

Kuruvai harvest complete in over 11,000 hectares

While kuruvai harvest has been completed in more than 11,000 hectares, samba cultivation has been taken up in more than 83,000 hectares in Tiruvarur district. Besides, several steps have been initiated to drain rainwater from the fields as flooding during northeast monsoon is a serious problem in the district.

Rainfall

Speaking at the farmers' grievances day meet here on Thursday, Collector C.Natarajan said the normal rainfall during January-October in the district has been 704 mm. In the current year, the rainfall recorded till October 22 was 523 mm.

According to an official release, the Collector said that normal rainfall in the district through northeast monsoon (October-November-December) has been 731mm. In the current season, in just about a week, the district has received 221 mm.

Referring to the measures initiated to drain water, Mr.Natarajan said apart from desilting canals, water hyacinth and 'Neyveli kattamankku' were removed from water bodies. Besides steps have been initiated to drain out water from stagnated areas.

Taluk-level committees are to be set up to protect crops and animals from rains .

Kuruvai crop has been raised in 7,985 hectares under System Rice Intensification (SRI) method, in 4,965 hectares under conventional method, and in 99 hectares under direct sowing method. "Of the kuruvai raised in 13,046 hectares, harvesting has been completed in 11,114 hectares till October 22 (Monday)."

Under samba, 67,593 hectares were covered under direct sowing, 12,570 hectares under conventional method, and 3,422 hectares under SRI method.

With respect to fertilizer availability, he said that of the 10,700 metric tonnes (MT) of urea, 1,777 tonnes have been distributed so far. About 3,214 MT of DAP and 1,243 MT of potash are also available.

Several inputs, including gypsum and bio fertilizers, are being distributed at subsidised rate under Samba Cultivation programme.

Community nurseries have been raised in 10,540 hectares by 5,112 farmers.

So far, more than Rs.203 crore (Rs.174 crore through nationalised banks and Rs.29 crore through cooperatives) has been extended as crop loan.

Loan

The district central co-operative bank has given Rs.7.65 crore crop loan to 219 new members.

An audio-visual show on “Bheema Bamboo” cultivation was screened to enlighten farmers about the possibility of the bamboo as an alternative crop. The crop could fetch substantial income for several years. Besides, it requires far less maintenance than other crops, the farmers were told. The bamboo could be raised in all locations and all soil types.

Special teams set up to monitor movement of fertilizers

Agriculture department has formed special teams to monitor movement of fertilizers in the district. The teams would mark the fertilizer availability at the block level to ensure adequate stocks were available to farmers and to prevent malpractice.

With the monsoon setting in and agriculture activities picking up, the department is hopeful to meet the current year’s target for paddy coverage of 16,000 hectares comfortably. Of that, the officials plan to bring 8,000 hectares under the System of Rice Intensification method. A total of 160 tonnes of quality paddy seeds have been made available at agricultural extension centres.

To meet the demand of farmers, adequate quantum of fertilizers and agricultural inputs have been stocked in primary agriculture cooperative societies (PACS) and with private dealers.

Di ammonium phosphate, urea, potash and other complex fertilizers have been stocked for sale and use, official sources say. TANFED has been involved in the process. Around 400 tonnes urea is available with PACS and another 500 tonnes are with private dealers to be made available to farmers.

Officials urge the farmers to get due receipts for the fertilizer purchases made to prevent malpractices. Every taluk would have a special monitoring team and any dealer found indulging in illegality would be dealt with severely.

While one dealer has been suspended for infringing on the Fertilizer Control Act provisions, nine other dealers have been put on notice for similar offences. Dealers have been warned that penal action would be taken against those violating the Act.

Fertilizer samples have been taken from various dealers and discrepancies if any would be dealt with accordingly. Farmers having any doubt regarding seed, fertilizer or other agricultural inputs could contact the nearest block level agricultural officers.

Provide village-wise insurance cover in coastal areas: farmers

Firka system of providing compensation for loss of crops 'totally unworkable'



Running for water:With almost 2.5-lakh acre of paddy at stake, it is imperative for the government to protect farmers.File photo.

As northeast monsoon opens its innings with a big bang in Tamil Nadu, the Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association has put forth its demand for a special insurance scheme for coastal farmers .

"Monsoon has set in at the right time. However, it is extremely difficult to judge the ferocity of the monsoon which could even turn into a cyclone lashing the coastal region. With almost 2.5-lakh acre of paddy area at stake , it is imperative for the government to safeguard farmers, most of them small and marginal, in areas such as Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Vedaranyam, Muthupet, and Mannargudi, said S.Ranganathan, general secretary of the association, to *The Hindu* .

The firka system adopted by insurance companies for providing compensation to loss of crops is "totally unworkable" in coastal areas as about 20 villages of the firka could be in upland and would have suffered zero loss while an equal number located in the coastal zone would have suffered complete devastation, but both sides might receive the same compensation which is unfair, Mr.Ranganathan contends. Instead, he pleads for "village-wise" insurance coverage.

He points out that flooding and drainage are the characteristic problems of monsoon season in the coastal belt "Though modernisation of drainage system was conceived at an estimate of Rs.1,000 crore to save the fields from flooding years ago, hardly anything has been done so far. The project cost has now escalated to more than Rs.5,200 crore." The project would be able to save at least 30 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) to 40 tmcft.

But, unless the Cauvery dispute is settled, the World Bank will not extend the assistance for the project, he adds.

"It is quite unfortunate that a dispute that arose in 1892 should drag on for 120 years with no solution in sight and not even international disputes drag on for so long," he laments.

Mr.Ranganathan contends that the authorities should realise that management of crop in Cauvery delta is not an easy job.

"Though I would consider the current rains as a passing phase, farmers have to be extremely vigilant about the copious showers especially during the last week of November and first week of December. It was during December, Tsunami struck us", he points out. Northeast monsoon is "destructive " and "not productive " like southwest monsoon.

Because of the rains, the paddy fields may not require any water for 10 to 15 days.

Farmers urged to attend grama sabha meetings



District Revenue Officer C. Prakasam (right) addressing the farmers' grievances meeting on Thursday. —Photo: N. Bashkaran

District Revenue Officer C. Prakasam urged farmers to attend grama sabha meetings to know about the various welfare schemes implemented by the State Government and obtain Uzhavar card (identity card). Presiding over the monthly grievances meeting at the collectorate here on Thursday, he said the funds to the tune of Rs. 103 crore allocated under the 'Uzhavar Paadhukaappu Thittam' (Farmers' Protection Fund) were not utilised properly in the district due to lack of proper communication.

K.M. Ramagoundar, State general secretary, Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, said the Palacode Cooperative Sugar Mill has categorised the sugarcane supplied by the farmers as 10.5 per cent of sugar content though the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University has categorised the sugar cultivated in Krishnagiri district has 17.5 per cent.

Apart from this, the molasses worth thousands of rupees were sold by the sugar mills at a meagre price to some private parties and the profit earned through sale of molasses was not passed on to the farmers, Mr. Ramagoundar alleged. A farmer complained that a private bank was insisting to pay interest for the educational loans on a monthly basis. V. Krishna Doss, Manager, Lead District Bank, said that the Indian Bankers Association has issued guidelines in this regard and private banks were asked submit the details of the procedures adopted by them as per the instructions of their Head Office. If any discrepancies were found, they would be asked to follow the IBA guidelines while granting educational loans. Mr. Ramagoundar accused that officials were not showing interest in getting subsidy for the turmeric farmers in the district.

Periyasamy, Joint Director, Horticulture, said that as many as 28 farmers were given subsidy. The government has allocated Rs. 8 crore for the district.

