

Farmers participatory programme stems coconut tree infestation

A total of 22 hectares, 4,000 trees, and 50 farmers were covered



Group approach: Demonstrating use of bordeaux spray. -Photo: Special arrangement

Bud rot is a fatal fungal disease affecting coconut trees. Young trees are more susceptible particularly during the monsoon.

With this infestation, the spear leaf becomes pale and breaks at the base and hangs down.

The tender leaf base and soft tissues of the crown rot into a slimy mass of decayed material emitting foul smell. The rotting progresses downwards, affecting and killing the entire tree.

Lack of awareness about the disease and its management practice is also leading to a disease spread. Individual prevention adoption by few farmers here and there is ineffective as coconut is cultivated almost throughout Kannur region in Kerala.

Severe spread

The spread of the disease is so severe that 14,350 hectares of coconut growing area is infected by this lethal menace.

“Bud rot is a serious problem throughout Kannur district and prophylactic chemical treatment proves to be effective.

“During 2007-08 we have successfully demonstrated this technology in Ayyankunnu Panchayath. However the disease was rampant in other agro- ecological zones also and it was found necessary as per the demands of farmers to conduct demonstrations in different regions to curb the spread of the disease,” says Dr.Abdul Kareem, Programme Coordinator, Kerala agricultural University, Kahirangad.

“We planned and implemented a frontline demonstration (FLD) of perforated plastic sachets containing 2-3 grams Mancozeb, two sachets per palm tied on the inner side of the spear leaf, spraying of bordeaux mixture on affected portion as well as neighbouring trees, removal and destruction of affected portions and application of bordeaux paste for combating the problem for four consecutive years (from 2007-8 to 2010-11),” he explains.

For this demonstration, two regions Koralai and Kolacherry, were selected; farmers were identified, group discussions, trainings and method demonstrations were done. A total of 22 hectares, 4,000 trees, and 50 farmers were covered under this.

Control measures

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Kannur areas has adopted farmer participatory extension approach, named as Compact Area Group Approach, which is now popularly known by its acronym, CAGA to control bud rot disease. CAGA promoted and sustained group action in a contiguous area for durable adoption of control measures by solving several hurdles.

Preparation of plastic sachets manually is a cumbersome process since a lot of holes have to be made on the sachets. To overcome this problem a small machine has been fabricated to puncture holes continuously on plastic tubes of 3-inch width.

This tube is cut into required length and filled with two gms of mancozeb and tied at ends. Cost of production of this sachet works out to only Rs. 2.50 per sachet.

The Department of agriculture helped arrangement of climbers in a few panchayaths at a cost of Rs. 10 per tree and in the remaining areas KVK helped farmers to arrange for climbers by themselves.

Coconut tree climbers are the only persons who see and feel the extent and magnitude of the disease incidence in the tree as they climb.

Decision-making on their part was very important for application of control measures in an effective manner.

Training the climbers

“Therefore the climbers were made conversant with all aspects of the technology like understanding magnitude of disease incidence, handling of sachets, placement and tying method of sachets, importance of cleaning methods, preparation of mixture and paste, areas and method to apply it etc,” says Dr. Kareem.

Integrated disease management focuses not only on application of chemical but also on maintaining health of plant.

The health of the plant is mainly attributed to the proper nutrition for the plant. During farmers’ meetings conducted in the CAGA approach, a lacuna in application of organic matter came up.

Recommended dosage of organic manure (25kg/ tree) cost more than Rs. 50 and farmers were not applying the manure. In this context scientists introduced a very cost effective technology of insitu green manuring using cowpea seeds.

Organic manure

Only 100 gm of cowpea seeds are required for one coconut basin to be sown at the onset of monsoon to produce 25 kg of biomass within few months. Thus cost of organic manure came down to Rs. 5 from Rs. 50.

Application of sachets, when clubbed with harvest before monsoon season, reduced the cost of application. Coconut growers throughout the district were made aware about the bud rot management practices through wide publicity.

Adoption level of farmers increased to 100 per cent due to the visualised effect of control measures recording very positive results.

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Cheshire Cats and water soluble electronic devices

In Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, Alice comes across the famous cat from Cheshire which discusses philosophy with her. After this talk, it grins and disappears. The cat is gone but the grin stays. Alice exclaims: I have seen a cat with no grin, but never a grin with no cat!

We are all familiar with electronic devices such as integrated circuits, chips and tools that do a hundred useful things. They have become inseparable from our lives.

What do we do once we are done with them? Throw them away, causing what has come to be known as e-waste. It is estimated that e-waste alone accounts for over 70 per cent of toxic wastes currently found in landfills, and we are yet to get a good estimate of how much it is in the seas and oceans.

Again, we use electronic devices such as pacemakers and other sensors that are implanted in our bodies. The trouble with them is that once they are past their use, we need to surgically remove them (and perhaps implant a fresh one). How nice it would be if only they dissolve away and get removed from the body; much the way we discard our body liquids and solids every day!

Yes, it appears possible to do so with the development of a prototype electronic chip that is made to work for a defined period of time, which is implanted into a body and dissolves after use and gets excreted away from the body after it has done its intended job. The job is done and the device is gone – a variation of the famous Cheshire Cat!

Dr. John Rogers of the Material Sciences department of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and his group teamed up with Dr. Fiorenzo Omenetto of the Biomedical Engineering department of Tufts University in Boston, and devised an implantable electronic thermal therapy

device which lasts inside a rat's body for a few weeks before dissolving away. They report this landmark work in the 28th September 2012 issue of *Science*.

In order that the device is water-soluble, every component in there must be made of molecules and materials which are water-soluble, not the conventional aluminium, rare-earth metal compounds or plastic stuff that are built to last forever. They must be built to stay and work for a stipulated time and then be washed away.

Hence, they used magnesium or Mg as the electrical conductor, MgO and Silicon dioxide as dielectrics, specially fabricated nanomembrane silicon semiconductor and so forth, in order to build the electrothermal device. The entire device including all of its inductor, capacitor, resistor, diode and transistor dissolves away when placed in deionized water.

Next, they packed this device in a sheet of silk, which is specially made so as to stay intact for a set period of time, after which it dissolves in the body water, exposing the electronic device which too dissolves away.

Here then is the 'proof of principle' – a silicon-based complementary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) device that is an implantable medical device, which can be custom-made or programmed to last for a defined period of time, after which it is resorbed in the body, so that no second intervention for retrieval of the device is needed.

The device they made was meant to be a heater – one that can be placed next to a site where a surgical operation has been done. It is meant to keep the area warmer so as to keep it free of infection from germs. They first implanted it sub-dermally (under the skin) of some mice.

After the programmed three weeks, the implant dissolved away. Only a faint residue was left, which too cleared away, with no inflammation or any side effects.

Reassured of its safety, they next implanted this transient thermal therapy device on rats through surgery. Weeks later, they found no traces of infection after the surgery. Here then is the proof of principle.

Such biodegradable electronic devices can have many uses. They can be sensors placed in fields, reporting what they are meant to, and fade away. One can, in principle, even make

portable consumer devices (cell phones?) which, after use, can be dissolved away in water and the starting material retrieved after evaporating the water.

Lewis Carroll used the term Cheshire Cat, apparently after the practice of dairy farmers in Cheshire who would pack and mould cheese in the form of a smiling cat. The cheese was cut and eaten from the tail side of the cat, leaving the smile for last. In any event, Carroll was prescient; Cheshire Cats are now an electronic reality.

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'Lab on a chip' may make analytic devices more efficient, less expensive

A technique that uses acoustic waves to sort cells on a chip may help create miniature medical analytic devices and lead to cell phone-sized medical labs, according to a team of researchers.

