

## Delta farmers on cloud nine



The euphoria among farmers even in the tail-end areas of delta is palpable.

With vast stretches on either side of Mannargudi-Muthupet-Thiruthuraipoondi Road looking lush green, a diametrically opposite picture obtained about a month ago, it looks the ryots of this region have surmounted the water crisis for the time being.

The normal bounty of northeast monsoon (October-December) to Tirurvarur district is 731 mm. In just a week (October 15 – 21), the district recorded 221 mm.

S. Vasudevan, a mechanical engineer who is looking after the family property of 188 acres in a single block at Perugavazhndan, admits that the farmers were in tears till the onset of monsoon.

“After September 23, there was no rain at all. And the Mettur water reached this area only by October 3. We took a calculated risk by resorting to direct-sowing and spent more than Rs four lakh. But, it was the timely rains after October 15 that proved crucial. A team with a German technical expert which visited the farm recently is confident that the yield would be extremely impressive,” he added.

The same joyous feeling is echoed by G. Ravi of Mannukkamundan, Mannargudi taluk, and J. Krishnan, who has lands in Manankathankottam and Peruvudaimarudur.

They hope that they would get adequate water during the next few weeks, thanks to monsoon.

But, with the Mettur Dam having hardly 30 tmcft of water and Karnataka remaining unmoved regarding release of water to Tamil Nadu, despite the contempt of court case filed by Tamil Nadu, they don't know whether to rejoice.

S. Santhanakrishnan, another farmer, said that the ideal situation would be to have one more spell of showers in a week.

At the same time, he articulated their lurking fear - whether there will be enough water to complete the cultivation because water is absolutely essential up to the end of January.

Mr. Ravi explained their apprehension. "Now we require water for 100 days. First worry is that the rains should not be too heavy as that would totally ruin the standing crops.

But rains would not continue beyond December.

As the harvest is going to be only by February 15 for the 150-day variety like Savithri, how are we going to manage the entire January with the pittance of storage in Mettur Dam? If we can't get water during January, situation will become a repeat of 2003 when we did not even bother to harvest."

Alleging that the prices of fertilizers have further shot up in the past couple of weeks, he pleaded that the government to check the same immediately.

Mr. Krishnan, who is looking after 40 acres, said this is the right time for the government to help the farmers out as they have taken enormous risk by raising crops.

"A large number of farmers have started insuring their crop and they can insure up to the end of December. Without insurance, crop coverage would plummet. Besides, both the Central and the State governments should release their contribution simultaneously to help the ryots".

**Ryots seek higher scale of finance for loans**

Considering the rise in cost of fertilizer, agriculture inputs and labour wages



tough call: The wide gap between the scale of finance and the actual cultivation cost has been posing a problem to farmers. In this picture, a cane grower is seen maintaining his field in Pudukottai.

The gap between the scale of finance and the actual expenditure for cultivating a crop has been widening for various reasons and farmers in the district have been making a pertinent plea to increase the scale of finance, taking into consideration the rise in the cost of fertilizer, agricultural inputs and above all labour wages.

One of the reasons for the difference in the bank's estimate and the farmer's actuals is, according to farmers, the bank sits upon the estimate at least six months ahead of the cropping season—well before farmer's preparation in the fields—providing adequate time for the rise in the prices of petrol, fertilizer and other inputs, says G.S. Dhanapathy, a progressive farmer.

He says that the scale of finance per acre was Rs. 21,000 for banana while a farmer had to incur an expenditure up to Rs. 38,000.

“Every plantain needed a few supporting poles to protect it from being uprooted, and the cost of these poles has been on the rise. Further, the cost of fertilizer and urea and other complex had almost doubled - between the date when the scale of finance was decided last year and the farmer applied the fertilizer this season.

“The timing of the decision on scale of finance always precedes the cultivation season by at least six months. The hike in prices of diesel, for instance, has resulted in steep hike in cultivation cost or farm mechanisation cost,” he says.

For paddy, the scale of finance is Rs. 11,000 while the actual expenditure is Rs. 18,000.

In case of farmers adopting System of Rice Intensification, the cost would come down to Rs. 14,000, thanks to some subsidy in the form of inputs.

The worst sufferers were the sugarcane growers. Primarily, dual scale of finance was being followed for sugarcane crop - Rs. 31,000 for the cane growers registered with the cooperative sugar mills and Rs.28,000 for those registered with private sugar mills. “Every sugarcane grower had to incur about Rs. 40,000 an acre to raise the crop,” he said.

Cooperative bank officials say that the scale of finance was being decided at the state level meeting being held in Chennai every year.

This year, the meeting would be held shortly for deciding some hike. However, the new scale of finance would be sanctioned only for the crop season next year.

#### **40% monsoon showers received**

Tiruchi district has received about 40 per cent of its northeast monsoon shower so far.

According to an official release, against the normal northeast monsoon rainfall of 356 mm, the district had received 149 mm till October 25. Of the 5,625 hectares of kuruvai area, harvest has been completed in 4,112 hectares. And the yield per hectare has been 6,150 kg. While it has been planned to raise samba in 64,000 hectares, transplanting has been completed in 8,843 hectares. Seedlings are ready for transplantation in 1,530 hectares.

More than 600 metric tonnes (MT) of paddy seed has been distributed and the department has 50 MT stock.

Besides, 23 MT of pulse and 74 MT of oil seeds have been distributed. In order to encourage System Rice Intensification (SRI) method, Rs.81 lakhs has been allocated under the National

Agricultural Development Programme for distributing inputs worth Rs.1,000 per hectare and subsidy of Rs.2,000 per hectare for planting expenses.

