a considerable profit with the farming of sugar cane. While the district water management agency has extended an assistance of Rs.90,000 for digging a bore-well, he had spent about the same amount to have the structure maintained.

Even rings were arranged in the well so as to protect it from collapse.

“We are not sure about the success of bore-wells even after going 300 feet deep, but water source in open-wells is assured and that is our experience. That is why we prefer to go for these,” says Chavan Kheemu, a resident of the tanda.

“Open wells are found more at Siddipet, Chinnakodur, Nanganoor, Dubbak, Zaheerabad and Kohir and the numbers are in a few hundreds. The number is high at places like Appanapally, Hasanmeerapur and Challapur,” said P. Jaipal Rao, Additional Project Director, District Water Management Agency.

Under the open-well development scheme, the DWMA has been extending an assistance of Rs.2 lakh for digging wells to the depth of 16 metres, he added.

Release foodgrains from godowns, demand Bhojan Yatra activists

Bhojan Yatra, a campaign demanding a comprehensive food security Bill, reached here on Tuesday after travelling through Bihar, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal.

At a rally organised from Bistupur to Ram Mandir Maidan, Right to Food (RTF) activists demanded that the proposed National Food Security Bill give universal access to food instead of capping it at 67 per cent of the population. They demanded that 8.2 crore metric tonnes of foodgrains lying in government storage be distributed through the Public Distribution System (PDS). In Jharkhand, at public meetings in 60 villages in 17 districts, the campaigners demanded better implementation of nutrition-related schemes.

In 2009, the Jharkhand Government reduced the price of rice to Re.1/kg and entitled families with Antyodaya cards to get rice for free. But the distribution of Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards continues to be based on a survey by the Bihar Government 15 years ago, and many poor families are still excluded from PDS. The Government did a fresh survey last year, but the date for issuing fresh ration cards based on this survey had been shifted thrice this year.

In districts adjoining Ranchi, including East Singhbhum and Lohardaga, which are among 35 districts most affected by Left Wing Extremism and have been identified by the Central Government for “focused development,” a majority of villagers still don’t have ration cards.

“Even one family doesn’t have a ration card. They did a survey in our village last year, but none of us got a ration card,” said Kanhu Hembrom, Gram Pradhan of Musabani, a hamlet of 70 households adjoining the CRPF Battalion 193 camp at Ghatshila in East Singhbhum. At Kekrang village in Lohardaga district, parts of which lie in the hills and are accessible only on foot, only 20 out of 110 households have a ration card.

“We don’t grow enough rice to last us through the year. We are tired of asking the panchayat officials to give us ration cards. Everyone got an MGNREGA card but the officials keep the work site open only for 10-15 days,” said Bifan Nagesiya (25) in Kekrang village.

Nagesiya says he migrated to work in a brick kiln in Tripura for one year, but returned when he earned only Rs. 6,000 after working for eight months. In a 2011 survey -- done by economist Reetika Khera, who supports the RTF campaign and teaches at the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences of IIT-Delhi -- in the districts of Dumka and undivided Ranchi, only 25 per cent of households surveyed said they were getting their full PDS entitlement. More than a quarter of the households reported that one family member missed meals in the previous three months, and 12 per cent said that they hadn’t consumed daal even once the previous week.

“Jharkhand has the highest levels of malnourishment after Madhya Pradesh. The Central Government allots rations, categorising 46 per cent of the State population as BPL. The Jharkhand Government includes another 20 per cent from its own funds, but 13 to 14 per cent of the State’s poor population is still left out. The proposed law will leave even more people out,” said Gurjit Singh, convener, RTF campaign in Jharkhand. “The Bill proposes that each household will get 5 kg of grain per person per month. This means four to five-member households, who currently get 35 kg of grain per month, will get 10 to 15 kg less grain,” he added.

Officials say they are reforming PDS. “Digitised ration cards with bar codes will be issued in all districts by December,” said Secretary (Food & Civil Supplies) A.K. Singh.

To improve predictability, similar to *chawal utsav* in the Chhattisgarh regime under which ration shops remain open on fixed days, the Jharkhand Government has two fixed days, 15th and 25th of every month, on which ration shops will remain open. Activists claim that so far the order is being implemented in full measure only in Dhanbad, one of the 24 districts.

CCI intervention to bail out farmers sought

All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) vice-president Sarampally Malla Reddy has demanded that the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) immediately step in to purchase cotton from farmers at remunerative price so as to save them from another impending crisis.

“Any further delay in this regard would make the farmers particularly the small and medium cotton growers susceptible to exploitation by the greedy traders and debt-trap,” he pointed out. The cotton growers are reeling under a multitude of problems triggered by manifold increase in input cost, unfavourable climatic conditions and other factors, he said adding that the tragic suicide deaths of two cotton farmers in Adilabad district on Monday was an eloquent proof to the plight of cotton growers.

He was talking to news persons after visiting the cotton market yard here on Tuesday. The cotton produce brought to the market yard here deserves a higher price, much above the minimum support price fixed by the government, by virtue of its quality, he said deploring that the cotton growers were being paid prices lesser than the MSP by the traders at the market yard on the false pretext of “high moisture content.” There is no machinery to assess the moisture content at the yard, he said pointing out the glaring deficiencies at the yard, which allegedly exposed the farmers to exploitation.

The cotton growers, who cultivated cotton against all odds including prolonged dry spell in many parts of the State, are now spending anxious moments over the fate of their cotton produce. The government encouraged Bt cotton cultivation unmindful of the risk posed by the genetically modified variety to its growers, he charged lamenting that the persons at the helm of affairs grossly ignored the traditional varieties at the behest of the multi-national companies. A P Rythu Sangham State committee member Nunna Nageshwara Rao, who accompanied Mr Malla Reddy during the latter’s visit to the cotton market yard, demanded that the revenue officials should monitor the transactions at the cotton yard on a daily basis to ensure fair price to the cotton growers.