The device uses two beams of acoustic— or sound — waves to act as acoustic tweezers and sort a continuous flow of cells on a dime-sized chip, said Tony Jun Huang, associate professor of engineering science and mechanics, Penn State. By changing the frequency of the acoustic waves, researchers can easily alter the paths of the cells. Huang said that since the device can sort cells into five or more channels, it will allow more cell types to be analyzed simultaneously, which paves the way for smaller, more efficient and less expensive analytic devices.

"Eventually, you could do analysis on a device about the size of a cell phone. It's very doable and we're making in-roads to that right now," said Huang. Biological, genetic and medical labs could use the device for various types of analysis, including blood and genetic testing, Huang said.

Cell-sorting devices

Most current cell-sorting devices allow the cells to be sorted into only two channels in one step, according to Huang. He said that another drawback of current cell—sorting devices is that cells must be encapsulated into droplets, which complicates further analysis.

"Today, cell sorting is done on bulky and very expensive devices. We want to minimize them so they are portable, inexpensive and can be powered by batteries," said Huang. Using sound waves for cell sorting is less likely to damage cells than current techniques, Huang added.

In addition to the inefficiency and the lack of controllability, current methods produce aerosols, gases that require extra safety precautions to handle.

The researchers created the acoustic wave cell-sorting chip using a layer of silicone — polydimethylsiloxane. According to Huang, two parallel transducers, which convert alternating current into acoustic waves, were placed at the sides of the chip. As the acoustic waves interfere with each other, they form pressure nodes on the chip.

As cells cross the chip, they are channeled toward these pressure nodes.

The transducers are tunable, which allows researchers to adjust the frequencies and create pressure nodes on the chip.

The researchers first tested the device by sorting a stream of fluorescent polystyrene beads into three channels. Prior to turning on the transducer, the particles flowed across the chip unimpeded. Once the transducer produced the acoustic waves, the particles were separated into the channels.

Leukemia cells

Following this experiment, the researchers sorted human white blood cells that were affected by leukemia.

The leukemia cells were first focused into the main channel and then separated into five channels.

The device is not limited to five channels, according to Huang.

"We can do more. We could do 10 channels if we want, we just used five because we thought it was impressive enough to show that the concept worked," Huang said.

The researchers released their findings in the current edition of *Lab on a Chip*. — ANI

Waste degradation by white rot fungus

Composting is a natural process of rotting or decomposition of organic matter by microorganisms under controlled conditions.

Raw organic materials such as crop residues, animal wastes, food garbage, some municipal wastes and suitable industrial wastes after composting enhance their suitability for application to soil as a fertilizing resource. In addition to being a source of plant nutrient, compost also improves the physiochemical and biological properties of the soil.

As a result of these improvements, the soil becomes more resistant to stresses such as drought, diseases and toxicity.

Composting helps the crop in improved uptake of plant nutrients and possesses an active nutrient cycling capacity because of vigorous microbial activity indirectly leading to pathogen suppression in soil. These advantages manifest themselves in reduced cropping risks, higher yields and lower outlays on inorganic fertilizers for farmers.

In recent years, decomposition of agricultural wastes such as coir pith, banana sheath (dried), sugarcane trash, millets and pulse waste, cotton stubble with white rot fungus (*Pleurotus* sp.) is gaining importance.

These wastes are decomposed with any one of the white rot fungi *P. eous*, *P. platypus*, *P. djamor* or *P. sajorcaju* by layer system. One layer of agricultural waste at 100 kg is spread uniformly in an area of 4 x 3 m² under shade.

Culture of *P. djamor* at 200 gms is applied over the substrate. Another 100 kg of substrate is spread over the first layer and urea is applied at rate of one kg to the substrate.

This sandwiching is repeated to make a heap of 1,000 kg substrate with such 20 layers. A total of one kg of the fungus and five kg urea is required to decompose 1,000 kg waste.

Water is sprinkled twice a day to maintain 50 -60 per cent moisture level. The heap is allowed to decompose for a month after which a turning is done. The waste undergoes degradation within 45 days. It has a narrow carbon : nitrogen ratio of 20:1 which can be used as organic manure.

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Finance Ministry moots increase in price of urea

The Finance Ministry has asked the Chemicals and Fertilizers Ministry to increase the price of urea and also work out a plan for direct cash transfer of fertilizer subsidy to farmers.

In a letter to the Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister M. K. Alagiri, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram has laid out a roadmap to prune the fertilizer subsidies. In the first place, he urged Mr. Alagiri to work for an increase in the price of urea. This would not only reduce the total subsidy requirements, but also correct the skew between the prices of P&K fertilizers and urea, which results in over-use of urea.

Similarly, it has asked the Ministry to work out a plan for rapid conversion of the existing naphtha-based urea plants into gas-based units. Pointing out that the efficiency of imports by public sector undertakings (PSUs) nominated for import of urea needed considerable improvement, Mr. Chidambaram said alternatives to the existing PSUs might be examined, and an oversight mechanism developed to ensure that urea imports were done more efficiently. On the subsidy for ultimate beneficiaries, Mr. Chidambaram said the direct cash transfer of subsidy was now under examination for the petroleum and food sectors.

“It is suggested that the Ministry of Fertilizers may kindly prepare a concept note for implementation of a direct cash transfer for fertilizer subsidy to the cultivators,” the letter said.

The letter by Mr. Chidambaram came just before the Kelkar Committee submitted its report, and suggested revision in the prices of urea to help restore soil mineral balance and reduce the government's subsidy burden.

Major fertiliser producers such as IFFCO, Zuari Industries, Coromandel International and Tata Chemicals have backed the Kelkar committee view stating that an upward revision in the prices of the important nitrogenous soil nutrient is the need of the hour. It would help in reducing the price gap between urea and the phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizers. The Kelkar

Committee felt that urea price revision was the most urgent reform required on the fertiliser subsidy front.

Down to earth



All through the bus journey back home, I dreamt of buying a piece of land to grow my own food. I would raise goats and cows and live amidst green fields and breathe pure air. I would lead a disease-free life and even give back something to society. Three days with Dr. G. Nammalvar had done this to me.

The 74-year-old agricultural scientist was part of a team led by environmental activist Dr. Vandana Shiva that was responsible for the European Patent Office revoking a U.S. firm's claim to patent neem. An advocate of natural pesticides such as 'Panchakavyam' and 'Amirtha Karaisal', he assisted farmers in Nagapattinam district as well as in Indonesia to rehabilitate their land after the 2004 Tsunami.

He is well-known for his campaigns against chemical-free agriculture... but these are just a few instances from the life of a man who has dedicated his life to popularising natural farming practices.

I first saw him at the thatch-roofed enclosure of Vanagam, his 55-acre organic farm at Kadavur, a mountain village near Karur in Tamil Nadu. Seated on a mat, he was addressing some 20 people who had signed up for the three-day organic farming training camp. They came from various backgrounds.

There was an engineering student who wanted to restore a polluted pond in his neighbourhood, an IT professional who wanted to become a farmer, a marketing executive who wanted to explore the commercial aspects of organic farming... There were also other farmers who were looking to step into organic farming.

Grow just enough

“Say you have 25 acres of land,” began Nammalvar. “Set aside just enough of it to produce food for you, your family and cattle and plant trees everywhere else. New leaves will grow every day; they will fall on the land and make it fertile. Your cattle can feed on the grass that grows between the trees; they will get to graze in an air-conditioned environment. Birds will sit in the branches and sing. There will be new songs and new colours every day. There will be food all through the year. Most importantly, you needn’t plough and till every day.”