Campaign begins to ensure higher yields during rabi

The Department of Agriculture has launched a fortnight-long pre-season campaign to gear up the farmers in the district for the rabi crop season that extends from this month to March. “We are aiming to bring about 80,000 hectares to 1,00,000 hectare under ‘agriculture crops’ in the district during this rabi season,” said Joint Director of Agriculture Mohammed Kalimullah Sherif.

During the season, the farmers in the district primarily raise maize, sugarcane, pulses with focus on Bengal gram, cow pea and black gram, paddy, groundnut and sunflower.

The sowing is expected to begin on a large scale in another 20 days.

As part of the pre-season crusade, it has been planned to conduct exhibitions at the block level and seminars to enable farmers have an interaction with experts.

“These programme will ensure that farmers imbibe latest farm practices that could ensure higher yields this rabi season,” Mr. Sherif told *The Hindu*.

The department will be spending around Rs. 2 lakh towards conducting the campaign and for distributing the farm inputs like seeds, bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides at subsidised rates.

“The inputs will be given away by converging schemes like Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and National Food Security Mission, among others,” agriculture officials said.

New insurance scheme should cover all farmers’

The Hyderabad Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HKCCI) has demanded that benefits of the new crop insurance policy be extended to farmers of Gulbarga district who lost their crops due to scanty rainfall this year.

An HKCCI delegation, under the leadership of its president Umakant Nigudgi, called on Deputy Commissioner Prasanna Kumar and submitted a memorandum on Thursday, highlighting the problems faced by farmers in the district.

A copy of the memorandum was released to the press here on Thursday. In it, they said that Gulbarga was selected as a pilot district for implementation of the new crop insurance scheme, which was more transparent and had simplified the process of quantifying losses suffered by farmers and the payment of insurance to the affected ones. The memorandum said that as per the new crop insurance scheme, the Deputy Commissioner was authorised to collect details of crop failure from the Agriculture and Revenue departments and send it to the Development Commissioner for the release of the crop insurance amount to farmers. The delegation urged the Deputy Commissioner to help farmers in distress..

The HKCCI pointed out that every year, when red gram arrived at the market, the prices of the product crashed, causing distress to farmers. To prevent this, the Red Gram Development Board should have funds to intervene in the market as and when the prices of the commodity crashed below the Minimum Support Price fixed by the Union government. They also wanted the government to appoint a full-fledged Managing Director to the board immediately.

On the MSP of Rs. 3,850 a quintal fixed by the Union government and Rs. 500 paid as incentive to farmers above the MSP, the HKCCI said the State government should pay Rs. 650 a quintal as bonus and purchase red gram at Rs. 5,000 a quintal.

Farmers firm on rasta roko on October 30

Farmers' associations have decided to go ahead with their plan to stage a rasta roko on October 30, after the heads of three cooperative factories rejected their demand, that they pay arrears of Rs. 200 a tonne for the sugarcane supplied last year.

At a meeting here on Thursday, heads of the sugar factories told leaders of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha that they could pay only Rs. 50 a tonne for the sugarcane supplied. "The factories told us that they were facing financial problems, and could not afford to pay more than that. We told them that they had agreed to pay Rs. 2,000 a tonne at a meeting of government officials, but paid only Rs. 1,800.

'Supply sugarcane'

They don't realise that it is their responsibility to pay the agreed amount. That is why we boycotted the meeting and decided to go ahead with the rasta roko," KRRS district president Vishwanath Patil Koutha said.

Meanwhile, Gurupadappa Nagamarapalli, president of the Naranja Sahakari Sakkare Karakhane, has urged farmers to supply sugarcane to the factories in the district and not divert their cane to factories in neighbouring States.

He urged farmers to support factories. The three cooperative factories in the district were started by farmers. The founders raised a share capital from farmers to establish these factories, only to create an assured market for sugarcane.

Farmers should not be tempted by offers from factories in Maharashtra or Andhra Pradesh. The cooperative factories in Bidar district had always supported the farmers, he said.

Pending compensation will be released, Bellubbi promises sugarcane growers

Government is facing funds crunch, claims the Minister



Participants at a coracle race held at Korti-Kolar in Bijapur district on Thursday, where Bijapur district in-charge Minister S.K. Bellubbi offered 'bagina' to the Krishna.

Minister for APMCs and Bijapur district in-charge S.K. Bellubbi has assured sugarcane growers that the government will soon release the pending compensation of Rs. 15 crore.

The growers have been waiting for the pending compensation for over two years.

Speaking to journalists after offering 'bagina' to the Krishna at Korti-Kolar here on Thursday, he admitted that the growers were in distress owing to the delay in the release of the pending compensation.

Mr. Bellubbi claimed that government was facing funds crunch.

He said he had brought the matter to the notice of Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar. Mr. Shettar had promised to release funds on priority, Mr. Bellubbi said.

The then Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa had promised growers in Bijapur and Bagalkot districts that Rs. 30 crore would be released as compensation for sugarcane that remained uncrushed in 2006-07. The government released Rs. 15 crore in 2010 and farmers have been waiting for the remainder since then.

On the delay in commencing work on a cold storage unit in Bijapur, the Minister said he would soon hold a meeting with officials on expediting the project.

When asked if he was planning to join the former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa, who is set to join a new party, Mr. Bellubbi asserted that he had no such intensions. "I am in the BJP and I will remain in it. There is no question of me quitting," he said.

Earlier, he said rabi sowing had commenced after the recent rainfall.

The Minister said the Kannada Sahitya Sammelan would be held in Bijapur in the first week of February next year. A coracle race was held on the occasion at Korti-Kolar.

Dairy sector in Medak faces problem of plenty

What to do with the excess milk production and how to handle the situation are the questions which are hunting the Medak district authorities. The output of milk has almost doubled compared with the production last year.

According to sources in the Animal Husbandry Department, the present collection of milk in the district stood at 1.6 lakh litres per day, compared with 44,000 litres in October last year. The collection of Vijaya Dairy alone has increased from 22,000 litres to 70,000 litres. Other private dairy operators that are collecting milk include Heritage (39,000), Jersey (32,000), and Reliance

(10,000), Nandita (10,000), Priya (6,000) and Karimnagar Dairy (5,000). The officials fear that the milk collection may reach 2 lakh litres per day by January 2013.

Private operators who once offered higher price than that of government-run dairies are rejecting milk from the farmers citing various reasons like low quality, lack of chilling centres and processing capacity. Farmers complain that the milk is being rejected on the grounds of quality, which was not the case earlier. In addition, the incentives offered so far were also withdrawn all of a sudden. "What should we do with this milk? Where should we sell this," was the question posed to an officer by a farmer from Ramayampet. He said that the offer price for milk was reduced to Rs. 16 from Rs. 18.

Andhra Pradesh Dairy Development Corporation Deputy Director K. Kamesh told *The Hindu* that they had already increased the capacity by 30,000 litres and are ready to make arrangements to take another 20,000 litres if necessary. However, he added that they would serve the interests of small farmers who had one or two cows or buffaloes rather than the dairy farms.

The officials feel that there is an urgent need to increase the installed capacity of milk chilling centres in the district. The proposed chilling centre at Pulkal with an installed capacity of 15,000 litres has not yet started. "We should prepare an urgent strategy to address the excess milk production. Being nearer to the State capital it may not be much difficult," Dr. V. Lakshma Reddy, Joint Director, Animal Husbandry told *The Hindu*.