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on October 16th.

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

Rainfall

Rain/snow has occurred at most places over Jammu and Kashmir and at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh. Rain/thundershowers have occurred at isolated places over Haryana, Punjab and west Rajasthan. Weather was dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 18th OCTOBER 2012: Rain/snow may occur at a few places over Jammu and Kashmir during next 24 hours and decrease thereafter.

Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during next 48 hours and mainly dry thereafter. Weather will be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 18th OCTOBER 2012: Partly cloudy sky.

Hindustan Times

TODAY FARM NEWS

17.10.2012 A.M

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Rainy

Wednesday, Oct 17

Max Min

33.9° | 25.5°

Rain: 0.0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:59

Sunset: 05:48

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Thursday, Oct 18

Max Min

30° | 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday
Oct 19



29° | 25°

Rainy

Saturday
Oct 20



29° | 25°

Cloudy

Sunday
Oct 21



28° | 26°

Rainy

Monday
Oct 22



32° | 25°

Overcast

Tuesday
Oct 23



30° | 26°

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:23

Humidity: 61

Sunset: 05:49

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1017



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

16.10.2012 P.M

17.10.2012 A.M

16th oct 2012 P.M

Chana may gain more on depleting stockpile



Chana prices rebounded on increased festive demand for pulses and gram flour on Tuesday.

Even as local *mandis* remained closed for the second consecutive day here on Tuesday on account of Agrasen Jayanti, in private trading, chana (kanta) rose to Rs 4,800-4,825 a quintal (Rs 4,725-50), while chana (desi) ruled at Rs 4,650-4,700.

Traders foresee further rise in chana prices, given a steep decline in domestic stock on account of lower output this year, even as new crop of chana is still 4-5 months away.

Last year production of chana in the country had declined to 75.8 lakh tonnes (lt) against 82.2 lt during 2010-11.

Chana dal (average) on Tuesday ruled at Rs 5,650-75, chana dal (medium) at Rs 5,750-75, while chana dal (bold) ruled at Rs 6,100-25.

Sluggish trend continued in dollar chana on weak domestic demand and rise in arrivals.

Improved export demand, has lifted dollar chana prices in the container by about Rs 200 a quintal.

On Tuesday, dollar chana (42/44 count) ruled at Rs 8,725 a quintal, 44/46 count at Rs 8,550, 46/48 count at Rs 8,375, 58/60 count at Rs 6,200, while dollar chana (60/62 count) ruled at Rs 6,100 .

With improved export queries in the coming days, dollar chana prices in the container may rise further, said a trader, Ankul Pandya.

Ample supply, limited trading pound wheat



Dara wheat and flour prices witnessed some correction on Tuesday after rallying last week.

Easy availability coupled with restricted trading in the market mainly pulled dara and flour prices down, said Ram Kumar, a wheat trader.

“It is unlikely to see any major alteration and prices may continue to rule around current levels this week,” he said.

The Dara variety eased by Rs 20 and settled at Rs 1,440-1,450 a quintal against Rs 1,470 last weekend.

In the physical market, around 600 quintals of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and the stocks were directly offloaded at the mills.

Mill delivery was Rs 1,440-1,445 a quintal while delivery at the chakki was Rs 1,450 .

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for October delivery increased by Rs 15 and traded at Rs 1,580 a quintal.

It had touched a high of Rs 1,588 earlier in the day.

November contract went up by Rs 2 to Rs 1,546. Wheat Spot prices on the exchange traded at Rs 1,590.5 a quintal.

Flour Prices

With a down trend in wheat, flour prices too decreased by Rs 25 and quoted at Rs 1,465 for a 90-kg bag.

Similarly, Chokar eased by Rs 15 and sold at Rs 655 for a 49-kg bag.

Spot turmeric loses colour as futures crash 4%



Spot turmeric continued its downtrend as no exporter has received any upmarket order for the Durga Puja.

The spot market also took cues from the futures market where all the contracts dropped by the maximum permissible limit of four per cent.

“In the 100-year-old turmeric market history, this is the first time no exporter has received Durga Puja orders from North India. Most of the exporters and traders are simply visiting the market daily and watching the auction, not buying any turmeric. Only a few stockists are buying.

Because of poor sale, turmeric farmers are in a distress mood,” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He also said that the price of turmeric is declining for want of orders. Farmers bring only the medium variety turmeric.

Almost all the traders and commission merchants are having reasonable stock with them and are not interested in buying any more.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,096-5,649 a quintal; the root variety Rs 4,019-5,009.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,969-6,281 and the root variety Rs 5,413-5,774.

Of the 786 bags arrived, only 192 were sold.

Inventory purchase in sugar likely next month



Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market improved by Rs 10-20 a quintal for normal quality, tracking similar rise in Naka delivery on the back of demand support. Mills tender rates increased by Rs 10-20.

Producers hold the price on continuous buying support from the stockists. Arrivals and local dispatches were routine.

Market observers said the sentiment was steady due to routine demand – supply. Producers continued selling to avoid any pressure to exhaust free sales quota. Millers expect steady rise in consumers' demands for next 2 -3 weeks for Dasara and Diwali.

The Vashi market is currently carrying sufficient inventory of about 10,000 – 12,000 bags and hence, traders are cautious about adding more stocks. Inventory buying may improve next month for Diwali. Currently, supply is ample in the market. Demand from neighbouring States also is expected in Maharashtra. In Vashi market, arrivals were about 68-70 truckloads (each of 100 bags of quintal each) and local dispatches were about 67-68 loads.