As the afternoon wore on, the sky turned grey. There were heavy gusts of wind and it began to drizzle. For Nammalvar, with rain, came laughter and poetry.

“Look at the trees dancing. Even Bharathanatyam dancers cannot come close to their movements,” he said, grinning behind his white beard.

Field work

The next day, I stepped out at 5 a.m. and the cold air from the mountains chased away the remnants of sleep. I assumed it was just me and the roosters who were up at that hour. But Nammalvar was already at work. He was carrying water for the newly planted saplings. He set the tone for the day; it was to be spent in the fields.

With the sun high in the sky, we planted millet seeds in an area under cultivation using the *vatta paathi* method.

As the afternoon wore on, we watered the seeds. I revere those moments, for out there, we became the creators. Imagine how a farmer must feel at the time of harvest!

Discussions followed every activity during the workshop, that included documentary screenings, games, and lectures. Nammalvar managed to make even the shyest of students speak. We

learnt that when fish waste is mixed with country sugar and set aside for 21 days, we get a harmless fertiliser that also helps plants fight drought.

A mixture of coconut milk and sour buttermilk can stimulate plant growth. Senthil Ganesan, Ayyappan, Kannadasan and Jothi, the staff members of Vanagam, demonstrated how these mixtures, that were kind to the soil, were made.

We practised double digging, an organic farming technique where cultivation is done on a raised bed of soil. With just a few hours for the sun to set, we walked to the vegetable patch with sickles and seeds and sacks of mulch. We saw the field change before our very eyes — what was once flat and covered with grass was now well-turned and healthy looking with all the mulch and fresh dose of topsoil.

We dug the earth around the bed to make a walking path. This path gives you access, makes the ground firm and prevents you from stepping on the plants.

With Nammalvar around, even a mundane task like cutting grass becomes interesting. He is a treasure trove of stories and working alongside him in the fields is the best way to hear them.

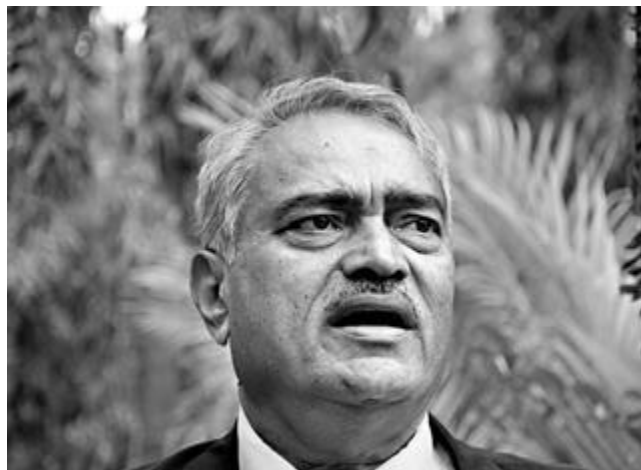
“This grass is for our two pregnant cows,” he said, as we cut grass. “We take the two aside before we feed them. Otherwise, the other cows will be disappointed if they are not given the same fodder.” ‘Periya Pasu’ (Big Cow), he explained, was his favourite cow. “She is beautiful to look at. You should see the way she opens her mouth nice and wide when you feed her.”

Tired and dusty, we settled down to watch documentary films that evening. The last day was all about feedback, plans for the future and goodbyes. But more than all the talks, discussions, and hours of fieldwork, it is the experience of being around Nammalvar that makes Vanagam so special.

“Sometimes, trees talk to you,” he said one morning. “When you spread mulch at their base, the leaves will nod a thank you. Cows bend their head low, in a gesture of gratitude when you feed them. They all speak, but not in Tamil.”

Bangalore UAS decides not to hold Krishi Mela this year

Instead, it plans to hold a conference for farmers



Change of plans: The decision was taken because of the drought, said Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda.— File Photo: K. Gopinathan

In view of the severe drought in the State, the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore, has decided against holding its annual Krishi Mela this year, Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda has said.

The university usually conducts the mela in November to demonstrate the availability of new technologies, farm management practices, and high-yielding variety of seeds to farmers. It conducted the mela on a national-scale last year.

“This year we have been able to get only 75 per cent of the expected yield because of irregular rainfall. Hence, the decision to cancel the Krishi Mela,” Dr. Gowda told *The Hindu*.

Alternative plan

The varsity, instead, has proposed to hold a conference in November to inform farmers on the crops that could be cultivated during a dry spell. Progressive farmers from each district would be invited to the conference and awarded, a UAS official said.

UAS, Dharwad, however, held its Krishi Mela recently.

Speaking to presspersons here on Wednesday, the Vice-Chancellor said that in anticipation of rain during October and November, farmers had been advised to cultivate short-duration crops, such as cowpea and chickpea using regular farming practices.

As reservoirs were not full, farmers had been advised to use the System of Rice Intensification, a method used to increase the yield of rice, as it required 40 per cent less water, Dr. Gowda said.

Cauvery issue

When asked about his opinion on the sharing of Cauvery waters with Tamil Nadu, he said the problem needed to be solved peacefully. The State government could send a comprehensive report explaining the plight of farmers here.

He asked farmers to use water judiciously.

Farmers protest against irregular power supply

Farmers, led by the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha's (KPRS) district unit, laid siege to the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom) office here on Wednesday, condemning irregular power supply.

The protesters gathered at the Inspection Bungalow, from where they took out a procession to the Bescom office. Farmers in the drought-affected district were facing problems due to inadequate power supply, they alleged. Krishnappa, superintending engineer of Bescom (Kolar circle) received a memorandum from the farmers. He promised there would be no load-shedding from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. The situation was likely to improve soon as the district feeder was expected to get 400 MW, he added.

"Crop diversity vital for ecological systems"

Crop diversity is important for both the functioning of ecological systems and generation of a vast array of ecosystem services, said K. Ramasamy, Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Coimbatore.

Participating in the 'Foundation Day Dialogue' held at Dhan Foundation on the occasion of the Foundation's 16th annual day on Tuesday, the Vice Chancellor said that agricultural biodiversity underpins agricultural productivity and therefore makes a critical contribution to agricultural sustainability.

Pointing out that agricultural biodiversity was the key for food production and supply, he said that agro biodiversity from one point of view is part of natural capital and the flow of services is the interest on the capital. Farmers and breeders use biodiversity to adapt crops to different and changing production environments.

Dr. K. Ramasamy said that the sustainable management of natural resources is a primary global concern, as increasing population and rapid technological advances are putting tremendous pressure on these resources. Plant Genetic Resources (PGRs) are one of the essential components that hold the key to the very foundation of agriculture as well as food and nutritional security for the world.

Realising the need to conserve crop biodiversity to meet the future challenges Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, a pioneer institution of the country in agricultural research, technology development and education has established a Gene Bank facility which is first of its kind among the South Asian Universities. Here at the Gene Bank we can store up to one lakh germ plasm entries including farmers' varieties, land races, wild species and cultivars, he said.

K. Palanisami, principal researcher and director, IWMI-TATA Water Policy Research Programme, Hyderabad in his presentation titled 'Water Resource Management and Tank Irrigation: Challenges and Opportunities' said that the experience of Tamil Nadu in the case of tank fed irrigation is instructive and it shows that technological interventions alone are not enough; sustainability requires attention both for management and to mobilise the resources to maintain the storage. M. P. Vasimalai, Executive Director, Dhan Foundation, Annette Houtekamer, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager, Achmea Foundation, Netherlands were present.