De-worming campaign on November 3

The Department of Animal Husbandry will be conducting a Reproductive Health Camp and De-worming Campaign throughout Tamil Nadu on November 3 as part of its efforts to provide post-purchase care to the cows and goats or sheep, which had been distributed under the free distribution of milch cows and goats/sheep scheme.

According to a press release issued by the Collector of Vellore district, the government launched the free distribution of cattle scheme on September 15, 2011 in order to uplift the economic status of the poor women folk of Tamil Nadu.

Under this scheme, four goats/sheep were distributed each to one lakh beneficiaries in 31 districts and 12,000 milch cows to 12,000 beneficiaries in 21 districts during 2011-12. Vellore district had completed the entire target of distribution of 32,900 goats and 650 cows to the beneficiaries during the said year.

The department has decided to conduct the reproductive health camp and mass de-worming campaign in order to benefit the cows/goats/sheep distributed under the scheme throughout the State, on the orders of the Chief Minister, with the objective of facilitating sustained milk production from milch cows and increasing the weight gain in goats/sheep provided under the scheme. The Collector said besides the beneficiaries of the free distribution scheme, other farmers could also avail the benefits of the health camp and de-worming campaign, get their animals checked and de-wormed and ensure the good health of their animals.

Government aid to set up poultry sheds

The Tamil Nadu government has decided to provide financial assistance and training to farmers, individual entrepreneurs and self-help groups (SHGs) interested in setting up poultry sheds for rearing broiler and native chickens under the Poultry Development Scheme.

According to a release from the Collector of Vellore and the Regional Joint Director of Animal Husbandry, Vellore, the government would provide subsidy to the tune of 25 per cent of the project cost for the setting up of poultry sheds, for the rearing of broiler chickens, egg-laying chickens and native chickens. Another 25 per cent subsidy would be given under the Poultry Venture Capital Fund, of the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD).

The beneficiaries should meet the remaining 50 per cent of the project cost either through own funds or bank loans.

In order to encourage farmers to rear native chickens, the government would provide 50 per cent subsidy on the cost of purchasing the second batch chickens, and 30 per cent subsidy on the purchase of third batch of chickens.

The subsidy would be given only to those who set up farms accommodating 1000 to 5000 broiler/egg-laying chickens, or 250 to 500 native chickens.

Besides, the beneficiaries should be in possession of sufficient land in their name or in the name of their family members. The scheme would be applicable even to those who have already set up sheds, to enable them to set up new sheds or to expand their activities.

Selected beneficiaries would be provided 5-day training in the training centres of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.

Interested persons should submit their applications to the veterinary assistant surgeons in the vicinity of their houses.

ICRISAT scientist bags global award

Dr. C.L.Laxmipathi Gowda, scientist of the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), received the 2012 International Crop Science award for his contribution to agriculture in the dry land areas of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

He received the award during the annual meeting of Crop Science Society of America (CSSA) on October 23 at Cincinnati, USA.

According to an ICRISAT release here on Thursday, Dr.Gowda is known for significant contribution in developing improved chickpea cultivars with high yield and resistance to pests and diseases. Shared as international public goods with scientists and national programmes globally, 68 high-yielding chickpea cultivars have been selected, tested and released in 30 countries globally.

Promote Ongole breed cattle, says Collector

Prakasam district Collector Anita Rajendra on Thursday urged the staff of the District Rural Development Agency to promote upkeep of the Ongole breed of cattle, the pride of Prakasam district.

Coupled with the efforts of the animal husbandry department, the DRDA staff should encourage women self help groups to maintain the world famous Ongole breed of cattle, she said while reviewing the DRDA activities in the district.

As part of the state milk mission, the department had identified 110 SHGs for setting up 'Palupragathi Kendralu' in the district, said DRDA Project Director A.Padmaja.

She said 84 SHGs were tied with banks for loans and 26 other groups formed into Joint Liability groups as part of the objective to enhance milk production in the district, which stood second dairying in the state after Chittoor. As many as 635 members of SHGs were involved in dairying at the village and mandal level with a bulk milk cooling unit in Bestavaripeta with a milk collection of 2,000 to 2,200 litres per day, P. Rama Rao, DRDA Assistant Project Officer(dairy) said.

Cardamom auction on

Cardamom auctions continued for the second day at Bodinayakkanur in Tamil Nadu after nearly a month's disruption. A total of 14,448 kg of cardamom was sold out of the total arrivals of 15,921 tonnes, fetching an average price of Rs.731.83 a kg. The auction recorded maximum price of Rs.1,019 a kg. Twenty-nine traders, including 10 from Tamil Nadu, participated.

Farmers' body moots five-pronged approach to improve irrigation

Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association has appealed to the State government to implement five projects in the State to ensure better water conservation and improve irrigation facility.

In a memorandum to Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, working president of the association Mahadhanapuram V.Rajaram lamented that water scenario in the State is topsy-turvy with virtual starvation for rain a couple of weeks ago to incessant downpour that has deluged the fields in the past few days. "We are not able to conserve even a week's rain water."

Encroachments have rendered the canals, drainages, and most water bodies useless.

"Have we ever thought of a storage system that could pump rain water to a higher plane and distribute it for irrigation?"

He pleaded that the State government should implement on "war-footing" the following five schemes to ensure better irrigation.

As a first step, Pennayar (Krishnagiri reservoir project) should be linked to the Palar which could help divert 3.5 tmcft (thousand million cubic feet) of water from the reservoir when it gets huge inflows during floods at Kallar, a tributary of the Palar. This would benefit 2,931 acres and the project would cost Rs.253 crore.

Second, the Pennayar (Sathanur reservoir) should be linked to the Palar. This would help divert the surplus of the Sathanur reservoir, about three tmcft, to the Cheyyar. A 38-km supply channel should be created to take this water to Nandan canal. This scheme would benefit more than 10,000 acres and would cost Rs.200 crore.

Mr.Rajaram also reminded the government of the scheme that would link the Cauvery (Mettur dam) with Sarabanga in Namakkal district. The project, estimated at Rs.1, 134 crore, would benefit 30,400 acres in Salem, Namakkal, Perambalur, and Tiruchi district.

Another scheme based on the Cauvery would be to link Kattalai barrage with Gundar by laying 258-km long channel. This would help divert seven tmcft of flood water from Kattalai barrage to Gundar to benefit 32,871 acres. The project would cost Rs.5, 166 crore.

He pointed out that already the government had estimated that Athikadavu-Avinashi scheme would cost Rs.1, 862 crore.

Quoting the Chief Minister, he said that all dams across the Cauvery in Karnataka had been constructed without the consent of the Central government .

Similarly, without waiting for the permission and funding from the Centre, Tamil Nadu should take up these schemes with its own funds to meet the State's water requirements.

Besides, in order to save the delta region from the monsoon fury, he suggested that flood water be pumped to a higher plane, several kilometres away, to fill up a number of tanks.

Once the rain stops, this water could be used either for irrigation or drinking purpose.

Such a multipurpose scheme could be entrusted with private sector or any other agency and implemented with the help of World Bank, he pleaded.

AP Paper Mills plants its billionth tree

Andhra Pradesh Paper Mills Ltd., achieved the milestone of planting one billion trees in India through its farm forestry initiative.

In Rajahmundry

The International Paper's group company planted its ceremonial billionth tree at its manufacturing facility in Rajahmundry by Mr. Thomas Kadien, senior vice-president, Consumer Packaging and IP Asia and India.

The farm forestry initiative was established by APPM in the early 1980s when it recognised the growing concern of non-availability of fibrous raw material for the paper industry.

A release said here on Thursday that the company embarked upon the ambitious programme of self sustenance by generating the requisite fibrous raw material in collaboration and cooperation with farmers by utilising their marginal and degraded lands, which were lying barren and unutilised.