On Monday, about 20-22 mills offered tenders and sold more than one lakh bags (each of 100 kg) to the local traders in the higher range of Rs 3,400-3,460 (Rs 3,380-3,440) for S-grade and Rs 3,480 - 3,580 (Rs 3,470 - 3,580) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 3,561 – Rs 3,591 (Rs 3,542 – Rs 3,592) and M-grade Rs 3,582- 3,711 (Rs 3,572- 3,711).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,510 -3,550 (Rs 3,490 -3,550) and M-grade Rs 3,560-3,670 (Rs 3,550-3,680).

Groundnut oil loses floor to cottonseed oil



On the back of lower demand, groundnut oil declined in the retail market. However, it remained unchanged in the wholesale market, while cottonseed oil moved up due to festival demand.

According to a Rajkot-based edible oil retailer, demand in groundnut oil has declined since last week as prices suddenly spurted more than Rs 150 a tin thrice last week. Hence, most people shifted to cottonseed oil and other edible oils and demand for cottonoil was good.

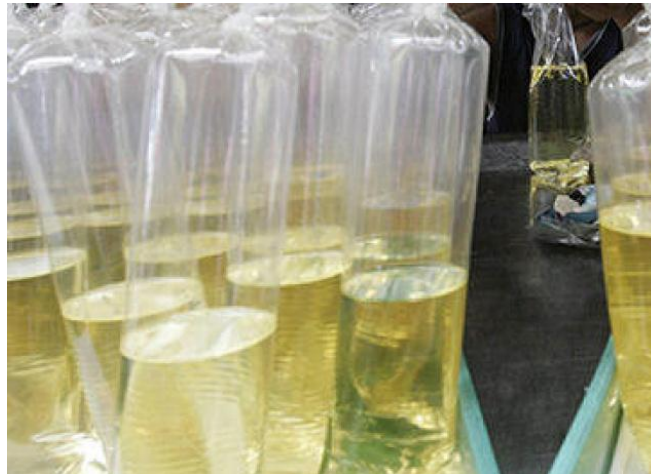
Groundnut oil new tin for 15 kg was down by Rs 10 to Rs 1,895-1,900.

Telia tin stood at Rs 1,715-1,716 . Loose groundnut oil was traded at Rs 1,115-1,120 for 10 kg. About 80-100 tonnes of groundnut oil were traded from Saurashtra's mills.

Cotton oil wash increased by Rs 5 to Rs 637-640 for 10 kg and cotton oil new tin was at Rs 1,110-1,120 for 15 kg.

A Gondal-based miller said, "High price of groundnut oil shifted people to other edible oils during last two years. Moreover, due to speculation in prices, there is an absence of bulk buying by stockists."

Stockists avoid buying edible oils



Edible oils ruled flat amidst thin volume on Tuesday. Barring imported palmolein which inched up by Re 1, all other edible oils ruled unchanged or weak.

Soyabean refined oil, groundnut oil, sunflower oil and rapeseed oil were steady, while cotton refined oil dropped by Rs 5 for 10 kg on improved arrivals of new crops at producing centres.

The volume remained subdued as stockists preferred fulfilling "higher priced" old commitments – purchases made well in advance and avoid new purchases. Merely 100-150 tonnes of

palmolein were traded during the day in the range of Rs 515-517. Towards the day's close, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 517-520 and super palmolein Rs 578, soya refined oil Rs 658. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 515 for Oct 20-Nov 15 and Rs 510 for Nov 15-30, super palmolein Rs 576 for Oct 20-Nov 15 and Rs 571 for Nov 15-30. Soya refined oil was at Rs 655 for Oct-Nov and sunflower refined oil was Rs 700. Allana's rates were Rs 515 for palmolein and Rs 575 for super palmolein.

Malaysia's crude palm oil November futures settled at MYR 2,397 (2,407), December closed MYR 2,435 (2,433) and January at MYR 2,466 (2,470) a tonne. **The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates were (Rs/10 kg):** groundnut oil 1,130 (1,130), soya refined oil 655 (655), sunflower exp. ref. 645 (645), sunflower ref. 700 (700), rapeseed ref. oil 830 (830), rapeseed expeller ref. 800 (800) cotton ref. oil 660(665) and palmolein 516 (515).

Tea prices up on quality at Kochi sale



A good demand perked up prices of almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi tea auction last week. The quantity on offer in the CTC dust category was 7,75,500 kg.

The markets were irregular and lower by Rs 2-3 and sometimes more especially the powdery grades following quality.

However, some well made clean black PD, RD and SRD grades dropped less compared to others, auctioneers Forbes, Ewart and Figgis said.

The orthodox dust grade also witnessed a good demand and the quantity on offer was 4,500 kg.

The market for highgrown and medium powdery grades remained steady, while others were irregular and lower. Bulk of the offerings was absorbed by exporters.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted at Rs 95-103, RD varieties stood at Rs 99-103, SRD grades ruled at Rs 99-104 and SFD at Rs 100-113.

In the leaf category, the quantity on offer in the orthodox grades was 87,500 kg. The demand was good as select best Nilgiri bolder brokens, smaller brokens and fannings fully firm to sometimes dearer. Others were irregular and tended to ease.

Corresponding whole leaf had shown strong feature and move up in value.

Medium bolder brokens and tippy grades were irregular and sometimes lower following quality. Whole leaf from the same origin was higher by Rs 5-10 and occasionally more. Medium fannings remained steady.

The CTC leaf also witnessed a good demand and the quantity on offer was 94,000 kg. The market for CTC brokens was irregular and lower by Rs 2-4 and sometimes more with many withdrawals. However, some select best and popular marks sold around last. CTC fanning was fully firm to sometimes dearer.