Call to share innovative farming methods

Information about innovative methods adopted by successful farmers should be shared for enabling all farmers to adopt the mechanism and succeed.

Hence farmers need to be brought into a network for knowledge sharing. This idea was suggested by a farmer during agriculture grievances day meeting held recently at the Collectorate.

Farmers said that all the six major departments relating to agriculture like horticulture, marketing, and engineering should be networked for the benefit of entire farming community and steps should be taken for frequent interaction with successful farmers.

Farmers also wanted the district administration to arrange loans through nationalised banks for carrying out alternative work as agriculture activities could not be carried out due to power cuts and non-availability of water. They also wanted banks to disperse loans for goat and hen rearing as they could earn their livelihood out of it.

Display boards

Officials from the Department of Agricultural Marketing said that seven digital display boards have been kept at regulated markets across the districts that would display the price of all agricultural products at various markets in the country.

Mettur water level

The water level in Mettur dam stood at 72.18 feet on Wednesday at 4 p.m. against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 9,881 cusecs and the discharge 14,707 cusecs.

'Plan samba according to weather, water, varieties'

Tamil Nadu Senior Agro Technologists Forum has advised farmers of Thanjavur and Tiruvarur districts to plan their samba cultivation according to weather forecasts, water availability , and age of the varieties.

In a press release issued here on Wednesday, the forum said that it receives a special 10-day weather forecast for Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, and Nagapattinam districts from Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System, Thailand.

As per the report dated October 2, 2012, there will be no rain up to October 6. From October 7-11, heavy rain is expected.

Accordingly, farmers of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, and Nagapattinam districts are advised to complete the Kuruvai harvest, wherever the crop is in harvesting stage, before October 6.

Further, direct sowing can be done in dry soil with dry seed. Where the river water is available, they can puddle the field, level it perfectly, and sow the sprouted seeds before October 6 .

Farmers have been advised to avoid sowing between October 7 and October 11 as the heavy rain may damage the sown seeds.

Nursery sowing can also be avoided during the period.

Through this about 250 mm of water and the cost of raising nursery can be saved. Medium duration paddy variety can be sown up to first week of October.

Henceforth long duration paddy variety should not be sown as it may not get water during the flowering period, it was said.

Short duration paddy varieties can be sown in the fourth week of October.

If sowing is done before this, the crop may get damaged due to heavy rain during flowering stage.

If it is sown after fourth week of October, there would not be any water during the flowering period.

So the sowing should be well planned, the forum said.

11.5 tonnes of PDS rice seized in one week

A total of 11.5 tonnes of rice meant for supply under the public distribution system (PDS) in Vellore district, which were being smuggled to neighbouring States were seized by teams of Revenue officials, including the District Supply Officer, Special Tahsildar, Taluk Supply Officers

and members of the Flying Squad following vehicle-checks carried out on the inter-State borders from September 22 to 28.

According to a release from P. Sankar, Collector of Vellore, the seized rice was handed over to the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation. He has warned of action under the Essential Commodities Act 1955 Section 6 (a) against those who were found to divert domestic liquefied petroleum gas cylinders for commercial use and as fuel for vehicles.

The Collector has appealed to the public who come across smuggling of PDS rice, kerosene and LPG cylinders to convey the information to cell number 9445000184.

Stall-fed goat farming a good option for farmers in Dakshina Kannada

A farmer in Bantwal taluk has been reaping the benefits for the past five years



RELIABLE: Stall-fed goats can be a good source of supplementary income for farmers.—

PHOTO: RAVIPRASAD KAMILA

How do goats help in farming particularly in a district where it is dominated by areca cultivation?

They do as their pellets had high potash needed by perennial crops such as arecanut, said Rama Kishore K. of Manchi in Bantwal taluk. Mr. Kishore has been carrying on stall-fed goat farming for the past five years.

Mr. Kishore, an agriculture graduate, told *The Hindu* that all perennial crops needed more potash. Goats produced pellet form of manure. They released nutrients to crops slowly. He had been applying goat manure for all crops since he began stall-fed farming. Stall-fed goat farming

had one more benefit. Matured male goats could be sold as there was demand for its meat. Now a two-year matured goat fetched Rs. 250 a kg in market. They were weighed live. A two-year old goat normally weighed 40 kg. Female goats should be retained for re-production. A female begins conceiving after six months and before a year.

Mr. Kishore said that if female goats were used for milking (for own consumption or sale), the growth of young ones would be slow.

He said that goats were relatively free from diseases. There was demand for healthy male goats to present them as “harake” (offering). It was called “kutta koduvudu” in Kannada. Such goats commanded high price.

Mr. Kishore said that a goat produced about a kilogram of pellets per day. For that it should be fed with 2.50 kg. of green grass and a quarter kilogram of cattle feed per day. He said that the goats in his farm produced about two lorry loads of manure worth Rs. 75,000 per annum. His farm now had about 30 goats.

Mr. Kishore, an organic farmer, simultaneously had cattle farming. He applied slurry produced from cattle dung to arecanut plantation and other crops.

“Input subsidy in farmers’ accounts by month-end”

Collector V. Durga Das has assured politicians that input subsidy funds granted by the government a few months ago will be deposited in the accounts of individual farmers by month-end.

At District Review Committee meeting held here on Wednesday, the Collector praised ADCC bank chairman Tarimela Kona Reddy for disbursing the input subsidy scheme completely.

Replying to a question put by Anantapur MP Ananta Venkatrami Reddy, he said that action would be initiated against bankers found to be adjusting the input subsidy amount against individual loan accounts.

Mr. Venkatrami Reddy appealed to the Revenue Minister to sanction 6000 units under the micro irrigation programme through APMIP (Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Project) so that 4,000 applications pending in the district seeking installation of drip and sprinkler irrigation systems could be cleared.

Micro irrigation

Responding to this, Revenue Minister N. Raghuvveera Reddy sought the intervention and support of district in-charge Minister Ganta Srinivasa Rao when the request was made to the Chief Minister to grant micro irrigation units to all those seeking them. The lone Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLA Payyavula Keshav and Palle Raghunatha Reddy raised voiced their concern over lack of drinking water at many places.

While Palle Raghunatha Reddy sought to know what was being done to solve the problem of fluoride hit areas in the district like the O.D.Chervu and Nallamada mandals, Mr. Keshav questioned why no departmental quality assessment was not done in the over Rs. 600-crore Sreeram Reddy drinking water scheme which aimed at supplying water to over 900 villages in the district.

The meeting was also attended by the Primary Education Minister S. Sailajanath besides the Additional Joint Collector Chennakesava Rao and the head so departments of all the government departments in the district.

Weather-based crop insurance scheme from this kharif

The Modified Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme (MWBCIS) will be implemented in Krishna and West Godavari districts from the current kharif season, according to S. Srinivasa Rao, Joint Director, Department of Planning. Mr. Rao, who was invited to train the personnel from different departments concerned on implementation of the modified insurance scheme, said an action plan was being drafted to take up crop cutting experiments with village as a unit in the two districts as part of assessing crop damages. He said the crops damaged on account of rains, hailstorms and the seed which failed to germinate due to adverse weather conditions would be covered under the insurance scheme. All the farmers, big and small, would be entitled for compensation under the scheme, he added.

Mr. Srinivasa Rao said the revenue villages with not less than 1,000 ha of crop area would be listed out for crop cutting experiments.

Nagarjuna, Deputy General Manager of the Agricultural Insurance Company, informed that it was decided to extend the insurance coverage to mango crop also, which was susceptible for heavy damages during rains and hales, in West Godavari district. He said Dwaraka Tirumala and Chintalapudi mandals which had the highest mango crop area in the district would be considered for crop cutting experiments. V.D.V. Krupadas, Joint Director, Department of Agriculture, said the modified insurance scheme would have a great relevance in the current kharif season as the paddy crop in both the Krishna and the West Godavari districts were reeling under drought and floods.