Similarly, Rs.35 lakhs has been allotted for providing subsidy of Rs.5 per kg of certified paddy seeds distributed through the agricultural extension centres and cooperative societies

### **Ornamental garden in Chennai**

Rs. 5.73-crore project in Madhavaram to be completed by February next year

Residents of north Chennai may soon turn benefactors of a luscious garden and recreational space in their locality.

An ornamental garden in Madhavaram, which will be the biggest botanical garden in the city, will be thrown open in a few months.

Spread over 28 acres, the garden is being developed at the State horticulture farm in Madhavaram Milk Colony. About 80 per cent of the civil work has been completed.

With the two-km-long footpath already laid, the site has become a haven for morning walkers in the area. Nearly 60 people from nearby areas such as Bank Colony and Annai Nagar take a stroll in the garden area, where work is fast progressing.

The project has brought cheer to residents of Madhavaram, who, until now had to travel on traffic-clogged roads to Perambur or even as far as Purasawalkam for an evening of recreation.

### **Rubber sector told to be innovative**

The ability to innovate and adapt to changing situations holds the key to prosperity for the rubber sector in India, Rubber Board Chairperson Sheela Thomas said here on Sunday.

Delivering the keynote address at the inaugural session of the International Rubber Conference-2012 and the annual meetings of the International Rubber Research and Development Board (IRRDB), she highlighted the need for a healthy relationship among all stakeholders in the rubber sector.

She said the IRRDB could play an important role in promoting international cooperation in areas of mutual interest pertaining to natural rubber cultivation processing, trade and industry.

Ms. Thomas inaugurated an exhibition in connection with the conference.

Agricultural Production Commissioner Subrata Biswas; Secretary General, IRRDB, Abdul Aziz SA Kadir; and Secretary General of the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries Kamarul Baharain bin Basir addressed the gathering. Vice-Chairman, Rubber Board K.K. Abraham; former Director, Rubber Research Institute of India M.R. Sethuraj; and President, The United Planters Association of Southern India G.J. Ancheril spoke. Sheela Thomas released the conference abstracts and Dr. Abdul Aziz SA Kadir released *Rubber Science*, a journal.

### **“Tap Kalvarayan Hills’ potential to uplift tribals”**

The Kalvarayan Hills has got a lot of potential to expand the area under horticulture crops. If done so, it would not only enhance the standard of living of the tribals, but would also arrest the migration of labour, according to K. Rasu, Deputy Director of Horticulture, Villupuram.

Mr. Rasu told *TheHindu* that as of now tapioca happened to be the predominant horticulture crop grown on 6,000 hectares on the hills.

Though the tuber was a rain-fed crop, owing to soil fertility and favourable climatic condition, the yield potential was over 5 to 7 tonnes per acre. Besides being the staple food of the tribals, the tubers also served as the main raw materials for the sago factories located at Athur and Salem. Mr. Rasu said that recently his department convened a consultative committee meeting at Vellimalai on the Kalvarayan Hills to deliberate on the implementation of the Integrated Tribal Development Programme and the National Horticulture Mission. In the meeting, Periyasamy, Special officer of the District Central Cooperative Bank, N. Vikraman, Assistant General Manager of NABARD, Velli, Chairman of the Vellimalai Panchayat Union, Annamalai, Panchayat President, and tribals participated.

Mr. Rasu said the participants put forth many suggestions which were listed out and sent to the Special Development Initiatives Department for scrutiny and broad basing the horticulture programmes. The tapioca growers had sought a sago factory on the hills, either a government-owned one or the one run on the cooperative model.

Once set up, the factory would improve employment opportunities and arrest the seasonal migration of workforce to other places. Moreover, the growers could save a lot of money, which otherwise, they would be spending on transporting the tubers to far away factories.

The tapioca farmers were also demanding a back-ended subsidy of Rs. 10,000 (to be given after the yield) as in the case of banana and turmeric.

Mr. Rasu said the tribals too had shown interest in diversifying the crops by taking to turmeric and banana cultivation. It was felt that establishment of a horticulture extension centre with a godown facility would serve the purpose. The Centre could impart necessary training on technical aspects of cultivation and the godown could stack inputs like seeds, manure and chemicals.

They demanded a uniform subsidy of 90 per cent on seeds, seedlings, farm implements and oil engines which at present varied from 50 per cent to 90 per cent. They also opined that scaling up the budgetary provision to Rs. 50 lakh would give a thrust to the implementation of the Integrated Tribal Development Programme. They sought pattas for their lands. Some farmers wanted financial assistance for digging open wells and 90% subsidy on precision farming, he added.

### **Balanced reportage of agricultural issues will help strengthen the sector, empower farmers: NGO**

Journalists and writers writing on agricultural issues have to maintain a healthy balance between positive and negative aspects of farm sector in the country, said Prakash Bhat, CEO, Society for Community Participation and Empowerment (SCOPE).

#### **CAM's 12th anniversary**

Speaking at the 12th anniversary of the Centre for Agricultural Media (CAM) here on Sunday, Mr. Bhat said that though the Indian farm sector had been facing troubles for quite some time, some positive developments, which could be an inspiration for others too, have taken place.

Media should also focus on such positive developments and achievements in the farm sector along with focusing on negative aspects which often hit the headlines. While reports on the



negative aspects helps open the eyes of the policy makers, the reportage of positive development raises hopes and instils new spirit among the distressed farmers.

Balanced reportage of the issues concerning the farm sector would really contribute to strengthening the sector and empowering farmers, he said.