In the dust category, Kodanaad CL.BOPD quoted the best prices of Rs 155 followed by Injipara (Prm) SRD by Rs 125. In the leaf grades, Pascoes Hyson Green tea quoted the best prices of Rs 285 followed by Chamraj Green Tea FOP at Rs 256.

Pepper futures fall

The pepper prices dropped on bearish sentiments following selling at discount of further up positions on Tuesday. Consequently, all the active contracts ended much below the previous day closing.

There were squeezing and cornering and about 2,000 tonnes have been marked for delivery under the staggered delivery system.

As the new crop is round the corner, the farmers and stockists holding pepper were liquidating their stocks. Some 20 tonnes of farm grade pepper arrived today and they were traded at Rs 405 a kg, market sources told *Business Line*.

The total open interest has shown a substantial increase while the totalturn over also moved up.

Turnover

Total turnover increased by 535 tonnes to end at 2,538 tonnes. Total open interest rose by 465 tonnes to close at 8,267 tonnes.

Oct open interest dropped by 80 tonnes to 1,365 tonnes. Nov and Dec open interest went up by 272 tonnes and 226 tonnes respectively to close at 4,947 tonnes and 1.469 tonnes.

Spot prices decreased by Rs400 a quintal to close at Rs40,100 (ungarbled) and Rs41,600 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market today was at \$8,500 a tonne (c&f) and remained totally out priced, they said.

Jeera futures slip on improved crop prospects



Jeera futures that were seen rallying last week, traded in the red on Tuesday owing to higher arrivals, slack spot demand and higher carryover stocks.

On the NCDEX, jeera for October delivery was down by Rs 305 at Rs 14,927.5 a quintal. The November and December contracts declined by Rs 295 and Rs 285 to Rs 15,150 and Rs 15,520 respectively.

Trimming of positions by speculators on expectations of better sowing due to a revival in rains later in the season, were the main trigger for the fall in prices.

Good rains in Gujarat have improved sowing prospects ahead of the rabi season. Arrivals in the key market of Unjha are projected at 8,000 bags (of 55 kg each), up from 5,000 bags on Monday.

In the Unjha spot market at Gujarat, prices of the spice rose despite rising arrivals. Jeera was quoted at Rs 15,137.5 a quintal.

Overseas trend: About 75 per cent of the export target has already been achieved due to a supply crunch in the global markets. Around 10 lakh bags of jeera are exported across India. Supply concerns from Syria and Turkey still exist making India a hot destination for buyers.

Jeera of Indian origin is being offered in the international market at \$2,775 a tonne (c&f), while Syria and Turkey are not offering. According to the Spices Board of India, exports of jeera in April stood at 2,500 tonnes as compared to 2,369 tonnes in April 2011.

Carryover stocks of the spice are expected to be around 7-8 lakh bags (4-5 lakh bags), while production in 2011-12 is expected to be around 40 lakh bags (29 lakh bags).

Traders begin to build copra stocks



Coconut oil market firmed up this week following festival demand. Emergence of corporate buying also contributed to the rally.

According to Prakash B. Rao, Vice-President, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), spot prices of coconut oil in Kerala remained at Rs 56/kg compared to Rs 54 in the previous week. Simultaneously, in Tamil Nadu prices firmed up to Rs 54 from Rs 52 last week.

Copra prices firmed up by Rs 200/quintal both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, with the commodity being traded at Rs 4,100 and Rs 3,900 respectively.

He said traders have started stocking copra and coconut on expectation of further rally in prices in the coming days especially on the commencement of North-East Monsoon.

Normally, Tamil Nadu and Kerala receive reasonable rainfall during this period.

Besides, the reports of procurement of copra by Kerafed, Marketfed from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka on behalf of Nafed, have also helped the market to recover from lower levels.

These agencies are reported to have procured 11,240 tonnes from Kerala, 20,690 tonnes from Tamil Nadu and 5,500 tonnes from Karnataka, respectively.

The palm oil and palm kernel oil, which is a substitute of coconut oil, is currently trading at Rs 54/kg (Rs 51) and Rs 50 (Rs 47).

P.G.K. Koshy, President, COMA, said that the market has slightly picked up following the festival demand and it is expected to continue.

Bharat N. Khona, former Board Member, COMA, said that the upcountry demand was low since prices of other edible oils are trading at lower levels.

The sudden firming up of prices is unusual and not related to any fundamentals. He expects that the market may decline in the short term.

When contacted, T.K. Jose, Chairman, Coconut Development Board, said that this not a steady track of upward movement.

However, the prices will move up within a few months because of delayed monsoon and drought-like situation which awaits a drop in production.

Fragile economy curbs cashew market movement



The cashew market remained unchanged last week with some slight pick up in enquiries not translating into actual business. There was reasonable buying interest at the lower end of the range for nearbys as well as forwards but selling interest at the lower levels was limited.

Price range (offers and trades) is almost unchanged i.e., W240 from \$3.60 to \$3.75, W320 from \$3.15 to \$3.35, W450 and SW320 from \$3.00 to \$3.10, SW360 from \$2.70 to \$2.90, splits from \$2.00 to \$2.25, Butts from \$2.10 to \$2.30 and pieces from \$1.60 to \$1.75 a lb (f.o.b.).

A look at the price movements during the past four years will give an idea about the market trend. During 2009 and first quarter of 2010, W320 traded in the range of \$2.25-2.75 - substantially lower than current range. At the same time, during the past three years processing costs have gone up significantly, Pankaj N. Sampat, a Mumbai-based dealer told *Business Line*.

Price movement in the first half of 2012 was very erratic – from \$3.70 in January to \$3.20 in March to \$3.80 in early May and \$3.50 by early June.

Since then, market has been moving sideways in a narrow range of \$3.25-3.50.