'Stable supply of raw material'

Mr. Michael Amick, president, IP India, said the company's farm forestry programme ensured a stable supply of raw material for their paper manufacturing while helping to create jobs and improve the lives of many families in the region.

Farm forestry initiative was established by APPM in the early 1980s when it recognised the growing concern of non-availability of fibrous raw material for the paper industry

Now, a technology to breed Cobia fish in farms, ponds



COMMERCIALY VALUABLE Cobia broodstock at the experimental station of the CIBA at Muttukadu near Chennai. Photo: M. Karunakaran

If you regularly watch channels such as National Geographic and Animal Planet, you may have seen a black fish (not sucker fish) with a prominent white bar on its body swimming alongside sharks and scavenging on remnants of fish hunted by the big predator.

A decade ago, Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) known as Black King Fish, Lemon Fish and Crab Eater, was not taken very seriously.

Today, it is one of the important fishes consumed and Chennai-based Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA) has achieved success in the controlled breeding of Cobia from pond-reared broodstock at its experimental station at Muttukadu near here.

Fish farming

“Cobia farming is done in cages erected in calm sea waters in countries like Vietnam. But in a country like India, where the sea is always turbulent, setting up cages is a difficult task. It is here our technology has paved a new path,” said A.R.Thirunavukarasu, Principal Investigator of the project and Head, Fish Culture Division of the CIBA.

“Ten years ago the fish was nowhere in the picture. Now it has a bright future as a commercially valuable fish,” Mr Sakthivel, former chairman of the Marine Products Export Development Authority, said. Mr. Thirunavukarasu said fish had characteristics such as fast growth (up to 10 kg in a year) and excellent texture and flavour.

It also fetches a good price in the domestic market and has potential for export.

Cobia has been identified as a fish for diversified farming in cages and ponds in marine and brackishwater ecosystems.

Dr A.G. Ponniah, Director of the CIBA, said the fish grew very fast and the growth was quite visible. “Since it is not easy for hatchery owners to set up cages in the sea, CIBA’s technology will enable them to rear the fish in farms,” he said.

Farmers can harvest a tonne a year from 100 juveniles while in the case of Seabass, it will require 1,000 juveniles to achieve the same result. The fish is called sea-chicken and in the market it costs around Rs. 300 per kg.

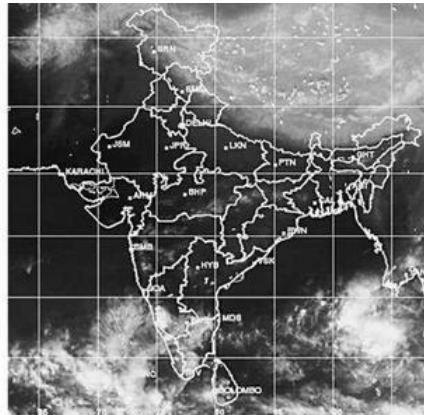
Mr. Thirunavukarasu said a Cobia would release millions of eggs during each spawning and these were fertilised externally by the male.

“At the experimental station, we keep the female and male at the ratio of 1:2 and subject them to induced spawning.

For accelerating ovulation, female fish are given hormone injection.

When the female releases eggs, the males fertilise them by releasing a milk-like substance,” he explained, even as workers at the experiment station caught the giant broodstock parents for displaying them to visitors. The juveniles can be reared in a nursery.

weather



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

Rainfall

Rain/snow has occurred at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand. Weather was mainly dry over rest of the region.

TEMPERATURES :

MAXIMUM : The maximum temperature fell appreciably in Haryana and Punjab, fell in east Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh and changed little elsewhere. They were appreciably below normal in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, below normal in Rajasthan and normal over rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 35.0°C recorded at Banswara (Rajasthan).

MINIMUM: The minimum temperature fell appreciably in east Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, fell in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and west Rajasthan and changed little elsewhere. They were appreciably below normal Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, west Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, below normal in west Uttar Pradesh and normal over rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 10.2°C recorded at Sarsawa (Uttar Pradesh).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 27th OCTOBER 2012: Rain/snow may occur at one or two places over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during next 24 hours and weather mainly dry thereafter. After 24 hours rain/snow may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir. Weather will be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 27th OCTOBER 2012: Mainly clear sky.

Hindustan Times

TODAY FARM NEWS

26.10.2012 A.M

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Oct 26

Max Min

30.6° | 23.0°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 84

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:01

Sunset: 05:44

Barometer: 1011

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Saturday, Oct 27

Max Min

33° | 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday Oct 28	Monday Oct 29	Tuesday Oct 30	Wednesday Oct 31	Thursday Nov 1
33° 24° Cloudy	33° 25° Partly Cloudy	33° 25° Cloudy	33° 25° Overcast	32° 25° Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:29

Humidity: 60

Sunset: 05:40

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1015



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

25.10.2012 P.M

26.10.2012 A.M

25th oct 2012 P.M

Jeera crackles on heavy inflow



Jeera prices declined on increasing arrivals and lower demand on Thursday. Jeera futures were down by over 2 per cent.

According to market sources, not much demand by stockists and physical traders was reported at current levels as comfortable rainfall in the major jeera producing States such as Rajasthan and Gujarat raised the prospects of a bumper production in the coming year.

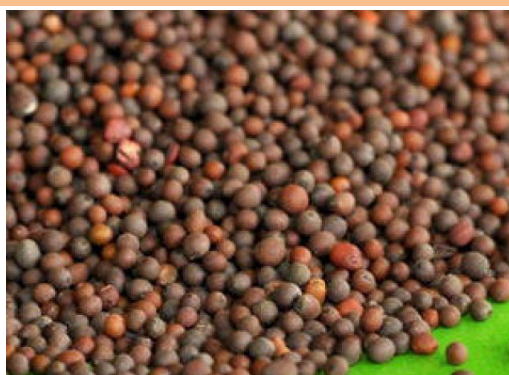
On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), jeera November contract decreased by Rs 365 or 2.41 per cent to Rs 14,757.50 a quintal with an open interest of 12,486 lots. December contract was down Rs 370 to Rs 15,162.50 with an open interest of 13,431 lots.

In the spot market, the spice lost Rs 25-30 at Unjha mandi in Gujarat and medium quality jeera quoted Rs 2,375-2,500 for 20 kg, NCDEX quality raw was quoted at Rs 2,650-2,775 .

Total arrivals increased to 6,000 bags from 5,000 bags, while demand slumped to 5,000 bags from 7,000 bags.

According to Kedia Commodity, farmers have increased supplies into the spot market as they need cash in the festival season. Due to a lean season, supplies in spot markets are low whereas export demand is still strong and is supporting the prices firm despite a projected rise in output in the next season.

Mustard seeds, oil perk up on weak arrivals



Weak arrival and improved buying support lifted prices of both mustard oil and mustard seeds in Indore mandis in the past one week and is expected to rise further as demand for mustard oil is expected to rise in the coming days.

In Indore *mandis*, mustard oil, on Thursday, ruled stable at Rs 777 (up Rs 18 in the past fortnight). Similarly in Neemuch and Morena, mustard oil ruled at Rs 770 and Rs 780 for 10 kg. In Rajasthan mandis also mustard oil has been witnessing an uptrend with its price in Kota being quoted at Rs 775 (up Rs 15 in the past fortnight), while it was Rs 780 in Ganga Nagar and Rs 790 in Jaipur. In Gujarat mandis, it was Rs 795.