The personnel from the departments of Agriculture, Planning and Horticulture received training in undertaking crop cutting experiments.

GM crops more profitable, says study



Studies on the impact of GM crops at farm level in Africa, Asia and Latin America have shown that the gross incomes of farmers who adopted them were higher than those who had not cultivated them.

The studies were conducted by the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute, which is part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

'Side event'

Talking to *The Hindu* after participating in a 'Side Event' on 'Socioeconomic considerations and bio safety decision making: assessments, positions, processes and practical experiences', Jose Falck-Zepada, senior research fellow and leader, Policy Team PBS (Program for Bio-safety Systems) , said “ we have seen overall that GM crops were more profitable than conventional crops”.

Corn, maize, cotton, rapeseed, canola and soyabean were the main GM crops being grown in different countries.

However, there were large variations at crop and farmer levels because of the agronomic practices. For instance in a group of 10 farmers, one might lose by using the technology while others end up with profits.

Differences in farmers' education, access to credit and experience with technologies were the reasons for such variations.

He said the cultivation of GM crops had seen a deceleration in the United States and Canada as they reached a plateau.

However, they would continue to increase in the developing countries. In Argentina, 99 per cent of soyabean production consisted of herbicide-tolerant GM crop. In all, GM crops were being grown in 26 countries. Evaluation was on for drought-tolerant sugarcane in Brazil and water-efficient maize for introduction in Africa.

Commercially approved

He said the water-efficient maize was commercially approved in the United States and it offers a potential solution for food security.

According to Samuel E. Timpo, senior program officer, Socioeconomics Communications, African Union- NEPAD/ African Bio safety Network of Expertise (ABNE), GM crops were being cultivated in three of the 54 African countries— South Africa, Burkina Faso and Egypt. In many other countries, field trials were on.

He said most studies showed that farmers were benefiting from GM technology. Similar views were echoed by Lucia Helena Oliveira de Souza, vice-president, Brazilian Bio-safety Association. She said that 39 per cent of cotton, 50-80 per cent of corn and 36 per cent of soyabean were cultivated in Brazil through GM technology. She said GM crops were increasing because farmers were benefiting from it. She said Brazil was the second largest producer of GM crops and the GM technology was introduced after a vigorous risk assessment.

Red Rice Mela from October 12 to 14

The Deccan Organic Producer Company will organise a 'red rice mela' at Exhibition Grounds from October 12 to 14 to showcase nutritive and medicinal values of red rice.

Being organised as part of the 'Save Rice' campaign and Sahaja Aharam (natural food), the event will bring together over a dozen organic rice saver groups and feature display and sale of different varieties of rice and rice-based value added products. The mela is aimed at creating awareness among people about the rice varieties grown without chemicals and promote ecological friendly agriculture.

According to Deccan Organic representative, Sitaram Komaragiri, red rice meets many of the requirements prescribed for good and healthy food and it was the only cereal eaten as a whole grain. More than 200 types of nutrient-rich grains would be on display at the mela for health conscious consumers looking for unpolished rice, especially traditional varieties.

The exhibition was aimed at expanding market for traditional rice varieties and enhancing marketing competitiveness among farmers engaged in their cultivation, he added.

Kisan Sabha sathyagraha on October 5

The State-wide strike of coconut farmers will have its presence felt in the district with the Kisan Sabha members holding a sathyagraha in front of the Collectorate on October 5.

The State-wide protest will have the farmers march to the Secretariat and stage a sathyagraha there. A host of demands are being raised by the farmers, including right to coconut farmers to produce 'Neera' and the procurement price of copra be fixed at Rs.7,000 per quintal.

The sathyagraha will be inaugurated by Communist Party of India district secretary C. Raveendran. The other demands of the coconut farmers are hike in the procurement price of unshelled coconut to Rs.2,500, provision of subsidy to coconut oil as is provided for palm oil, exemption of kera products from tax, and initiation of measures for sale of coconut products in foreign markets.

Paddy fields inundated in Krishna

Surplus water being released downstream Prakasam Barrage



Problem of plenty: Farmers taking a look at their inundated paddy crop near G. Konduru of Krishna district on Wednesday.

Krishna Delta farmers who were, till recently, worried about getting enough water to irrigate their paddy are today having an excess dose.

About 10,000 hectares of paddy standing in the fields in several delta mandals has been inundated by the recent downpour.

The Irrigation authorities are releasing a surplus of about 48,000 cusecs downstream Prakasam Barrage.

Deputy Director of Agriculture N.Ch. Balu Naik , on Wednesday, told *The Hindu* that paddy in 10,000 hectares in the delta mandals of Gudooru, Pamarru, Gudlavaluru, Movva, Challapalli and Ghantasala have been inundated.

Surprisingly cotton and groundnut which are usually cultivated in upland areas with better drain have also been inundated in 90 and 100 hectares respectively.

Mr. Naik said the choking of drains by weed like Tape Grass and water hyacinth caused water-logging and inundation.

The crop is bound to be damaged if the rain continued. With no water being released from Nagarjunasagar Reservoir the farmers in Krishna district were forced to depend on rainfall.

The rain god however was partial to some and neglected some others.

While paddy was planned in 3.49 lakh hectares this kharif transplantation could not been taken up in 11,000 hectares in Koduru, Nagayalanka, Avanigadda and Nandiwada mandals.

This has turned out to be a boon for Koduru and Avanigadda farmers who received rainfall of 120 mm and 131.6 mm over the weekend.

While there seems to be a surplus of water in the Krishna River there is no water for farmers in the tail-end of the canal network.

Downpour in Krishna and Khammam districts has sent several rivulets into spate increasing the inflow to the Prakasam Barrage tail-pond.

The Vijayawada Irrigation Circle authorities, on Wednesday, had to lift 66 Crest Gates of the barrage by one foot and release 47,850 cusecs downstream to maintain the water level at the mandatory 12 feet.

Unfortunately the surplus water is not being released into the canals for the benefit of tail-end farmers because no water should be released into the canals on days the rainfall is high.

The authorities released only 1,450 cusecs in Krishna Eastern Main Canal.

Hindustan Times

TODAY FARM NEWS

04.10.2012 A.M

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Thursday, Oct 4

Max Min

33.2° | 25.5°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:58

Sunset: 05:56

Barometer: 1009

Tomorrow's Forecast



Sunny

Friday, Oct 5

Max Min

33° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday Oct 6	Sunday Oct 7	Monday Oct 8	Tuesday Oct 9	Wednesday Oct 10
30° 26° Rainy	33° 24° Sunny	33° 24° Sunny	30° 26° Rainy	32° 26° Rainy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 61

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:15

Sunset: 18:03

Barometer: 1005

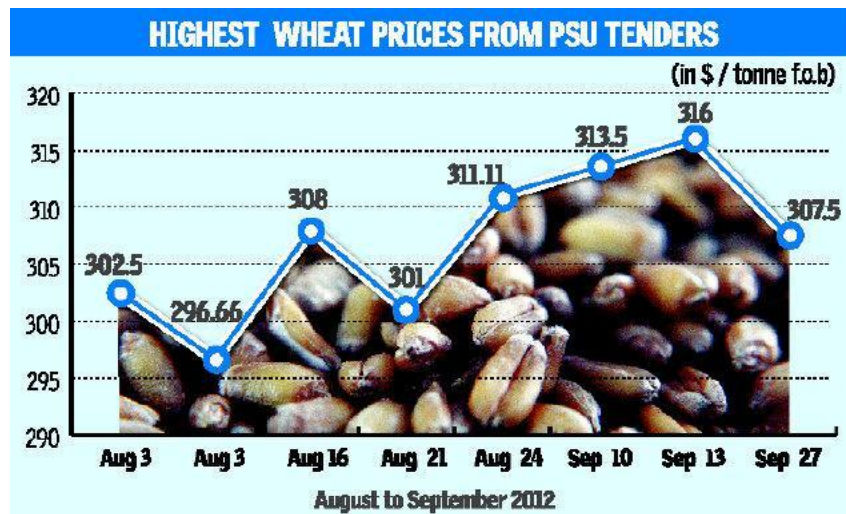


THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

03.10.2012 P.M

'G-to-G' wheat export to Iran not a great idea



For the last nine months, India and Iran have been exchanging official delegations for export of Indian wheat, while not a single gram has been shipped out.