“Current range is the lowest in the last two years and is significantly lower than the average of last two years. If you take into account the increase in processing costs, current prices are probably lower than the average of the last five years – or at least close to that,” he said.

Due to the fragile economic situation, all links are content to operate with short term positions as the market continues to move in a narrow range.

But on the other hand, there is the risk of sharp movements if something unusual happens. As far as cashews are concerned, supply side factors are well known and no big surprises are expected.

RCN market quiet

There was not much activity in the RCN market except for some trades for good quality Indonesian nuts in the range of \$1,325-1,350 a tonne (c&f).

“There seems to be reasonable quantity in West Africa but there is little buying interest because of dull kernel market and quality concerns. No news yet from Tanzania or Mozambique about pricing or movement,” Pankaj added.

Crude palm oil prices seen ruling weak in near term

Crude palm oil (CPO) prices are expected to rule weak in the near term till year-end on rising stocks in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Though the short-term outlook remains bearish, the demand for palm oil is expected to pick up next year on anticipated fall in global oilseeds output, analysts and industry observers said at the Malaysian Palm Oil Trade Fair and Seminar, organised by the Malaysian Palm Oil Council.

Dorab E. Mistry, , Godrej International Ltd Director, said that CPO will touch a low of 2,200 Malaysian ringitt (MYR) in the next three months as stocks build up in the second largest producer.

CPO prices are trading around 2,465 MYR or \$810 levels. Mistry advised Malaysia to remove all export taxes and quotas on short term basis and allow prices to touch level of 2,200 MYR a tonne or \$749 c.i.f Rotterdam to help reduce rising stocks and overcome the current crisis.

“If prices are held artificially high, it could be counterproductive and stocks could build further,” Mistry said.

Malaysia was recently forced to announce a duty cut effective January 1 to make its CPO exports competitive and on par with larger rival Indonesia.

Benny Lee, Chief Market Strategist at Jupiter Securities Sdn Bhd, said that CPO prices will stay bearish in the near term on rising stocks in Malaysia, which are expected to touch three million tonnes by December-end from the present 2.48 mt.

James Fry, LMC International Chairman, said that the recently announced duty cuts and abolition of export quotas coupled with the emergence of price-sensitive bio-fuel demand should stop the rising stocks from December.

The rising crude oil prices, which were hovering around \$116 a barrel, could possibly trigger the demand for bio-fuel palm diesel, he said.

Fry said that the production of palm oil in Indonesia will continue to rise as newer plantation areas are expected to come into production.

At the same time, Malaysian output is seen marginally declining to around 18 mt, while the Indonesian output is pegged at 27.5 mt for the current year.

Thomas Mielke, Head of Hamburg-based research firm Oil World, expressed optimism that global demand for oil palm will continue to grow going forward. He suggested that the key oil palm producing nations – Indonesia and Malaysia should not slow down planting of oil palm.

Mielke estimated that the world market needs about 78 mt oil palm by 2020 compared with 52 mt at present.

The anticipated shortfall in oilseed production will see demand for palm oil in 2013, he said.

(The correspondent's visit was sponsored by Malaysia Palm Oil Council)

Mixed trend in spot rubber



Physical rubber prices were mixed on Tuesday.

The undercurrent was weak reflecting the overall sentiments in the market.

But sheet rubber finished steady at Rs. 183 a kg, as quoted by the traders and the Rubber Board.

According to observers, the grade managed to sustain at the prevailing levels on supply concerns and as the domestic futures improved marginally on fresh buying and short covering.

The November series improved to Rs 182.50 (Rs 181.33), December to Rs 183.58 (Rs 181.75), January to Rs 184.75 (Rs 184.35) and February to Rs 185.60 (Rs 182.18) a kg for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) closed marginally higher at Rs 170.32 (Rs 170.30) a kg at Bangkok.

The October futures increased to ¥ 250.5 (Rs 168.20) from ¥ 249.8 a kg during the day session but then slipped to ¥ 250.3 (Rs 268.03) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

The rates in Rs/kg are as follows: RSS-4: 183.00 (183.00); RSS-5: 175.00 (178.00); Ungraded: 167.00 (169.00); ISNR 20: 163.00 (164.00) and Latex 60%: 119.00 (120.50)

AP to set up livestock heritage farm to preserve unique breeds

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy today said that the State plans to set up a livestock heritage farm and develop Araku Valley near Visakhapatnam as a global agriculture heritage site.

Addressing the high-level Segment of Conference of Parties (COP) 11 at the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Chief Minister said that livestock heritage farm is aimed at preserving the unique cattle breeds of Ongole and Punganur, sheep breed of Deccani fame and poultry breed of Aseel.

The Araku Valley will be developed as an agricultural heritage site recognising the contributions made by tribal families to the development of climate-smart agriculture. He said that necessary documentation was prepared for submission to the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

He said that sustainable use of biodiversity and its resources would pave way for economic development and more so help poorer sections of society.

To mark the historical convention here, the State is creating a biodiversity complex in Hyderabad. It would host a biodiversity museum with the support of the National Government.

Thanking the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, for supporting the initiative, he said that the commemorative pylon has been developed to acknowledge the participation of delegates from all over the world. The monument captures organic evolution of life over millions of years.

The Biodiversity Park is expected to connect with various countries that participated in the event. Members would plant a sapling there. As the sapling grows each year, it should signify the growing efforts of mankind to conserve and preserve biodiversity, he said.

Country could do with more sugar mills, says ICAR official

Though the number of sugar mills in India has gone up nearly twenty times in the past eight decades, the country could do with more, according to Dr Swapan Kumar Datta, Deputy Director-General (Crop Science), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi.

He also stressed the need for increasing the productivity of sugarcane farming.