### **'Engage in farm sector'**

Speaking on the occasion, senior physician and activist Sanjeev Kulkarni said efforts of those writing on the farm sector and farmer's issues would bear fruit when they involve themselves with the farm sector with a sense of belonging. There was an ardent need for translating literature on global developments pertaining to the farm sector, environment and other related issues into the regional languages. Hence, writers should also engage themselves in translation works which offers abundant opportunities, Dr. Kulkarni said.

Anita Pailur, director, CAM, said they offered courses in farm journalism that are aimed at reorienting journalists and writers engaged in writing about agricultural sector. It is necessary for agricultural graduates to possess the knowledge of the media and for the media graduates to have the knowledge of the farm sector. CAM courses try to cater to such needs, she said.

### **At Rs.3 a nut, it is a raw deal for coconut farmers**

No coconut procuring units in rural Kozhikode



Tall no more: The low price of coconut is dousing the spirit of farmers. A view from Vengeri, where coconut trees are on the verge of ruin.—Photo: S. Ramesh Kurup



Hundreds of farmers in rural Kozhikode are seeing a harrowing situation as the price of coconut is yet to reach a stable position in the market. Local traders now offer Rs.9 for a kilogram of raw coconut.

Settler farmers in such rural areas, including Thiruvambadi, Perambra, Kuttiyadi and Nadapuram, who have been depending on coconut farming are the worst-hit as the region does not have a single copra procuring unit, sanctioned by the State government. Without procuring units, majority of the farmers are forced to sell coconuts at Rs.3 a nut. It is at a time when retailers are selling coconuts at Rs.10 to Rs.15 a nut in the city.

Johnson Kulathingal, a farmer and leader of the Kerala Karshaka Union, says the support price of Rs.5,600 a quintal of copra cannot be considered an “awesome offer” on the part of the government. “If the government is truly concerned about the suffering of the farmers, this price should be increased to Rs.7,000 ,” he adds.

The farmers seek a fair price of Rs.25 a kg of raw coconut, which could be achieved only through a fruitful government intervention. In addition to this, they demand a new piece of legislation permitting coconut farmers to tap ‘neera’ and sell it in the market.

Mr. Johnson says a farmer can earn at least Rs.36,000 a year from a single coconut tree if they are allowed to tap neera. “Every day, three litres of ‘neera’ can be collected from a full-grown coconut tree. As the market price is Rs.64 a litre of ‘neera’, a farmer will be able to earn a minimum of Rs.180 a day from a coconut tree,” he explains.

K.M. Augusthy, the former president of Koodaranhi grama panchayat and coconut farmer, says: “We are sticking to the demand as product diversification will only save the farmers from the present crisis.” Perambra MLA K. Kunhammad says that the State government is yet to understand the issues of coconut farmers in rural areas. “Not even a single copra procurement unit has been opened in these areas, which attest to the fact that it had hardly any interest in the sector,” he remarks.

The support price announced by the government for procuring copra is a farce as it has not brought any of the professed benefits to the farmers.

“It was because of such farce projects a farmer in Koorachundu panchayat was compelled to cut down nearly 40 coconut trees from his farm,” he told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

### **Sugarcane farmers seek increase in MSP**

Farmers of Kamareddi revenue division staged a dharna in front of Gayatri Sugar Limited at Adlur Yellareddi village and later held a ‘rasta roko’ on National Highway 44 demanding that the government ensure payment of Rs.3,000 per tonne for sugarcane, on Sunday.

A large number of farmers of various villages joined the agitation, which was led by YSRC and TRS.

Movement of vehicular traffic was badly affected and hundreds of vehicles were stranded on either side of the road following the farmers’ protest.

Speaking on the occasion, YSRC district president K. Venkatramana Reddy said that at present only Rs.2,400 was being paid for a tonne of sugarcane, which was not remunerative at all for farmers.

The price should be made at least

### **Micro irrigation gaining popularity**

About 450 hectares of land belonging to small and marginal farmers in the district have so far been brought under micro irrigation practices by the Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Corporation (APMIC). In the next 3 months another 600 hectares will be covered bringing the total extent of land brought under micro-irrigation to 1050 hectares. Oil palm, sugar cane and vegetable crops were being raised by the small and marginal farmers using drip irrigation systems. Another additional 500 hectares will be targeted in the months of February and March and the mango, coconut, guava and even sericulture plantation farmers will be encouraged to adopt drip irrigation techniques. The total extent of lands that will come under drip irrigation by the end of March will be 1500 hectares. The state government is introducing drip irrigation with the objective of conserving scarce water resources and encouraging its judicious use. Besides there is a false notion among the farmers that the more they water the plant the more it would

increase its crop yield. This impression the APMIC is seeking to dispel by educating the farmers against excessive use of water.

Farmers investing a maximum of Rs.1 lakh are able to reap 100 per cent profits due to their adoption of the micro-irrigation techniques. While SC and ST farmers were getting free supply of the drip irrigation kits, small and marginal farmers were given 90 per cent subsidy with a mere 10 per cent of the cost as the beneficiary's contribution. Medium farmers are eligible for 75 per cent subsidy and farmers irrespective of their land holdings are eligible for 40 per cent subsidy.

All that a farmer needs is a small piece of land anywhere from 2 to 5 acres and a bore-well and the rest is being provided by the government and banks. Small and marginal farmers are reaping profits out of vegetable cultivation which is giving them revenue on a daily and weekly basis. District Collector V. Seshadri had directed the department of Horticulture and the APMIC to educate the farmers and create awareness on the benefits of drip irrigation and bring 1000 acres under the drip, under Indira Jala Prabha scheme. The scheme envisages conversion of waste lands into fruitful ventures taking advantage of the drip. The NREG scheme also came in handy for the farmers. The APMIC plantations were being raised using the labor component under the scheme.