Mustard seeds in Indore mandis on Thursday ruled at Rs 4,400-4,500 a quintal, while it was Rs 4,075 in Neemuch. Slack arrival and improved buying support have perked up mustard seeds in Madhya Pradesh mandis by about Rs 75-100.

Similarly, plant deliveries of mustard seeds for Jaipur line also ruled higher at Rs 4,450-75 a quintal. Mustard seeds November and December contracts on the NCDEX on Thursday closed at Rs 4,340 and Rs 4,397 a quintal.

With speculators pushing up mustard seeds prices in the futures, mustard seeds and oil may witness an uptrend in its prices in the physical market in the coming day, said Vinod Choudhary, an Indore-based broker.

Arrival of mustard seeds in the country on Thursday was recorded at 60,000 bags in Rajasthan; 4,000 bags each in Madhya Pradesh and U.P; 5,000 in Punjab; 2,000 in Gujarat and 8,000 bags elsewhere in the country.

Rice unchanged in listless market



Aromatic and non-basmati rice ruled almost unchanged on Thursday even as buying remained tepid.

After witnessing a decline earlier this week, aromatic and non-basmati varieties managed to maintain their previous quoted levels amid slack trading, said Tara Chand Sharma, proprietor of Tara Chand and Sons.

Due to a fall in the domestic demand, prices are getting softened and if the situation remains the same, rice prices could witness another downtrend, he added.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) sold at Rs 5,500 a quintal while Pusa-1121 (sela) sold at Rs 4,400 .

Pure basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 5,500 while pure basmati (sela) sold at Rs 4,600 . Duplicate basmati traded at Rs 4,600-4,700 .

PR-11 (sela) sold for Rs 2,450-2,500 while PR-11 (Raw) quoted at Rs 2,400-2,500 .

Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,070 while Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,050-2,100.

Sharbati (steam) quoted at Rs 3,500 while Sharbati (sela) quoted at Rs 3,300 a quintal.

Paddy Arrivals

About 1.5 lakh bags of PR variety arrived and went for Rs 1,200-1,270 a quintal, Sharbati arrived with a stock of around 6,000 bags and quoted at Rs 1,720-1,770 while just around 3,000 bags of Sugandha 999 variety arrived and sold at Rs 1,670-1,750 .

Around 30,000bags of PR14 arrived and sold for Rs 1,300-1,340 , while DB arrived with a stock of 6,000 bags and quoted at Rs 2,040-2,270.

About 25,000 bags of Pusa-1121 arrived and quoted at around 2,070-2,300 a quintal.

Pepper market stays buoyant

Pepper market remained buoyant with buying interest pushing two active contracts up and one down despite positive open interest on Thursday.

A bull operators' cartel, which has already cornered an estimated 5,500 tonnes of pepper, investing around Rs 250 crore, is said to have spread rumours that it would corner another 5,000 tonnes. All kinds of bullish rumours are being spread.

On the other hand, the multinational companies with multi-origin operations were sending out their projections of the next Indian output at above 70,000 tonnes. Overseas commodity publications quoting foreign dealers have estimated the production at some 63,000 tonnes.

Some of the growers in Kerala said it would be slightly higher than the production last year while some major growers in Karnataka were quoted as saying the crop there is going to be nearly double the crop last year.

The market is ruling at very high levels, nearly \$2,000 above other origins which were offering Asta grade black pepper at \$6,500 - 6,700 a tonne. FAQ 500 GL was being offered at \$6,150 - 6,200 a tonne, they said.

The strong domestic market is aiding the operators to zoom the market, trade sources told *Business Line*.

November contract on the NCDEX decreased by Rs 150 to the last traded price of Rs 44,180 a quintal while December and February increased by Rs 170 and Rs 50 respectively a quintal to the LTP of Rs 43,370 and Rs 38,950 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover declined by 218 tonnes to 1,543 tonnes. Total net open interest increased by 284 tonnes to close at 8,213 tonnes.

November open interest moved up by 41 tonnes to close at 5,610 tonnes while December and February increased by 219 tonnes and 21 tonnes respectively to close at 2,479 tonnes and 546 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend remained steady at the previous levels of Rs 40,700(ungarbled) and Rs 42,200(garbled) a quintal. On the spot today 14 tonnes of pepper arrived and they were traded.

In the international market, Indian parity was at \$8,500 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and \$8,800 a tonne (c&f) for the US and remained totally outpriced, they said.

Soyabean futures surge on global trend

Soyabean futures surged on Thursday on the commodity exchanges following cues from the global markets. Lower arrivals and demand also boosted the sentiment.

On the NCDEX, soyabean for November delivery gained 3.56 per cent at Rs 3,355.5 a quintal while December and January contracts increased 3.7 per cent each to Rs 3,396.5 and Rs 3,433 respectively.

Reports of improved export demand for the soyameal along with festive season demand for its oil supported the oilseed's prices. Also, lower arrivals were reported as farmers were not ready to sell their stocks at lower levels.

Soyabean arrivals in Madhya Pradesh stood at 1,50,000 bags (of 100 kg each), while in Maharashtra and Rajasthan they were around 80,000-1,00,000 bags each.

On Wednesday, arrivals at M.P. were at 4,50,000 bags, Maharashtra-1,70,000 bags and Rajasthan 1,00,000 bags.

Spot soyabean prices too were ruling high on the back of demand and lower arrivals. In Indore (M.P), soybean was quoted at Rs 3,300 a quintal while plant delivery soyabean was at Rs 3,250-3,300 - up about Rs 50 from Tuesday.

Global scenario

On the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT), soyabean had gained 1.5 per cent in the last two sessions on buoyant export demand (from China) at a time when harvest is coming to an end. Also, farmers have slowed their sales expecting better prices for their crop.

According to the latest USDA report, global soyabean output is projected at 264.3 million tonnes, up 6.2 mt. Ending stocks are seen down from 169 million bushels in 2011-12 to 115 million bushels in 2012-13 season.

Brazil could churn out 81 mt of the oilseed and topple the drought-stricken US as the world's top soyabean producer.

Turmeric futures down at Rs 4,984 a quintal



Turmeric futures on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Ltd (NCDEX) continued its downtrend on Thursday after registering a new contract low on Wednesday.

Turmeric for November delivery was down 0.8 per cent at Rs 4,984 a quintal at 1.45 pm on extended selling pressure. Spot prices at Nizamabad were quoted at Rs 5,000 a quintal on Wednesday.

Huge inventory and weak demand from export markets have exerted pressure on prices. Output estimate of the new crop is expected to be marginally lower. Fresh crop arrivals start from March next year.

Turmeric prices are expected to remain under pressure due to lack of demand.

Sugar decontrol could turn sweet for mills, growers, says study

Acceptance of the recommendations of the C. Rangarajan Committee on sugar decontrol will lead to a 50 per cent increase in the profitability of mills and the cane growers would get stable income due to higher share of realisation from sugar and by-products, according to a study by Crisil.

While the 47 sugar mills rated by Crisil would gain Rs 450 crore because of linking sugarcane prices to that of the end-products, the abolition of levy quota and modification of the packing rule would lead to Rs 150 crore increase in profit, the report said.

In a report based on its study of 47 of its rated sugar companies, Crisil said it expected that the profitability of these companies to go up by Rs 600 crore in 2012- 13 FY if the recommendations of the Rangarajan Committee on full decontrol of the sugar industry were implemented. This amounted to a 50 per cent hike in profit for the rated companies compared to their estimated profits under the existing "regulated scenario".

Listing the benefits, the report said that while it would strengthen the credit risk profile of the sugar mills, the cane farmers would gain from it because of fall in cane arrears and as they would share any increase in sugar prices.