The Prime Minister-led delegation, during its recent visit to Tehran for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference, also interacted with the Iranian side on this subject.

Pursuant to the discussions at the highest level, India is dispatching another official team soon to Tehran for further "discussions" so that concerns for facilitating a Government to Government (G-to-G) deal may be understood.

Meanwhile, Iran's state grains agency, GTC (Government Trading Corporation), has discreetly contracted approximately one million tonnes of wheat of EU/Romania/Australia origin through MNCs/private trade at undisclosed prices in the second half of September 2012.

US sanctions are not applicable to food items on humanitarian grounds. This portends that Iranians do not expect any rapid developments regarding purchase of Indian wheat. (Iran may have already contracted about 4.5-5 million tonnes between January and September 2012, which is more than their normal import appetite.) A gap of 280 per cent between the official and market exchange rate — 1\$=12250 Iranian Rials vs market rate 1\$=34500 Rials as on October 1, 2012 — reflects severe scarcity of foreign exchange reserves.

India's Food Minister K.V. Thomas recently mentioned a possibility of two or three million tonnes of wheat export on a "long-term basis", while Iranians indicated some relaxation in zero tolerance to "Karnal bunt"— an infectious fungus — which is virtually non-existent in Indian wheat, but was an inhibiting factor in acceptance of Indian quality. In the highly volatile commodity markets, there cannot be any long-term binding agreements, and even if they are entered into, they snap sooner than later.

PITFALLS

G-to-G deals too, invariably meet a similar fate with negative publicity. It will be prudent to start and price smaller transactions of 200,000-300,000 tonnes of wheat on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

The timing of the conclusion of the prospective deal remains uncertain. The procedural and contractual architecture are yet to be formalised by two sides. The resolution of differences is sought through bureaucratic intervention, rather than trading channels.

Proclaiming an official intent to export enormous volumes of Indian wheat to any country can be highly counterproductive, commercially and economically. The proposed deal can be frustrated by established competing origins.

It lends incorrect strength to the idea of Indian wheat lacking bulk importers. The whispers in the international trading community are that India does not know how to export wheat.

It also delineates India's desperation to offset "rupee reserves" accumulated under "Indo-Iran rupee agreement". The operation of this agreement needs to be smoothed to prevent delayed payments to Indian exporters.

DEALING WITH IRAN

The “long-term” fallout of the rupee payment arrangement could be that the Gulf nation might seek use of its huge credit balance, if not set off against exports, for purchasing assets in our domestic market that may be awkward for the Indian side to agree.

Iran has demonstrated that it can commercially access wheat from any part of the world, including US, on its terms and conditions, and may require India to fall in line.

Indian PSUs are apparently not experienced with the risk matrix of GTC. Major deviations between GTC requirements and Indian PSUs’ capabilities are:

GTC undertakes business on a negotiated basis on its preferred timings. Prices are not made public.

Iran is not amenable to bid against tenders of PSUs. A special policy framework for Iran will have to be approved.

Shipments are required on delivered basis, and not “fob” terms. Indian PSUs have rarely done export business on cost plus freight (CFR) on their account.

Iranian shipping terms are tough. Business can be abandoned or renegotiated by citing non-adherence to ‘shipping conditions’. This can happen when the market reverses — that is world prices drop lower than contracted values. Will GTC agree to fob shipments?

The international practice is to accept cargo with “quality and quantity” final at load port. GTC needs “quality” final at “destination” port to be certified by their official agencies. The risk scenario is — cargo can be rejected on arrival; quality claims can be raised; payment may be delayed till settlement is reached. “Risk free” business, without any loss to PSU — defined under audit and vigilance guidelines may not be feasible.

Unless agreed otherwise, Iranian payments will be authorised after inspection at destination. PSUs will not be able to remit proceeds to the FCI/Government for a much longer period than what is currently possible, wherein proceeds of LC are realised by “payment on sight”. Loss of interest may have to be factored in by the Government.

GTC calls for resolution of disputes as per Iranian law, and not even as per Gafta (Grain and Feed Trade Association London) rules, while Indian PSUs require arbitration as per the “Indian Arbitration Act”. Some middle path has to be found for this crucial issue.

International wheat prices are around \$345-350 fob, while Indian values are \$302-\$316 fob. A pricing formula can be worked out with Iran, but realisation of payments in the light of the above divergence will be a concern. A single dispute can stall/terminate future dealings.

GTC is accustomed to a one-to-one relationship with the world’s private traders/MNCs. Modifying their structure to suit Indian G-to-G requirements may be difficult. Any rigid positioning by Iran can delay or deny India’s wheat export.

STOCK CLEARANCE

If the Government is keen to push out two or three million tonnes wheat on a long-term basis, it might as well seek participation of private trade and give them the option of procuring wheat from FCI either at port warehouses or in places such as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, by prior payments at pre-determined rupee rates.

Private trade can deal freely with GTC and the Iranian private sector. Private to Government (P to G) or Private to Private (P to P) affiliations can then be developed by both sides.

It is up to Indian traders to take a call on GTC or Iranian private trade, while keeping FCI/ Government insulated from all risks.

This alternative also merits serious consideration.

ADB cuts India growth forecast for this fiscal to 5.6%



The Asian Development Bank has lowered India's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 5.6 per cent, citing falling global demand and impact of delayed monsoon on agricultural production.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has lowered India's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 5.6 per cent, from 7 per cent projected earlier, citing falling global demand and impact of delayed monsoon on agricultural production.

India, however, can reverse the trend of falling growth by promoting economic reforms and taking steps to improve investment climate, said the ADB's Asian Development Outlook 2012 Update.

For the Asian region as a whole, the ADB Update expects the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate to drop to 6.1 per cent in 2012 from 7.2 per cent in 2011. Growth rate for the region has been projected at 6.7 per cent in 2013.

"The deceleration of the region's two giants — the People's Republic of China and India — in tandem with the global slowdown, is tempering earlier optimism," ADB said.

As for India, it said that growth rate will decelerate to from 6.5 per cent in 2011-12 to 5.6 per cent in the current fiscal. ADB had earlier projected the country's growth rate at 7 per cent for 2012-13.

The growth rate for 2013-14, according to the ADB Update, has now been estimated at 6.7 per cent, down from 7.5 per cent projected earlier.

Falling global demand and a delayed monsoon curtailing agricultural growth have exacerbated India's recent economic slowdown, and have led to reduced growth forecasts by the ADB for fiscal years 2012 and 2013, it said.

"India can start reversing this trend by improving its investment climate and expediting reforms," ADB Chief Economist Changyong Rhee said.