The farmers are using the NREGS work force for the tilling, plantation and all farm operations and for installation of the drip irrigation systems. Using drip irrigation, several farmers had been cultivating leafy vegetables and tomatoes and earning Rs.50,000 per acre annually. Scores of farmers were earning handsomely on their lands using 100 per cent subsidy on drip.

Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Project (APMIP) project director S. Rammohan Rao told *The Hindu* that the drip and sprinkler irrigation is helping the small and marginal farmers in the district to earn handsomely.

### A purple menace in Pokkali fields



Paddy hunters:Purple moorhens have become a pest for the paddy crop in Ernakulam.— Photo: K.K. Mustafah

Slow-moving purple moorhens in lush green paddy fields may be a sight to behold. But it is one species that the paddy farmers detest to see as the birds destroy paddy saplings.

Faced with the prospects of economic loss, the farmers are devising schemes to keep the birds, known as Nelli Kozhi in local parlance, at bay. Automatic firecracker units are the latest trick being tried in the paddy fields of Kochi to scare away the birds.

The Pokkali farmers of Eazhikara, Kuzhipally, Edavanakad, and Pallupuram, are the most-affected in the district.

They have been using the firecracker units provided by the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU).

The firecrackers would go off at preset intervals upsetting the tranquillity of the bird habitats, says Mani Chellappan, Associate Professor at KAU. Four units were delivered to the farmers last month. They may go in for more units during the next farming season as the machines have been found effective.

The crackers would burst at an interval of five minutes in the installed units, Mr. Chellappan says.

Pokkali farmers in the region complained that the movement of the birds were leading to the dislodging of paddy saplings. The birds also feed on the succulent parts of the stem of the saplings, they said.

The nesting of the birds in paddy fields too adds to the worry of farmers.

Lincy Xavier, Assistant Director, Agriculture Department, North Paravur, say the birds have destroyed paddy cultivation in around 10 hectares of land in the region this season. Farmers had earlier unsuccessfully tried to scare the birds away using red colour ribbons drawn across the fields hoping that its fluttering movements would deter them. Now, they are using the firecracker machines as a pest-control measure, she said.

The birds prefer to feed on tender leaves and shoots. The pest attack was reported during August-September period this year, Ms. Xavier said.

### **Resident birds**

Moorhens are resident birds with breeding populations in the country.

These wetland species are herbivores as well as granivores (seed predators), says P.O. Nameer, State Coordinator of the Asian Water Bird Census.

The population of the species has gone up in the State during the past few years. Though they were rarely sighted during the 80s, the population has increased in the State.

The increased level of protection from hunting may be one of the reasons for the increase in population. The species is protected in India and included in the Schedule 4 of the Wildlife Protection Act, Dr. Nameer says.

The birds are present in most of the paddy wetlands of the State including Kole wetlands, Palakkad and Kuttanad.

The crop loss caused by the purple birds is a common complaint of the paddy cultivators, Dr. Nameer says.

### **Meat and eggs**

Ms. Xavier says there were instances of the birds being hunted for meat in the district.

An adult would weigh around 1.5 kg. Its eggs are also used for human consumption, she adds.

### **Back to the roots**

SHOPPING Buffalo Back introduces the newcomer to all things organic, be it the vegetables, rice, dal, wheat flour you consume every day or the earthy field beans you've never seen before



THE ORGANIC GARDEN OF EDEN Where you'll find everything for healthy living PHOTO: K. GOPINATHAN

Going organic may just be a dandy thing to do. But for the serious and more recent convert to the organic movement, there is a lot out there to discover each day. Buffalo Back, an organic store in Malleswaram, is hoping to introduce people to healthy and sustainable living, by consuming all things organic and natural — be it cosmetics, breakfast, or floor cleaner.

In the little store opened in a home, you will find delightful goodies that range from dry fruit sweets, pickles, chutneys and jams to the more sombre and serious black rice, bran flake cereal, stone-ground earthy wheat flour etc.

A joint venture between Padmavathi. K and Kishore Gowda, the store was set up with the idea of promoting a healthier way of life, says Padmavathi. And the name Buffalo Back stuck on because the buffalo is the earthy being yoked to our image of agriculture, she says.

### **Transition to a new way of life**

In the last seven months that the store has been around, Padmavathi has figured that it takes about four months for anyone who takes their first steps into the store to go completely organic. “We don’t force customers to buy readymade foods in the first go. We ask them to try out the fresh vegetables first. Once they cook and experience for themselves the chemical-free flavours of vegetables like cabbage and cauliflower, they gain the confidence to try other products.”

As of now, fresh organic vegetables are available every Tuesday at the store. And organic milk is available every Tuesday and Friday. Organic milk is sourced from an organic dairy in Tiptur.

Most of the products at the store come from Doddaballapur, Gouribidanur, Holenarasipura, Shimoga, Sirsi, Udupi, Mysore and Belgaum. While Buffalo Back has some of its own branded products, they also stock products of most well-established organic brands from all over the country.

Whatever's on the shelf can see you through your day organically, pretty conveniently with a range of around 400 products. There's coffee and tea powder to begin the day's brew. There's breakfast cereal of all kinds. There's readymade mixes of navane (a fibrous millet) pongal, ragi malt drink mixes, or red rice avalakki for you to make uppitt from, and peanut butter too. Then there's a variety of rice to be had — from completely unpolished (it doesn't even look like rice if you're used to white polished stuff) to traditional red rice (unmilled and with the bran on). Jaggery, spices, tamarind, will add flavour to the dals and millets, flours on offer. Cook it all in cold pressed nut oils or olive oil or fry organic papads in them.