Inaugurating an 'International Symposium on New Paradigms in Sugarcane Research' here on Monday, organised as part of the Coimbatore Sugarcane Breeding Institute's centenary celebrations, he said there has been a quantum jump in the number of sugar mills in India in the past eight decades — from around 30 in 1930 to about 560 now. Still, there were no sugar mills in several parts of India. Considering the fact that sugarcane cultivation could improve the economic condition of the region where cane is grown, he suggested that efforts should be made to capitalise on this opportunity.

He suggested that the sugar industry should involve itself aggressively in R&D activity that would help increase production and improve profitability for all stakeholders. He lauded the role of sugarcane researchers, farmers and the sugar industry in propelling the country to the slot of the second largest producer of sugar globally.

He suggested use of molecular biology and genetic engineering for manipulating sucrose accumulation mechanism in sugarcane for enhancing sugar content.

N. Vijayan Nair, Director of the Sugarcane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore, said sugarcane has emerged as a multiproduct crop since apart from sugar, it contributed to the production of bio-fuel and bio-energy. He felt that in future these two would play a key role in ensuring the energy security of sugarcane growing nations.

He said the demand for sugar was likely to go up by 50 per cent by 2030. With expansion in the cane cultivation area for achieving higher production not being possible in traditional sugarcane growing countries such as India, increased production "has to be achieved only through a vertical increase in productivity" that required "appropriate technological interventions".

K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University(TNAU), Coimbatore, stressing that development should not take place at the expense of the environment, wanted industries to support green technologies and research institutions should lend a helping hand to the industries in this regard.

The four-day symposium has attracted participants from India and abroad.

Environmental groups launch Indo-Africa Millet Network



A group of environmental organisations and NGOs from India and West Africa launched the Indo-African Millet Network at a side-meeting of the on-going UN conference on biological diversity.

The initiatives will aim at working with farmers groups across India and West Africa to boost production and demand of millets. These groups see millets as a bonding crop between India and Africa, especially because of nutritional values.

The groups are led by Millet Network of India, Deccan Development Society, Coalition to Protect African Genetic Heritage based in Benin, Organic Farming Association of India and Paryavarana Vikas Kendra of Gujarat.

National Convenor of Millet Network of India P.V. Satheesh said millet production in India has declined 50 per cent in the last two decades, primarily due to lack of incentives to farmers and adequate policy backing. "We have been seeking inclusion of millets in the Public Distribution System as one way to boost production," he told media persons here.

The organisation has brought back about 5,000 acres under millet cultivation across eight States, including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan through farmers programmes.

Festive demand lifts coconut oil prices

Coconut oil market firmed up from lower levels this week following festival demand. A better corporate buying too had attributed for a rally in prices.

According to Prakash B.Rao, Vice-President, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), spot prices of coconut oil in Kerala were trading at Rs 56 per kg compared with Rs 54 in the previous week.

Simultaneously, the Tamil Nadu market too firmed up to Rs 54 a kg from Rs 52 last week.

Copra prices also firmed up by Rs 200 per quintal both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu to Rs 4,100 and Rs 3,900 per quintal, respectively.

He said traders have started stocking copra and coconut on expectations of further rally in prices in the coming days especially due to the commencement of North-East monsoon. Normally Tamil Nadu and Kerala receive reasonable rainfall during this period.

Besides, the reports of procurement of copra by Kerafed, Marketfed from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka on behalf of Nafed have also helped the market to recover from lower levels.

These agencies reported to have procured 11,240 tonnes from Kerala, 20,690 tonnes from Tamil Nadu and 5,500 tonnes from Karnataka, he said.

Palm oil and palm kernel oil, which is a close substitute of coconut oil, is currently trading at Rs 54 per kg (Rs 51) and Rs 50 (Rs 47).

P.G.K. Koshy, President, COMA said that the market has slightly picked up following the festival demand and it is expected to continue.

Bharat N. Khona, former Board Member, COMA, pointed out that the unprecedented fluctuation in the market has rallied up the prices. Upcountry demand was low since the prices of other edible oils were trading low.

However, he said the sudden firming up of prices was unusual and not related to any fundamentals. He expects that the market may decline in the short-term.

Tea prices firm up on buying interest at Kochi auction

Good demand perked up prices of almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi tea auction last week. The quantity on offer in the CTC dust category was 7,75,500 kg.

The markets were irregular and lower by Rs 2 to Rs 3 and sometimes more, especially the powdery grades following quality. However some well made clean black PD, RD and SRD grades dropped less compared to others, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart and Figgis said.

The Orthodox dust grade also witnessed good demand and the quantity on offer was 4,500 kg. The market for high-grown and medium powdery grades remained steady, while others were irregular and lower. The bulk of the offerings was absorbed by exporters.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted at Rs 95/103, RD varieties stood at Rs 99/103, SRD grades ruled at Rs 99/104 and SFD at Rs 100/113.

In the leaf category, the quantity on offer in the Orthodox grades was 87,500 kg. The demand was good as select best Nilgiri bolder broken, smaller broken and Fannings were fully firm to sometimes dearer. Others were irregular and tended to ease.

Corresponding whole leaf showed strong features and moved up in value. Medium bolder broken and tippy grades were irregular and sometimes lower following quality. Whole leaf from the same origin was higher by Rs 5 to Rs 10 and occasionally more. Medium fannings remained steady.

The CTC leaf also witnessed good demand and the quantity on offer was 94,000 kg. The market for CTC broken was irregular and lower by Rs 2 to Rs 4 and sometimes more with many withdrawals. However, some select best and popular marks sold around last. CTC Fanning was fully firm to sometimes dearer.