The Rangarajan Committee's recommendations, apart from full decontrol of the sector, included abolishing state-advised cane prices (SAP) and removal of regulatory control on the sale of sugar in the domestic market, of quantitative restrictions in international trade and of mandatory jute packaging.

Subodh Rai, Senior Director, Bank Loan Ratings, Crisil, observed that the sugar decontrol would “improve players” cash flows, reduce their working capital requirements, and thereby strengthen their credit risk profiles.

While the Government of India recommended cane purchase price called as the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) to the sugar mills, some of the states like Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Punjab also announced SAP for sugar cane. The Rangarajan committee wanted that the SAP be done away with and recommended that that 70 per cent of the sugar mills’ realisation from sugar and sugar by-products should be shared with growers.

Rai felt that the move to link cane prices with that of its end-products would be “positive for the industry and will improve Crisil-rated companies” profits by Rs 450 crore”.

According to current rules, the mills should sell 10 per cent of the sugar produced at a subsidised rate of Rs 19.05 per kg which was much below the market price. Moreover, government also placed export embargoes that restricted companies benefiting from higher export realisation. The insistence on usage of jute bags for packing sugar also pushed up cost by Rs 400 per tonne.

Manish Gupta, Director, Bank Loan Ratings, Crisil, calculated that due to removal of sale of sugar under the levy quota and flexibility to use of plastic bags, the mills’ profits would go up by Rs 150 crore, that would improve their cash flow. This would help increase liquidity and enable the mills pay their dues to farmers on time. The cane arrears would come down drastically from their usual peaks of six to seven months.

The cane growers would gain from any increase in sugar prices as the payout to them has been recommended at 70 per cent of the realisation from sugar and its by-products compared to 55 to 80 per cent payout in the past five years as it would bring stability to their income.

Global rubber meet at Kovalam

The International Rubber Research and Development Board (IRRDB), an R&D platform of natural rubber producing countries, will hold its annual meeting and 10th International Rubber Conference at Kovalam.

The rubber conference will be held from October 29 to 31 at Hotel Samudra and the annual meetings on November 1 and 2 at Hotel Vivanta.

The Indian Rubber Board is hosting the events this year. More than 400 delegates, including representatives from natural rubber producing countries, growers, nursery owners, industrialists, agri-input distributors and persons from related areas will attend.

Sheet rubber rules unchanged

Spot rubber ruled steady on Thursday. There were no fresh initiatives to set a definite trend in the market and it continued to remain in a holiday mood even after the Pooja holidays and on the eve of Id-ul-Zuha.

Sentiments were badly affected by the difference between the domestic and international rates and the absence of major manufacturers in the buyers' side as the commodity is slowly moving into the peak production season.

Sheet rubber was quoted unchanged at Rs 177 0 a kg, according to traders. The grade closed steady at Rs 178 at Kottayam and Kochi, as reported by the Rubber Board.

In the futures market, November contracts improved to Rs 179.35 (Rs 177.91), December Rs 180.20 (Rs 178.56), January Rs 182.20 (Rs 180.52) and February Rs 184.89 (Rs 182.78) while the March and April contracts remained totally inactive on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to Rs 163.82 (Rs 163.43) a kg at Bangkok. The October futures expired at ¥246.6 a kg, while the November futures increased to ¥251.5 from ¥241.9 during the day session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 177 (177); RSS-5: 173 (173); Ungraded: 166 (166); ISNR 20: 161 (161) and Latex 60%: 120 (120).

Teas from Lanka fetch higher price

Sri Lanka teas continued to fetch the world's highest price average, reveals an the latest data available with the different auction centres around the globe.

In the first seven months, the Island's teas fetched an average price of \$3.01 a kg at Colombo auctions – 9.34 per cent lower compared with \$3.32 got in the same period of 2011.

Kenya's teas fetched the second highest \$2.77 at Mombasa auctions – marginally higher than \$2.75 got last year.

Bangladesh's teas came third at \$2.19 at Chittagong auctions – 3.10 per cent lower compared with \$2.26 last year.

Closely following this, Indian teas at country's different auction centres fetched an average price of \$2.12 — 6.19 per cent less than \$2.26 last year.

North Indian auctions lost 8.40 per cent to average \$2.40 (\$2.62), while South Indian auctions gained 1.28 per cent to average \$1.58 (\$1.56).

Indonesian tea price averaged \$1.87 at Jakarta auctions – 5.37 per cent lower compared with \$1.97 last year.

Malawi's tea fetched the lowest price average of \$1.66 at Limbe auctions, but it was 5.47 per cent more compared to \$1.58 last year.

Launch scheme to promote new planting in pepper, plead Karnataka growers

The Karnataka Planters' Association (KPA) has urged the Spices Board to introduce a special scheme that will promote new planting and replanting of pepper in the State.

The special scheme could be covered under the National Horticulture Mission, it said.

"We request the National Horticulture Mission (NHM), under the Union Ministry of Agriculture, to approve the proposal submitted to the Spices Board and extend the pepper development scheme," said Nishant R Gurjer, Chairman, KPA.

inter-crop

In Karnataka, pepper is grown as an inter-crop in coffee estates in Kodagu, Hassan, Chikmagalur, and in Shimoga, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada districts.

Abul Kalam, Spices Board member and a grower from Chikmagalur said,

“The State government has requested the Spices Board to send a detailed report to include pepper under NHM scheme.”

To pursue this, the KPA, on its part, has formed a committee and represented the issue with the State Government and the Spices Board.

Kalam said: “We are requesting the Spices Board to include Karnataka on the lines of Kerala. “Growers are seeking assistance for 5,000 hectares under replanting and 45,000 hectares for raising new plantation.”

As part of the mission, pepper growers have sought planting materials, currently unavailable to exclusive spice-growers.

rain water harvesting

In addition, the growers have also sought assistance for rain-water harvesting, irrigation and land development.

“On this, the Spices Board should provide 75 per cent subsidy at the present unit cost as the cost of these equipment, water storage devices have increased considerably and farmers cannot afford it,” said Kalam.

India may benefit from Ukraine ban on wheat exports



Ukraine’s move to ban wheat exports from November 15 could trigger demand for the Indian grain.

Wheat exporters see a potential rise in Indian shipments, though prospects for upside in pricing are limited as the market has already factored in Ukraine's move.

"The Ukraine export ban will definitely benefit us. However, it all depends on how the Australian crop, scheduled for harvest next month, shapes up," said Anil Monga, Chairman, Emmsons International Ltd, a Delhi-based exporter.

Ukraine is one of the top 10 global wheat exporters, which saw its harvest decline by a third due to drought this year.

On Wednesday, Ukraine decided to stop wheat exports from November 15, a move that saw global prices firm up.

Monga suggested that the Government open up the wheat stocks to private trade and fix a price as it had done in 2002. Such a move will enable exporters to encash the potential demand arising from the current market dynamics.

"There is no reason why India should not benefit considering that we have huge stocks," said Atul Chaturvedi, Chief Executive Officer of agribusiness at Adani Group.

The fact that Indian wheat has already been accepted in the West Asian market should accelerate the exports.

Wheat exports have crossed three million tonnes, a bulk of which has been by the private trade.

Government agencies have contracted about eight lakh tonnes for exports and have shipped about four lakh tonnes so far.

So far, Indian exports have been to Korea, Taiwan, Yemen and neighbouring Bangladesh, Sri Lanka among others.

Though the exporters are bullish on the prospects of the Ukraine fallout, analysts are skeptical over the imminent gains.

Major buyers of Ukraine wheat such as Egypt and West Asian nations have covered their requirement till December-January, said commodity analyst Tejinder Narang.