Pick up a handmade soap that uses essential oils, or an organic clothes detergent that doesn't harm the environment.

For those who thrive on supplements and nutrition-rich superfoods, there's wheatgrass powder, flax seeds and powders, flax seed chutney, Ayurvedic kashayas and churnas, gomutra (cow's urine) products.

Trust is crucial while sourcing products, specially vegetables, says Padmavathi, who's been part of the network of organic growers and producers for the last seven years, although, while working with different organisations. "I have visited most of these farmers because I should know how they grow the produce before I'm able to tell customers," she says.

Padmavathi is usually busy at the store acquainting customers with the nutritive properties of each product and suggesting ways to cook millets or sprout beans. Where the products are not "certified organic" but use all natural ingredients or partially-organic ingredients, the store brands them as "natural" products.

Pricing of organic products also puts many people off the shift — most often the prices are double that of non-organic products (for example organic milk costs Rs. 25 for half a litre). "Customers do worry about it when they first come in, but as they start using the products, this becomes a negligible factor. Because the farmer does not use chemicals and fertilizers on his



produce, production quantities come down. This is a cost the farmer has to bear, so products are more expensive,” she explains.

Buffalo Back is at No 64/1, 17<sup>th</sup> cross, 4<sup>th</sup> main, Malleswaram. The store is closed Sundays, but open all other days 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Contact: 97420-06075.

### Woman Scientist award for ANGRAU former Dean



Vijayakhader receives the award.

Former Dean of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU), Vijayakhader has been chosen for the Eminent Woman Scientist award given by Women in Science & Engineering (WISE INDIA) and International Network of Women Engineers and Scientists (INWES). She received the award at a function organised by the INWES in New Delhi recently.

### Rubber sector told to be innovative

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# Hindustan Times

TODAY FARM NEWS

29.10.2012 A.M

## Weather

Chennai

### Chennai - INDIA

#### Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Oct 29

Max Min

31.2° | 23.7°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 66

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:01

Sunset: 05:43

Barometer: 1010

#### Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Oct 30

Max Min

30° | 23°

#### Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Oct 31	Thursday Nov 1	Friday Nov 2	Saturday Nov 3	Sunday Nov 4
33°   25°	32°   25°	32°   25°	33°   25°	32°   25°
Overcast	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast

#### Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:31

Humidity: 77

Sunset: 05:38

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1016



## Crude down in Asia as hurricane threatens US east coast

Oil prices fell in Asia Monday as US refineries cut crude production in anticipation of a plunge in energy demand ahead of the Hurricane Sandy megastorm, analysts said. New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in December shed 32 cents to \$85.96 a barrel and Brent North

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contract, light sweet crude for delivery in December shed 32 cents to \$85.96 a barrel and Brent North Sea crude for December delivery fell 51 cents to \$109.04.

A projected fall in energy demand in the world's largest oil consumer as Hurricane Sandy menaced the US east coast led refineries to slash production and traders to evacuate the market.

"Oil has fallen and the market is reacting to Hurricane Sandy which is affecting the US east coast," said Victor Shum, senior principal of Purvin and Gertz energy consultants in Singapore.

"Quite a few refineries on the east coast have reduced throughput in preparation for the hurricane to hit the US east coast and that means crude oil consumption is going to come down," he told AFP.

After claiming 66 lives in the Caribbean, Hurricane Sandy forced a lockdown in the US eastern seaboard as 10 states declared states of emergency, including the capital Washington.

Airports, businesses, schools and even the Statue of Liberty brought down their shutters as nervous Americans stripped supermarket shelves of water, bread and batteries before the hurricane hit.

US President Barack Obama also on Sunday urged Americans to take the storm "very seriously".

Forecasters warn that Hurricane Sandy might bring "life-threatening" storm surges of six to 11 feet (1.8 to 3.3 metres) in waters around New York City and northern New Jersey.

Authorities predict the hurricane will start to be felt late Monday.

# THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

28.10.2012 P.M

29.10.2012 A.M

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

## Bulls still control pepper



Pepper futures continued to remain in the control of the bulls cartel which has been able to push the prices of active contracts up last week.

In the domestic market, because of the high prices, the demand continued to remain thin and the end-users and industry were covering only hand to mouth. They are waiting for the new crop to arrive by mid-Dec.

The farmers/dealers were liquidating looking at the new crop which is estimated to be higher than that of the previous season.

Some have put it at 60,000-63,000 tonnes while some others have claimed it would be over 70,000 tonnes.

It believes that there would be a supply crunch in the coming days and that would drive the buyers to the cartel.

Hence, they believe the only available source is the cartel. Some of the investors were buying spot and depositing in the exchange and selling Nov and Dec.

About 110 tonnes of pepper were deposited on Nov 25, the trade sources claimed. The market was under the control of the bulls and, hence, the prices of active contracts moved up. Nov, Dec and Feb contracts increased by Rs 490, Rs 405 and Rs 90 respectively to the last traded price (LTP) at the weekend close of Rs 44,000, Rs 43,400 and Rs 38,970 a quintal.

Total turn over decreased by 3,516 tonnes during the week to close at 6,138 tonnes. Total open interest rose by 1,165 tonnes to 8,767 tonnes. Spot prices on buying support and in tandem with the futures market trend by Rs 300 a quintal to close at Rs 40,700 (ungarbled) and Rs 42,200 (garbled) a quintal.

Last week activities were limited because of the holidays. On the spot, the total arrivals last week stood at around 45 tonnes and the entire quantity was sold at Rs 410, Rs 415 and Rs 420 a quintal depending upon the quality and the high bulk density.

There was reportedly good demand for bulk density pepper. But, availability of this variety was very much limited, trade sources said.