In the dust category, Kodanaad CL.BOPD quoted the best price of Rs 155, followed by Injipara (Prm) SRD by Rs 125. In the leaf grades, Pascoes Hyson Green tea quoted the best prices of Rs 285 followed by Chamraj Green Tea FOP at Rs 256.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

17.10.2012 A.M

Fertiliser plant offer to Mozambique

India has told Mozambique it would like to make investments to set up fertiliser, petrochemical and city gas distribution businesses in the country, if Indian entrepreneurs are offered gas under long-term contracts.

“India has asked at what price Mozambique could make gas available to Indian companies,” said a petroleum ministry official.

MP aims for 20% agricultural growth

Though Madhya Pradesh boasts a handsome growth of 18 per cent in agriculture this year, poor access to irrigation for farmers remains a big challenge for the authorities. Experts and insiders fear that besides warehousing issues, gradual fragmentation of land poses a major challenge for agriculture. The real estate industry and other big-ticket investors are fast consuming arable lands across the state. Pest attacks, heavy rains and inclement weather also pose problems.

“Inadequate irrigation infrastructure is the biggest challenge for us to attain the targeted growth, though we have a three-pronged agenda to attain 20 per cent growth this year,” admits D N Sharma, director, agriculture and adds, “Quality input has prompted farmers to retain farming as their prime business in the state.” Of the total 72 lakh farmers in the state, hardly 30 per cent have access to irrigation. The ones in the low-lying areas are the worst sufferers. Buoyed by the procurement of over 85 lakh tonnes of wheat, state is chalked out a strategy to overtake farming-dominated states like Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. In fact, the growth rate, which held at 9 per cent pace during the last Plan, is expected by the authorities to cross 20 per cent. The national average agriculture growth is 3 per cent.

The primary reasons for buoyancy in agricultural productivity are surplus availability of seeds and fertilisers.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

17.10.2012 A.M

Training programme to help farmers maximize returns

GUWAHATI: The Lions Club Guwahati CARE and the Horticultural Research Station, Kahikuchi, jointly organized a [training programme](#) for the [farmers](#) of Borka village in Kamrup (rural) district in a bid to combat the diminishing net farm returns and to meet the existing technological demands.

The training programme, "Toria Seed Production Technology and Certification Protocol", envisages building a capacity of seven hundred farmers of Bokra village.

The training began on October 11 at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kahikuchi. Sarat Saikia, the chief scientist of Horticultural Research Station addressed the participant farmers in the inauguration session. This programme was attended by 27 farmers, along with Lions Club officials Manoj Jain and Dinesh Kejriwal and scientists of the research station.

This entire programme was conceived and executed by [Jayanta Kumar Kalita](#), a scientist of the [Horticulture Research Station](#). This effort was initiated to combat the diminishing net farm returns and to meet the existing technological demand. The solution that the programme came up with is likely to increase production and productivity levels of small holder farming in Assam. The Assam Agricultural University developed two varieties called TS -36 and TS-38 for this purpose.

Gum ka fasana: Bumper guar crop helps farmers float political party

JAIPUR: Rajasthan's guar gum [farmers](#) are full of beans these days. From Rs 10,000 per quintal, the price of the wonder bean has jumped to Rs 1 lakh per quintal in the past year, a

result of a sudden surge in its demand in the international market, particularly the west where it helps bring down the cost of drilling for oil.

Guar gum, which comes from the commonly known guar phalli, has numerous other uses - from pharma to explosives. But, now it seems guar gum is helping farmers, who made millions from producing it, launch a political party.

In Sri Ganganagar, empowered and enriched by the magical gum, several farmers have united, breaking caste and religious barriers, to launch the Zamindara Party. They now plan to contest 200 seats in Rajasthan's next assembly elections. For the Congress and [BJP](#), the guar gum party could prove to be a sticky proposition.

"So far we have received membership of more than 3.5 lakh farmers from Rajasthan. We are ready to fight upcoming polls," said Rajendra Jani, one of party's founding members.

The first indications of the farmers starting a [political party](#) came when BD Agarwal, a guar merchant and working president of Sir Chhoturam Kisan Samiti, offered a donation of Rs 100 crore for building a government medical college in Sriganganagar. But it was turned down by the state government. Undeterred in his zeal for social service, Agarwal met like-minded farmers to start their political organization. "We want only farmers in the organisation to contest election," said Agarwal.

Agarwal criticized the political parties for not taking care of farmers' interests. "A few years ago, loans given to farmers amounted to Rs 3 lakh crore, which has now increased to Rs 4.5 lakh crore. The government is ready to give more loans. But, this would only increase farmers' burden. They are under debt and many farmers want to quit farming," Agarwal said.

He said his organisation's aim is to help farmers get the best possible cost for their crops as per World Trade Organization's best prices.

"Rajasthan produces 90% of the country's guar gum. I bought a new tractor after selling my crop and other electronic equipment. There's a large number of farmers whose life has changed completely because of guar gum prices," said farmer, Rajendra Jani.

Gum ka fasana

- * Guar gum is produced from guar beans. Seeds are dehusked, milled and screened to get gum
- * World market of guar gum estimated at 150,000 tons annually
- * With exports worth Rs 1,110 crore, India accounts for about 80% of its trade

Uses

- * Paper: improves sheet formation, folding and denser surface for printing
- * Explosives: waterproofing agent
- * Pharma: binder in tablets; main ingredient in bulk-forming laxatives
- * Cosmetics and toiletries: thickener in toothpastes, conditioner in shampoos
- * Oil and gas drilling, hydraulic fracturing
- * Food: used in sweets; chewing gum

Kerala Agricultural University to set up crop productivity centre

THRISSUR: In order to study the variation in crop production and crop-weather relations in the kole lands, the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) will soon open a 'kole land — crop productivity centre' in Venkitangu.