Moreover, the market has already discounted the Ukraine ban and whatever upside in pricing that was anticipated, has already been attained, he said. “This is the best time to get rid of old stocks for the Government,” another analyst said. Wheat stocks in the Central pool stood at 43.15 million tonnes, as on October 1, about three times higher than the 14 mt of the normative buffer and strategic reserve requirements for this date.

Fertilisers policies pull in opposite directions



The Union Budget for 2012-13 generated huge expectation about the Union Government's keenness to reduce ballooning subsidies that have been a major source of its fiscal targets going awry.

The then Finance Minister promised to contain the total subsidy bill within 2 per cent of the GDP in the current fiscal and at 1.75 per cent in the next three fiscals. However, there is little to show for any credible action plan in this regard. The recent measures to restrain subsidies in diesel and LPG are too little and too late. As far as fertilisers go, the powers-that-be have not even demonstrated a basic intention to walk the talk.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has recently approved a meagre increase of Rs 50 a tonne in the retail price of urea (less than 1 per cent). The subsidy savings from that would be a pittance – Rs 50 crore, which works out to 0.25 per cent of the total of Rs 60,000 crore allocation for 2012-13.

No big bang

In what may sound bizarre, the Fertiliser Minister has resisted even this, which demonstrates total imperviousness to change. The big bang reform — as claimed — is a distant cry!

An Empowered Group of Ministers had earlier recommended deregulating urea prices and bringing it under the nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) regime. A Committee of Secretaries was, then, asked to work out the modalities of the plan, which is now practically shelved.

Phosphatic (P) and potassic (K) fertilisers were brought under the NBS in April 2010. Under NBS, the Centre can cap subsidies at the level it wishes, and while producers are free to adjust the maximum retail price (MRP) to reflect changes in manufacturing or import costs after factoring in the subsidy concession.

Logically, urea, which supplies around two-thirds of nitrogen (N), should also have been under NBS. But this was avoided. Under the New Pricing Scheme (NPS), the MRP remains controlled.

All along, urea has been a holy cow. Thus, in 1992, though P and K fertilisers were de-controlled, urea was not. The latter remained under the Retention Price Scheme, which has since been rechristened as the NPS.

Skew towards urea

For two decades, we have lived with different policy dispensations for urea, and P and K fertilisers that work at cross purposes. While NPS/RPS for urea encourages excessive use, NBS for P and K discourages their use.

This has skewed the NPK fertiliser-use ratio towards urea, therefore progressively worsening the overall soil nutrient imbalances and also effecting crop yields. The Government is well aware of all this, as evident in its various policy documents. Yet, there is no corrective action.

About 75 per cent of urea demand is met indigenously. While 80 per cent of P fertilisers used consists of imported material, all of our K fertilisers demand is met through imports. Clearly, the vulnerabilities are more in P and K fertilisers; yet these receive scant attention.

For 2012-13, the subsidies on P and K fertilisers under NBS were drastically reduced. This has led to a spike in prices: they are up 3-4 times since 2010. The urea MRP, on the other hand, has risen by only 10 per cent.

During kharif this year, poor monsoon rains have brought down overall fertiliser use. However, whereas consumption of P and K fertilisers went down by 30 per cent, that same for urea has declined only by 5 per cent, thus further aggravating the imbalance.

Leakage

An estimates 30 per cent of urea sold in the country is diverted for industrial use. The subsidy meant for agricultural use is, hence, guzzled by dubious operators. There is also rampant smuggling to neighbouring countries that do not subsidise fertilizers.

In the face of unabated and rampant profiteering on the ground — right under the nose of administrators — at the expense of taxpayers' money; all official pronouncements to reign in the ballooning subsidy would seem hollow.

A tracking system for fertiliser sales is now being proposed.. Under this, the subsidy would be released to producers only after 'confirmation' of receipt by dealers. One wonders whether this may not lead to payments crisis, instead of tackling the underlying malaise!

Urea can be imported only by State agencies. Increasing dependence on import (no capacity addition in the last decade) has led to higher subsidy on imported urea. It means our subsidy regime helps exporters to India make more money!

Indian companies have set up joint ventures abroad in countries that are rich in gas, such as that offfco and Kribhco in Oman. However, India does not benefit as under the buy-back agreement, as the international price is what gets charged.

About a fifth of urea capacity is based on naphtha and fuel oil. High production costs based on these expensive feedstock gets protected under NPS. The Government has no plans to remove this protection.

A new investment policy for urea has been in the works for two years and is yet to see the light of day. A policy based on import-parity pricing was put in place in 2008, which, too, has not attracted any new investment.

So, we have on our plate a highly disjointed policy framework that breeds imbalances and inefficiencies in fertiliser use; a flawed policy for urea that protects high costs and inefficiencies;

and an enforcement machinery that glosses over leakages and misuse. And, all this is capped by an astounding subsidy close to Rs 1 lakh crore!

The Government knows what to do; what it lacks is the political will to do what it knows to do.

(The author is Executive Director, CropLife India.)

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

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Basmati prices rule high for the new crop

Smiles are back on the faces of basmati growers in Punjab and Haryana, as prices of the new crop, Pusa 1121, have surged 20-25 per cent.

In view of the surge in exports and attractive rupee exchange rate, basmati exporters have increased the remuneration to farmers.

The comparatively lesser carry-forward stock with exporters and higher dollar prices this year compared to last year helped farmers get more, said Sushil Kumar Jain, president, Haryana Rice Exporters Association.



According to exporters, prices for the Pusa 1121 variety this year are Rs 2,100-2,300 a quintal as against Rs 1,700 a quintal last year. Pusa 1121 is the main basmati variety grown in Punjab and Haryana, comprising around 75 per cent of the basmati area. Punjab and Haryana account for about 80 per cent of basmati production in the country.

Rajeev Setia, executive director, Chaman Lal Setia Exports, says higher prices of the new crop are mainly on account of 'over-depressed prices' of last year. Last year, Pusa 1121 had gone down to Rs 1,500 a quintal.

The crop size this year is projected to be slightly down, compared to last year, according to M P Jindal, president of the All India Rice Exporters' Association. "Last year, the crop size was 150 million bags. This year, the size would be six per cent less, owing to decline in the area under traditional basmati," he said.

According to Jindal, this year's basmati exports will be 25 per cent more than last year's. His estimate is that basmati exports this year would be around 4 million tonnes, compared to last year's 3.2 million tonnes.

Exporters say that the higher export projections achievement would depend on Iran market. They point out that the demand from Iran could set the tone for basmati prices in the domestic market in the medium- and long-term.

Liquidity in the Iran market would set the tone for basmati prices in next 3-5 months, says R S Seshadri, general-secretary, Airea.

Out of India's total basmati exports of about 3 million tonnes, 1.1 million tonnes go to Iran.

However, the US sanctions that prohibits Iran from trading in dollars has affected India's rice exporters in big way.

Jagdish Suri, another rice exporter, says that whether the basmati prices would continue to rule high or low would depend on the Iran market. "If Iran is the buyer(for basmati), prices would increase, if not, they will come down in longer term."

Uttar Pradesh to promote betel vine farming

The Uttar Pradesh government has launched a scheme to promote betel vine farming in the state.

During current financial year, the government has allocated Rs 1 crore for the scheme, wherein betel farmers would be provided grants. The decision was taken during the state's Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav today. The districts to be included in the scheme are Unnao, Rae Bareli, Hardoi, Lucknow, Sitapur, Barabanki, Sultanpur, Lalitpur, Mahoba, Banda, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Kanpur, Allahabad, Amethi, Varanasi, Mirzapur and Sonebhadra.