No demand is expected from the international market as the Indian parity is over \$2,000 above other origins.

Everybody is covering from Indonesia now as it was quoting asta grade pepper at lower rates. Lampong Asta was reportedly being offered at \$6,500 a tonne.

Vietnam was offering asta grade at \$7,000 a tonne. Vietnam has been selling its FAQ 500 and 550 GL pepper much. FAQ 500 GL is offered now at \$6,100-6,200 a tonne.

Availability of pepper in Vietnam in 2012 is projected at 1,22,000 tonnes and of this it has already shipped out 93,684 tonnes leaving a stock of 28,316 tonnes as on Oct 1.

Once the Indonesian current crop exhausts the buyers would turn towards Brazil which is offering at \$6,700 a tonne. Against this, Indian parity is at \$8,500 a tonne and remained totally out priced.

## International rubber conference

The International Rubber Research and Development Board will hold its 'annual meetings 2012' and the tenth annual rubber conference at Kovalam here.

The conference will be held from Monday to Wednesday and the annual meetings on Thursday and Friday, a spokesman for the Indian Rubber Board, which is organising the events, said.

The conference will have technical deliberations focusing on 'challenges to rubber industry' and 'farm mechanisation.' Annual meetings include those of directors, chief executive officers and liaison officers of international board.

## Coonoor tea: 82% of offer sold out

About 82 per cent of 13.56 lakh kg offered at Sale No: 43 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions (when the market reopened after Pooja holidays) were sold.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC market at Rs 149 a kg.

Hittakkal Estate got Rs 136, Vigneshwar Estate and Blue Monte Speciality Rs 135 each, Deepika Supreme and Shanthi Supreme Rs 133.

In all, 81 marks got Rs 100 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Chamraj got Rs 250,

Highfield Estate Rs 219, Havukal Rs 177, Kairbetta Rs 164, Kodanad Rs 156 and Mailoor Rs 155. In all, 42 marks got Rs 100 and more.

"Orthodox leaf market eased Rs 1-2 a kg. High-priced CTC leaf lost Rs 4-5, mediums Rs 2-3 and plainers, up to Rs 3.

Primary orthodox dusts irregularly but secondary grades lost Rs 4-5.

High-priced CTC dusts oscillated up and down Rs 1-2, mediums eased up to Rs 2 but plainers lost Rs 1-4", an auctioneer told *Business Line*.



## export demand

Export demand was weak with only skeletal purchase for Pakistan for Rs 72-86 a kg and the CIS Rs 74-83.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 70-73 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 95-120 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs 76-82 for plain dusts and Rs 100-135 for brighter liquoring dusts.

## Rabi oilseed planting begins on sluggish note



Planting of oilseeds for the rabi season has started on a sluggish note on delayed kharif harvest.

Early data from the Agriculture Ministry suggests that sowing of key rabi oilseeds such as rapeseed, mustard and safflower are yet to gain momentum.

As of October 25, the acreage under rabi oilseeds stood at 8.37 lakh hectares, down by more than half of last year's 20.15 lakh ha in the corresponding period.

Rapeseed mustard has, so far, been planted in about 6.71 lakh ha against 18.55 lakh ha in the corresponding period last year.

"Farmers are waiting for the temperatures to come down," said B.V. Mehta, Executive Director of Solvent Extractors Association of India, expressing optimism that "sowing will pick up over the next two to three weeks".

Further, the delay in harvesting of kharif crops such as rice and other cereals may push back the rabi planting by a couple of weeks.

The delayed arrival of the South-West monsoon this year had hurt the kharif crops.

Besides, the farmers are also waiting for the minimum support price (MSP) announcement from the Government to decide on their plantings.

“Farmers will look at prices of competitive crops before deciding on plantings,” Mehta said.

The Government is expected to announce minimum support prices for rabi crops over the next couple of weeks. The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACPC) has recommended a Rs 500 increase in MSP of rapeseed mustard at Rs 3,000 a quintal for the 2012-13 season. For safflower, the MSP hike has been suggested at Rs 200 to Rs 2,800 a quintal.

The oilseed extraction industry is expecting a 20 per cent rise in rabi output this year.

Rapeseed mustard output is pegged at 6.5 million tonnes against last year’s 5.5 million tonnes, as late revival in monsoon has created a conducive atmosphere for rabi plantings.

The kharif oilseed had taken a hit on account of delayed and erratic monsoons and the total output is pegged lower at 18.78 million tonnes against last year’s 20.78 million tonnes.

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### **Areca nut prices firm in Kumta, Sirsi markets**

Prices of areca nut are expected to be firm in Kumta and Sirsi regulated market in December, according to the Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (Demic).

Demic has been set up in the Department of Agri-business Management, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, to advise farmers and save them from distress sale.

Dr Balachandra K. Naik of DEMIC, said, “Due to normal monsoon in Uttara Kannada district this year, the average yield is in the range of 18-22 quintals per hectare.”

“After analysing monthly price of arecanut for the last 20 years collected from Kumta and Sirsi regulated market, we see arecanut prices to trade higher in December,” he added.

### **Kumta Market**

The prices of ‘chippu’ arecanut is expected to be Rs 10,200-10,800 in November. It may trade a little higher between Rs 10,500-11,000 in December, and later drop a little to trade between Rs 10,400-10,800 in January.

The prices of ‘Factory’ nuts is expected to be Rs 6,500-6,800 in November, trade in the Rs 6,700-7,000 range in December and Rs 6,800-7,200 in January.

‘Cocca’ prices are likely to trade Rs 9,100-9,500 in November, Rs 9,000-9,300 in December and Rs 8,400-8,800 in January.