The centre will be set up at a cost of Rs 18 lakh with financial aid from the state government. "In some areas of kole land, paddy production is high with a yield of 12-14 tonnes a hectare. But in other areas, the yield is not more than four tonnes. The reasons for such variation will be analyzed," said Prof U Jayakumaran of agriculture research station, KAU.

"Every year there is a change in the quantity of production. But, nobody knows why. If we can study that, a contingency plan can be evolved to increase production. This is the aim of the project," he said. The project is expected to be launched next month.

To study crop-weather relations, an automatic weather station costing Rs 5 lakh will be installed at Venkitangu. It will study temperature, monsoon, rainfall, evaporation, wind direction and how these affect production. A field lab will also be started here to analyze soil and plants, said Jayakumaran.

As part of the project, a crop security intelligence wing has been formed and officers have been appointed to conduct field observation in five blocks: Puzhakkal, Mullassery, Anthikad, Cherpu and Irinjalakuda.

"If they identify any pest disease or crop disorder, they will have to inform us and the assistant director in the agriculture office of the block concerned," he added. The intelligence wing has been set up at a cost of Rs 12 lakh.

"With their information, we can ensure timely intervention of experts to adopt measures on a war footing to maintain productivity," Jayakumaran said.

Alagiri says no to hike in urea price

In a major jolt to the UPA's fiscal consolidation drive, Fertilisers Minister M K Alagiri has struck down the proposal to raise urea prices by 10 per cent, which would have reduced the subsidy burden by about Rs 2,400 crore.

His ministry's revised note for the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs removes a paragraph from the CCEA note of August 2012 which had proposed raising the maximum retail price of urea by 10 per cent during 2012-13.

The new proposal of October 8, 2012, says changes in the retail price may be considered "from second year onwards" to compensate fertiliser units, and that too for increase in pool price of fuels or fixed costs like wages, selling expenses and repair.

Even on these hikes, Alagiri wants final say. "The Department of Fertilisers with the approval of the minister, after recommendations from the Inter-Ministerial Council, may decide MRP increase before every financial year," it says.

Last year, a panel headed by then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee approved a new draft urea policy proposing partial freeing of retail prices, allowing firms to hike prices by 10 per cent in the first year of policy implementation.

A committee of secretaries had proposed complete deregulation of the urea sector, but the finance, agriculture and fertilisers ministries opposed this. The Department of Expenditure, then under Mukherjee, also opposed freeing prices but supported a 10 per cent hike every year for three years.

Alagiri's move reflects the DMK's position, which had demanded that the Kelkar Committee's recommendation, endorsing increase in urea prices by 10 per cent, be shelved. Alagiri wrote to the PM that this would affect farmers, but Finance Minister P Chidambaram recently asked Alagiri to raise the price of urea and work out a plan for direct cash transfers of fertiliser subsidy.

Wal-Mart faces sourcing challenge



As Wal-Mart Stores Inc ramps up its operations in India, it needs to find more farmers like Yogesh Todkari.

His acre of cauliflowers is big, leafy, and a deep shade of green, thanks to modern irrigation and quality nutrients and seeds - all provided by the world's largest retailer.

"They train us and assist us right from when the crop is sown to when it's harvested. They give us a higher price than the market for better quality", said Todkari, 29, who works the field in western India with his elderly father.

Investing in farmers to help them improve quality and efficiency, and getting around the army of costly middlemen, will be key to whether global chains like Wal-Mart and Tesco Plc succeed where local operators have failed to make a profit. It will also be a test of whether India's politically fraught decision to allow in global supermarkets in order to modernise its food supply chain proves to be the right one.

"We plan to procure as much as we can via direct farming so the procurement from traders in local markets is as little as possible", said Krishnakant Reddy, who is in charge of direct farming in south and west India for Wal-Mart, which already operates in India through 17 wholesale stores.

Under the reforms, foreign retailers must source at least 30 percent of their goods from local, small industries.

India recently let in global supermarkets, despite heavy political opposition, in the hope of improving the supply chain and bringing down wastage and costs in a country where one-third of fresh produce rots and food inflation is persistent.

Mentha oil futures fall 1.03% on profit-booking

Amid profit-booking by speculators and subdued spot demand, mentha oil prices fell by Rs 12.50 to Rs 1,205.60 per kg in futures trade today.

Adequate stocks position in the physical market following increased arrivals from major producing region also put pressure on mentha oil prices.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, mentha oil for delivery in November fell by Rs 12.50, or 1.03 per cent, to Rs 1,205.60 per kg in business turnover of 67 lots. Similarly, the oil for delivery in October shed Rs 11.90, or 0.99 per cent, to Rs 1,191.10 per kg in 453 lots.

Marketmen attributed the fall in mentha oil futures to profit-booking by speculators at prevailing higher levels and sluggish demand from consuming industries in the spot market.

Sugar futures prices up 1.29% on Rangarajan committee recommendations

Sugar futures prices today surged 1.29 per cent to Rs 3,434 per quintal as speculators enlarged their positions after the Rangarajan Committee suggested de-control of the sector.

Besides, strong demand in the spot markets for the festive season too influenced sugar prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in October spurted by Rs 44, or 1.29 per cent, to Rs 3,434 per quintal, with an open interest of 3,280 lots.

Similarly, the sweetener for delivery in November gained Rs 11, or 0.33 per cent to Rs 3,370 per quintal in 33,920 lots.

Market analysts attributed the rise in sugar prices at futures trade to the Rangarajan Committee's recommendation de-control of the sugar sector by giving freedom to mills to sell their produce in open market and removing the obligation on the industry to supply the sweetener at below market price for ration shops.

Further, strong demand in the market for the festive and marriage season, also gave push to rising sweetener's prices at futures trade, they said.