Decontrol to boost sugar companies` profits by 50%: CRISIL

If recommendations of the C Rangarajan Committee on full decontrol of the sector are implemented, rating agency CRISIL says, the profitability of sugar companies rated by it will increase by 50 per cent or Rs 600 crore in fiscal 2012-13.

In other words, as against their estimated profits under the current regulated scenario, profits of the rated companies could well grow by 50 per cent, apart from their credit risk profiles being strengthened, says a study conducted CRISIL on 47 of its rated sugar companies

What's more, sugarcane farmers too stand to benefit from decontrol through reduction in cane arrears and share the upside in sugar prices, said Subodh Rai, senior director, bank loan ratings, CRISIL regarding the study.

Apart from full decontrol, the expert committee headed by C Rangarajan has recommended abolishment of state-advised cane prices (SAP) and removal of regulatory control on the sale of sugar in the domestic market, of quantitative restrictions in international trade and of mandatory jute packaging.

The Government of India (GoI) advises the cane purchase price - known as the fair and remunerative price (FRP) - for companies. However, the key sugarcane-producing states such as Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Punjab also announce SAP for sugarcane. The committee has recommended abolishing SAP, and suggested that 70 per cent of companies' realisation from sugar and its by-products be shared with the farmers.

"We believe that linking sugarcane prices to the prices of end products will be positive for the industry and will improve CRISIL-rated companies' profits by Rs 450 crore," Rai added. As per the existing regulations, sugar companies are required to sell 10 per cent of their sugar produce at a subsidised rate of Rs 19.05 per kg which is significantly lower than the market price. In addition, the Centre imposes export embargos, restricting companies' opportunities to benefits from higher export realisations. Companies are allowed to use only jute bags for packing sugar which increases costs by Rs 400 per tonne.

"We believe that removal of sale of sugar under the levy quota and flexibility to use plastic bags will increase profits by Rs 150 crore, resulting in stronger cash flows for sugar companies," said Manish Gupta, Director, Bank Loan Ratings, CRISIL.

Faster growth not leading to fast poverty reduction: Study

GANDHINAGAR: A recent study has taken strong exception to those who argue that [Gujarat's poverty levels](#) have gone down drastically, and the main reason for this is the "economic model" of chief minister Narendra Modi. Presented at a seminar sponsored by the [Planning Commission of India](#), and slated to be part of a larger book on Gujarat growth story to be put out by the commission, the study, titled "Is Gujarat Growth Inclusive?", says that rate of reduction of poverty in Gujarat has been equal to all-India average, but Gujarat's ranking on incidence of poverty vis-a-vis other states has worsened, from 7th in 1993 to 9th in 2010.

Prepared by Prof Indira Hirway of [Centre for Development Alternatives](#) (CFDA) Ahmedabad, the study, based on the well-accepted methodology used by the Tendulkar Committee to calculate poverty, agrees that between 2004 and 2010, the annual percentage point in the decline in poverty in Gujarat was 1.7, about the same as all-India average of 1.5. But it underlines, "Several relatively slow growing states experienced much higher decline in poverty during this period."

The Tendulkar methodology uses consumption expenditure data to calculate poverty. Not confining to spending for minimum calorie intake, it takes into account expenditure on food, education, health, electricity, clothing and footwear.

Thus, in Gujarat the number of poor reduced from 31.6 to 23 per cent, a drop of 8.6 per cent. But in other states the drop was higher - by 13.4 per cent in [Himachal Pradesh](#), 13.7 per cent in Maharashtra, 9.7 per cent in Karnataka, 11.9 per cent in [Madhya Pradesh](#), 20.2 per cent in Orissa, 9.6 per cent in Rajasthan, 12.3 per cent in [Tamil Nadu](#), and 14.7 per cent in [Uttarakhand](#). "This shows that the growth alone does not count for poverty reduction, and something more is needed to translate growth into poverty reduction," Prof Hirway argues.

Interestingly, Prof Hirway observes that the urban areas, growing faster in Gujarat than other states, are witnessing a much slower poverty reduction. During 2004-10, urban poverty in Gujarat went down from 20.1 per cent to 17.9 per cent, a drop of just 2.2 per cent as against all-India's 4.6 per cent. A dozen states - [Andhra Pradesh](#), [Bihar](#), [Chhattisgarh](#), Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and [West Bengal](#) - experienced a higher drop.

Relying on National Sample Survey (NSS) data, Prof Hirway's view on urban poverty is shared by well-known pro-Modi economist Prof Bibek Debroy, who in his latest book, "Gujarat: Governance for Growth and Development", says that the slow reduction in urban poverty has led to total number of urban poor having gone up. "Urban poverty figure was 4.3 million in 2004-05 and 4.5 million in 2009-10. While the percentage declined in urban Gujarat, the absolute number of below poverty line went up marginally," he admits, adding, poverty reduction in Gujarat is a largely rural phenomenon.

National Botanical Research Institute can help farmers raise agro income: Abdul Kalam

LUCKNOW: The former President APJ Abdul Kalam, who began his speech at NBRI by waving at his young [friends](#), hailed the institute's contribution in applied areas of plant diversity. He suggested the [National Botanical Research Institute](#) (NBRI) should prepare an atlas of plants of Indo-Gangetic plains which would aid the farmers in choosing the right kind of plantation according to the area and its conservation.

Kalam, who said that excellence is not by an accident but it's a process, suggested a number of areas and priority issues to be looked upon by the institute. One of the major challenges, he emphasized, is to document the biodiversity of Sunderbans. "I visited Sunderbans and the area has [solar power](#) as the main source of energy. Can the NBRI scientists study the problem of Sunderbans and start a laboratory there," he said. The rich biodiversity of the forests acts as a large sink for harvesting tonnes of carbon dioxide. The emission of greenhouse gases is the main cause of climate change, Kalam added.

Citing another case from Allahabad, where plantation of Jatropha has made the alkaline soil neutral, he said NBRI should provide farmers advanced science and technological information so that they can use it in their region to increase their incomes. "In Allahabad, farmers used to

make bricks of the alkaline earth but cultivation of Jatropha has changed the scenario," he said. At least 10,000 farmers in Allahabad are into Jatropha cultivation. Kalam also planted a 'rudrash' sapling on the day. Governor BL Joshi appreciated NBRI for working with UP [agriculture department](#) on biofertilizers since 2004.

NBRI director CS Nautiyal presented a report on the major works done by the institute. Prof [Samir K Brahmachari](#), DG CSIR and secretary DSIR, said, "NBRI is working on mapping the soil by root biology project. In future, NBRI will also help in identifying the suitable crop for the area, depending upon water availability."

Focus on farmers, climate change: APJ Abdul Kalam tells scientists



Urging scientists to undertake research keeping in mind the interest of society, especially farmers, and climate change, former President APJ Abdul Kalam today called for greater participation in protecting the climate while pushing for 'clean' energy sources of solar, wind, bio-fuel, hydro-power and nuclear energy.

“Scientists should undertake research which serves the society while also keeping the environment in mind,” Kalam said. “Every year, 36 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide is released in the environment globally and in 60 years, as per World Energy Forum data, all fossil fuels, except coal, would be exhausted,” he said. Hence, we urgently require a portfolio of renewable energy, Kalam said, speaking at the 60th anniversary celebrations of National Botanical Research Institute — a lab under Delhi- based Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR).

Also present at the event were UP Governor B L Joshi, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research secretary and director general CSIR S K Brahmachari, NBRI Research Council chairman and JNU V-C S K Sopory and NBRI director C S Nautiyal.