### **Sirsi Market**

In Sirsi regulated market, the prices of ‘Bilegotu’ is to fetch Rs 11,600-12,100 in November, Rs 11,700-12,200 in December and Rs 11,600-12,000 in January.

‘Rashi’ nuts will fetch Rs 8,400-8,900 in November, Rs 8,700-9,100 in December and Rs 8,900-9,400 in January, respectively.

‘Cocca’ arecanut is to fetch Rs 8,900-9,300 in November, Rs 9,000-9,600 in December and Rs 9,200-9,800 in January.

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### **Pro-Bt cotton farmers flay move for moratorium on field trials**

The farmers who are in favour of Bt cotton have flayed the recommendations of a Supreme Court panel that called for a 10-year moratorium on field trials of biotech crops.

They said biotechnology gave the seeds in-built protection against harmful insects, helping them get additional yields.

They called for efforts to make the regulatory system more robust to address fears and apprehensions over the genetically modified crops.

“We need to reinforce checks and balances to ensure systematic trials and implementation of all guidelines. But to stop all research into biotech crops is short sighted and regressive,” they said.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, representatives of three district level farmers’ groups termed the moratorium ‘anti farmer’.

Lakshminarayana (President of Nagarjuna Rythu Samakhya, Guntur), S. Jayapal Reddy (President of Pratapa Rudra Farmers Mutually Aided Credit and Marketing Federation, Warangal) and Laxma Reddy (President of Karimnagar Manair Farmers Welfare Society, Karimnagar) have participated in the conference.

“There are some seeds (with biotech) protect the plant against herbicides and weedicides and some others help the crops grow with less water and use fertiliser more efficiently. Any moratorium on field trials could impact the interests of farmers,” they said.

“We need biotechnology. We want the right to choose and freedom to farm,” they said.

The associations have also written to the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N Kiran Kumar Reddy, seeking his intervention to ensure that research in biotechnology is not stopped.

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## Americans brace up for Hurricane Sand

As the entire US East Coast braced up for the Hurricane Sandy, hundreds and thousands of Indian Americans prepared themselves for the days ahead, rushing to the grocery store to stock up eatable, water, milk, fruits and other emergency items.

And in many cases a lot of them had to be disappointed or had to pay more, as the grocery stores in some cases had raised up their prices given the huge demand.

“A Gallon of milk went up by 29 cents, bread by 19 cents, water bottles 10 cents... yet, three of those stores ran out of drinking water bottles and candles, two stores ran out of milk and bread.

I missed getting bread, had to be happy with Bagels & Tortillas,” wrote Jay Mandal, a New York-based photo journalist.

Sree Srinivasan, professor of journalism at the Columbia University, went to his neighbourhood grocery store yesterday to stock up his home supplies ahead of the landfall of hurricane; shopping carts were missing, there was a huge line, all milk were taken.

“I got the very last onion in the place,” Srinivasan, tech guru and head of South Asian Journalist Association wrote on his Facebook page last evening; the picture of that lucky onion which he did not forget to post on this social network site.

He was not the only Indian American to encounter with such a rarest of the rare situation in a grocery store yesterday, had millions of Americans on the East Coast braced up for the Hurricane Sandy.

Expected to landfall tonight, with a gusty wind and heavy rainfall, according to weather experts is likely to create havoc in major parts of the United States in its East Coast — from North Carolina to New England as far west as the Great Lakes.

In anticipation, the US President, Barack Obama, declared emergency in a number of states including New York, New Jersey, Virginia, District of Columbia and Massachusetts.

Thousands of emergency staff have been put on alert; government offices and schools have been closed for today and tomorrow and hundreds and thousands of people from the low-laying areas have been asked to evacuate, as the hurricane Sandy is expected to bring potentially life-threatening storm surges on the coast ranging from several feet to potentially as high as 11-feet in the coastal areas.

The New York Stock exchange has suspended physical trading today. Electronic trading would continue, however. The United Nations headquarters in New York too have been shut down for two days.

Given the seriousness of the hurricane, the US President, Barack Obama, suspended his election campaign mid-way and returned to the White House to personally review the preparedness.

Mitt Romney, his Republican challenger, also had to cancel his election meetings in the storm affected areas. Both Obama and Romney cancelled events in Virginia.

Romney also cancelled his New Hampshire trip, but would continue with his campaign in the battleground states of Ohio, Iowa and Wisconsin — which are away from the storm.

“This is a serious and big storm,” Obama said at the headquarters of Federal Emergency Management Agency in Washington DC where he had gone to review the preparedness.

“And my first message is to all the people across the Eastern seaboard, Mid-Atlantic, going north, that you need to take this very seriously and follow the instructions of your state and local officials, because they are going to be providing you with the best advice in terms of how to deal with this storm over the coming days,” Obama said.

Later Obama had a conference call with all the State Governors and City Mayors to be affected by the hurricane.

The Indian Embassy in Washington and the Indian Consulate in New York announced that their offices would be closed today due to storm.

The TriVisa offices, to which the Indian Embassy has outsourced its visa services, has also closed its offices in both New York and Washington.

# Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

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## 'Fert demand in rabi to be subdued if urea prices not revised'

The demand for phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers is expected to remain subdued in the upcoming rabi (winter sowing) season if urea prices are not revised, a top official of Tata Chemicals Ltd (TCL) said.

"We expect the demand (for P&K fertilisers) to remain subdued in the rabi season unless urea prices are adjusted," TCL Managing Director R Mukundan told PTI.

TCL is the country's leading manufacturer of urea and phosphatic fertilisers and through its subsidiary, Rallis, has a strong position in the crop protection business.