The delayed monsoon and weaknesses in the agricultural supply chains, coupled with rising costs of fertilisers and irrigation, are likely to result in subdued farm growth and sustain pressure on food prices.

Moreover, industrial output is expected to remain subdued in 2012-13, while weak demand from industrialised countries continues to take its toll on exports.

Rhee further noted: “Tight monetary policy to counter persistently high inflation and a high deficit leave little room for policy to stimulate growth. However, restoring investor confidence can help jump-start critical infrastructure projects that could get the economy moving.”

In its mid-quarter monetary policy review last month, RBI had kept the lending rate (repo rate) unchanged in view of high inflation but reduced the Cash Reserve Ratio — the portion of deposits that banks keep with the RBI.

“The Government has made some headway in addressing these challenges recently,” ADB said, adding, “these steps have boosted business sentiment and raised hopes for further policy actions”.

The Government has recently taken a number of reform initiatives like opening the multi-brand retail sector to FDI, hiking diesel prices by over Rs 5 a litre, capping the number of subsidised LPG cylinders to six per family a year, allowing foreign carriers to pick up stake in domestic airlines and liberalising FDI rules for broadcasting sector.

“FDI in retail will result in substantial investment in a modern agricultural supply chain that will reduce huge food losses from farm to market, helping farmers and consumers,” ADB said.

As regards to developing Asia, ADB has significantly scaled back 2012 and 2013 growth forecasts saying that “after years of rapid growth, the region must brace for a prolonged period of moderate expansion amidst an ongoing slump in global demand”.

Palm oil market in a tizzy as prices plunge



It is chaos that prevails in the global vegetable oils market after crude palm oil prices have plunged by a third in the last one week.

What is leading to the situation is talk of Indian importers renegotiating deals with sellers in Malaysia and Singapore.

According to agency reports, at least two lakh tonnes of crude palm oil were being renegotiated by Indian buyers but traders and industry officials here denied any such renegotiation.

“Maybe, the fact that there is no renegotiation could have lifted palm oil on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives exchange towards close,” said a broker from Mumbai.

Crude palm oil slumped to 2,330 Malaysia ringgit (MYR) in the morning before rising 4.5 per cent to 2,351 MYR (\$769 or Rs 40,200) a tonne.

In the domestic market, palm oil was quoted by refiners at Rs 498 for 10 kg and at Rs 503 on the Bombay Commodity Exchange. This is against Rs 568 quoted 10 days ago.

“Prices have dropped sharply that traders are reluctant to buy now. However, they are ready to make forward purchases,” said a trading source in Chennai.

In Mumbai, things are the other way around. “Traders are ready to take ready delivery but are not prepared to make forward purchases,” said the broker. “It is a situation similar to the one we saw in 2008 when prices crashed and many traders burnt their fingers,” said Sushi Goenka, former chairman of the Solvent Extractors Association of India.

The situation then helped get rid of fly-by-night traders.

Palm oil prices looked bullish until two months ago what with Indian monsoon playing truant and the US soya being affected by drought. “Prices touched 3,650 MYR in April and it was expected to run up to 4,000 MYR. Things have not turned that way,” said the Chennai source.

Though prices pared losses on Wednesday, the short-term outlook is bleak for the vegetable oils market.

“Crude palm oil on the MCX is quoted at Rs 415.60 for 10 kg for delivery in December.

“RBD palmolein, on the other hand, is quoting over Rs 500. Usually, the difference between these two is Rs 50. This means, there is further scope for prices to drop,” said the Chennai source.

“The closure of Chinese markets for a national holiday this week does not also augur well,” the source said.

Making things look more bearish are factors such as palm oil stocks being reported at 2.3 million tonnes for September and speedy harvest of soyabean in the US.

On Wednesday, soyabean on the Chicago Board of Trade fell for the third straight session to \$15.20-3/4 a bushel. This is nearly \$3 below its record high of \$17.94-3/4 recorded on September 4. “If at all any renegotiation is taking place, it could be by some Delhi traders who do trade on high seas. But they are few and far in between,” said a southern refiner.

The Mumbai broker said that buyers were taking delivery of palm oil despite facing loss.

According to sources, some of the traders could be taking a hit of Rs 1 lakh for each container load they would be taking delivery of.

In Chennai, a consignment of 6,000 tonnes of crude palm oil has landed with a third-party letter of intent.

With no takers, it has headed to a warehouse in the city, said a trade source. A trade analyst in Chennai said that crude palm oil could head towards 1,500 MYR given the current situation of production glut and slowdown in economy.

Decision on pulses imports likely today

The Government is likely to allow import of one million tonne (mt) of pulses to meet shortfall in domestic supplies. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs is expected to decide on pulses imports on Thursday. It is also expected to decide on increasing the subsidy from Rs 10 a kg to Rs 15 on imported pulses to be distributed through the PDS outlets. The proposed imports will help meet the shortfall in domestic supplies as scanty monsoons has hurt the kharif production. According to the first advance estimates, pulses output is expected to decline to 5.26 mt against 6.16 mt last year.

Marginal drop in Coonoor tea volume

A volume of 13.03 lakh kg has been catalogued for Sale No: 40 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions to be held on Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of brokers' listing.

It is about 41,000 kg less than last week's offer and 43,000 kg less than the offer this time last year.

Of the 13.03 lakh kg on offer, 9.44 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 3.59 lakh kg to the dust grades. As much as 12.49 lakh kg belongs to CTC and only 0.54 lakh kg, orthodox variety.

In the leaf counter, only 0.29 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 9.15 lakh kg, CTC. Among dusts, only 0.25 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 3.34 lakh kg, CTC.

The substantial portion of this volume comprises fresh teas totalling 11.35 lakh kg. About 1.68 lakh kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions.

Last two weeks, about 30 per cent of the offer remained unsold due to weak export and domestic demand. "This week, exports to Iran may not take place in the context of Iran rial hitting all-time low against the dollar as sanctions by the US and European countries are taking a toll.

"Commodities are unavailable there despite high retail prices. There is no guarantee of our getting money, if we export tea to Iran now", an exporter told *Business Line*.

Domestic demand may pick up if tea movement from Assam is hampered due to floods in Brahmaputra, a trader said.

NBA to take action against Bt Brinjal biopiracy



The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) is all set to file the country's first ever bio-piracy criminal case against companies involved in developing BT Brinjal by using its local variety, a top official said today.

The entities including Maharashtra Hybrid Corporation (Mahyco), which are involved in developing the BT Brinjal, have used brinjal germplasm for transformation, said Balakrishna Pisupati, Chairman, NBA.

"The company (Mahyco) has used local variety of brinjal to develop BT Brinjal. We are in the advanced stage of filing a case against companies involved in that. As per the Act, it is a criminal case. It is a cognisable offence," he said on the sidelines of United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity here.

Pisupati said the intention of the companies in effecting transformation using NBA's germplasm was not for the sake of research but for obvious "commercial intent".

Any violation of the Biodiversity Act is a non-bailable offence and attracts punishment, he said.

The NBA encourages using India's biological resources within the framework of laws, Pisupati said, adding, "Our intention is not to chase people but to create awareness that they are doing wrong."

Replying to a query, he said under the NBA as many as 14 States have formally notified the list of endangered species whereas some states are in advanced stage of notifying the same in a few months.

"We are not only looking at states list. We are also working with organisations such as Botanical Survey of India and Zoological Survey of India to prepare the list and to monitor it on long term basis," the NBA chairman said.

According to him the list will be finalised in a year and the same will be periodically monitored.