"Till the time prices of urea, a key nitrogenous crop nutrient, are way below that of P&K fertilisers, the overuse will continue," he said when asked about the demand prospect of fertilisers for the rabi season.

The issue of revision in urea prices has been on hold for sometime and industry body Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) has time and again urged the government to revise it.

Even the committee on roadmap for fiscal consolidation, headed by former Finance Commission Chairman Vijay Kelkar, has said that "the most urgent reform required on the fertiliser subsidy front is revision in the price of urea".

As per government data, the retail prices of MoP rose by 92% to Rs 23,100 per tonne in the just ended kharif (summer) season from Rs 12,040 per tonne in the 2011-12 rabi (winter) season, while, DAP prices rose by 33% to Rs 26,500 per tonne from Rs 20,000 per tonne in the same period.

The government recently raised the maximum retail price of urea by Rs 50. Before that MRP of urea was last increased by 10% to Rs 5,310 per tonne in April, 2010.



The high prices of P&K fertilisers coupled with low prices of urea has led to farmers opting for the latter option leading to demand destruction in sales of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), muriate of potash (MoP) and complex fertilisers.

According to market data, it is estimated that for the April-August 2012 period, urea sales fell by 3%, DAP by 29%, NPK by 25% and SSP by 14% compared to the same period of previous year.

The decline in sales of MoP could not be made as during April-August 2011 the industry had declared 'potash holiday' (non-use of the crop nutrient).

The fertiliser industry has 8.35 lakh tonnes of unsold DAP till August this year as against 73,000 tonnes in the same time last year, while, 6.83 lakh tonnes of stocks of NPK fertilisers were unsold as against 1.60 lakh tonnes in the same period.

The declining sales have also led to a fall in import of these crop nutrients.

India imported about 4.24 million tonnes (MT) of DAP and 2.68 MT of MoP in the last fiscal. This is against 7.41 MT of DAP and 4.5 MT of MoP imported during 2010-11 fiscal.

### Hoping for high prices, farmers hold on to soya produce

Soya bean farmers are holding on to their produce because prices, though higher than the [minimum support price](#), are less than their expectations. But processors think farmers will have no option but to sell their stocks sooner or later.

Supplies to [Madhya Pradesh](#) and Maharashtra markets are much below the normal at this time of the year.

[Soya bean prices](#) had touched Rs 5,000 per quintal last year. Prices in different markets are in the range of Rs 2,700 per quintal to Rs 3,200 per quintal. Farmers' expectations have increased because of a drought in the United States.

Some APMCs have made arrangements for the storage of soya bean and are giving pledge loans to farmers against the stored produce. Millers think farmers will not be able to hold their stocks for long as the carrying costs are high.

"Considering this, farmers' expectations of better prices do not seem to be rational. This season's soya crop in India is expected to be the biggest ever. Farmers will bring the bean to the market sooner or later. Possibly, oil crushing and refining plants will streamline their sales based on seed purchases," said Dinesh Sharma, managing director, Ruchi Soya Industries.

India being the cheapest source of soya bean meal, good demand is likely to prevail and may stabilise the bean price. "Demand for [soya bean meal](#) from neighbouring countries and local users is expected to continue and may partly offset the incremental supplies of beans during the current year," said Sharma.

Soya bean prices increased by about Rs 200 per quintal last week due to international support, coupled with heavy buying by processors who have just started their plants.

"Soya bean prices may correct downward after the immediate need of the processors is met," said Rajesh Agrawal, spokesperson and co-ordinator, SOPA. According to the estimate of [Soya bean Processors Association of India](#) (SOPA), production is expected to increase by about 9% from 116.5 lakh tonnes in kharif 2011 to about 127 lakh tonnes in kharif 2012.

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

### Tomatoes, almonds among must-have foods for 40-plus

Tomatoes, oats, almonds and fish are among the essential food items that can slash the risk of heart diseases and diabetes in those over 40, experts say.

The risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes can become a concern after the age of 40 and an unhealthy lifestyle can lead to rise in cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

Experts advise that stocking up on certain food items can help ward off the risks.

Researchers say that eating just 3g of oats daily is enough to reduce total cholesterol by five to ten per cent.

Oats contain beta-glucans, a soluble fibre that can help lower the unwanted form of cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL), the Daily Mail reported.

It is estimated that the risk of developing heart disease drops by two per cent for every one per cent reduction in total cholesterol.

Tomatoes are also a 'wonder-food' for the 40-plus as they are an excellent source of the antioxidant lycopene. They offer a degree of protection against the formation and spread of cancer cells as well as protecting arteries from atherosclerosis.

Research has shown that drinking 150ml of tomato juice after 20 minutes of exercise offers protection against prostate, lung and stomach cancers and heart disease.

In another study, researchers found that 20 adults eating 60g of almonds daily for four weeks showed a nine per cent reduction in blood-sugar, suggesting almonds could offer protection against cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Experts also believe that Omega 3 fats in oily fish can help lower heart rate and blood pressure, and reduce the risk of irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia).

Isoflavones in soy beans have been linked to lowering cholesterol, increasing bone density in post-menopausal women and improving male fertility.

Cherries are useful in combating several conditions common in middle age, including gout and arthritis. They are a rich source of the antioxidant anthocyanin.

Full-fat milk can help combat the reduction in muscle mass associated with getting older, especially after the age of 50, experts say.

A 2006 study found that drinking full-fat milk after exercise helped ensure that muscle mass was enhanced.

Chicken which is a great source of protein can help combat common cold, experts believe.

Highlighting the benefits of chicken, a study in 2010 showed that a 'moderate increase in protein' resulted in maintenance of weight loss compared with higher-carbohydrate diets.