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), established under India's Biological Diversity Act (2002), is a statutory, autonomous body overseeing conservation, sustainable use of biological resources and sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources on behalf of the union government.

Coconut oil prices hit new low due to weak sentiment in edible oil market



The decision of a leading copra buyer to drop buying price from the open market has created panic in the coconut oil market this week.

Prakash B. Rao, President, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), told *Business Line* that the corporate firm, who is an aggressive copra buyer from the open market, has dropped the buying price at Rs 2 per kg.

The company has lowered its procurement price at Rs 41.50 per kg against Rs 43.50 per kg last week and this has impacted the market sentiments, he said.

According to Rao, the coconut oil market has further crashed to a new low due to weak sentiment in overall edible oils.

In Tamil Nadu, coconut oil prices touched a new low of Rs 51.50 per kg (Rs 55) and copra fell to Rs 3,700 per quintal (Rs 3,750).

Prices in Kerala market too have dropped to Rs 57 per kg (Rs 59) and copra prices to Rs 3,900 per quintal (Rs 4,000).

Sentiments for the coming days are reported to be weaker. Major corporates have reduced their intake on anticipation of a further drop in prices, he added.

Edible oils are also ruling at a two-year low on account of better production in Malaysian markets. At present, palm oil prices are ruling at Rs 54 pr kg (Rs 57), while palm kernel oil is trading at Rs 52 per kg (Rs 54).

P.G.K.Koshy, President, COMA, said that shifting from coconut oil to other less costlier edible oils by soap manufacturing companies has resulted in declining prices of coconut oil.

Besides, the piling up of stocks with major importers of edible oils in the country has also created less demand for coconut oil. Coconut oil, he said, has now become the cheapest among edible oils in India.

Bharat N. Khona, former Board Member, COMA, said that market is sliding day by day due to weak sentiments.

Low prices of other edible oils have also impacted the coconut oil market. Corporates and upcountry buyers are watching the situation and he hopes that they may enter once the market stabilises.

India's edible oil import may touch 10 mt by month-end'



India's edible oil imports are likely to touch the 10 million tonnes (mt) mark in marketing year (MY) 2011-12, which runs from November 2011 to October 2012.

In MY 2010-11, India imported 8.37 mt, Raju Choksi, Vice-President (Agro-Commodities), Anil Nutrients Ltd, told Business Line here on Wednesday.

Poor crop output this year due to deficient rainfall in key growing areas is likely to push the imports by around 20%. Edible oil imports during the 10 month period from November 2011 to August 2012 rose by 20.7% to 7.98 mt, he said, citing the data from Solvent Extractors Association.

Most of the rise in imports has come from RBD palmolein, sunflower oil and soybean oil, which is likely to continue. While India imported 818,640 mt in the November 2010-August 2011 period, it has already imported 1,404,640 mt of RBD palmolein in the November 2011-August 2012 period. Similarly, 969,181 mt of sunflower oil (680,487 mt) and 927,970 mt of soybean oil (699,367 mt) have been imported by August-end in MY 2011-12 this year.

“India’s edible oil consumption is growing at a far more rapid pace than its production. Despite government’s incentives, the growers are not going for oilseeds crop as other cash crops are giving them better returns. Growers are also skeptical about oilseeds due to increased uncertainty about weather conditions,” said Raju Choksi.

Higher demand compared to production and high prices is leading to a shift in consumption of cheaper oils, Raju Choksi said. “This year, the production is likely to be even lower due to deficient monsoon. So

marketing year 2012-13 is likely to see even higher imports,” he added.

Gujarat, a leading groundnut oil producer, is likely to lose over 90% of groundnut crop this Kharif season due to late monsoon and prolonged dry spell, according to Samir Shah, President, Saurashtra Oil Millers’ Association (SOMA).

Acreage-wise, the area under groundnut decreased by 25% to 11.87 lakh hectare (ha) this year, as against 14.27 lakh ha in 2011.

Overall, only 68% of the normal acreage of oilseeds has been cultivated this year in the state.

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Domestic demand may pick up if tea movement from Assam is hampered due to floods in Brahmaputra, a trader said.

Pepper goes up on buying support



The pepper market moved up on good buying support on Wednesday as was evident from the rise in open interest. Consequently, all the active contracts ended marginally higher.

More and more people are depositing in the exchange platform and, as a result, the stock position has increased to 3,613 tonnes as on October 3.

Meanwhile, those who are not able to reprocess and re-deposit their stocks which are maturing on October 5 have opted for selling at Rs10 below October delivery price. These stocks were covered by some new generation processors and that in turn has raised the open interest in Nov and Dec apart from raising the prices, market sources told *Business Line*.

Domestic demand from upcountry was not forthcoming as it is being met by supplies from Rajasthan at Rs 400-405 a kg, they said.

October contract on the NCDEX increased by Rs 65 to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 43,500 a quintal. November and December went up by Rs 230 and 175 respectively to Rs 43,350 and 42,450 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover increased by 1,192 tonnes to 2,304 tonnes. Total open interest increased by 430 tonnes to 8,846 tonnes showing good additional buying and switching over.

October open interest increased by 294 tonnes to 5,303 tonnes while that of November and December went up by 513 tonnes and 124 tonnes respectively to 2,597 tonnes and 656 tonnes.

Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs40,000 (ungarbled) and Rs41,500 (garbled) a quintal in tandem with the futures market trend.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$8,600 a tonne (c&f) and remained totally out priced, they said.

Wheat to be sown on 29.9 million hectares this yr

Sowing of wheat, the main rabi crop, is expected to begin from the current month-end and the total acreage is likely to be at last year's level of 29.9 million hectares, according to a Government research body.

"There may not be either increase or decline in wheat sowing this year. I think, it would be at last year's level of 29.9 million hectare," the Karnal-based Directorate of Wheat Research, Project Director, Indu Sharma, told PTI.

Wheat acreage is likely to be steady as there are less chances of crop diversification, she said.

Sowing of wheat in the rain-fed regions, where late rain has recharged the soil profile, is expected to be on time from October-end, she added.

For early sowing for central India on residual moisture, farmers are advised to sow wheat varieties, especially Pusabahar, Malvaratna, Amrita, Harshita, Meghdoot, Amar and Swapnil, an official in the Agriculture Ministry said.

Farmers are also encouraged to use yellow-rust resistant varieties of wheat, especially GW 322, PBW 502 and DBW 16 among others, to save crop yields, he said.

The Government has kept a target of 86 million tonnes of wheat in the 2012-13 rabi season. Last year, the country had harvested a record 93.90 million tonnes due to good rains.

The monsoon witnessed a sluggish start this season with a three-day delay in onset. June and July saw 28 per cent and 13 per cent deficient rains respectively, but September ended with 11 per cent excess rains.

The country as a whole received seven per cent less rains. The monsoon is crucial for agriculture in the country as it irrigates nearly 60 per cent of the cultivable land.

FICCI to hold meet on technology and farm efficiency

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) will hold the second edition of Food 360° here on November 5 and 6.

This edition would focus on how technology could enhance efficiencies in agriculture.

The plenary sessions would deal with technology for improving farm incomes, mechanisation of small holdings and technology for supply chain management, according to S. Sivakumar, group head of the agri business division of ITC Ltd.

J.A. Chowdary, the Chair of Food 360°, said the meet would focus on technologies that are relevant and useful for farmers.

Commodity price risk management meet on Friday

A stakeholder awareness and education seminar on agri-business and commodities price risk management will be held at 5 p.m. on Friday at S.S. Patil Auditorium, HKCCI Building, Super market, Gulbarga.

The seminar is organised by *The Hindu Business Line* jointly with commodity futures market regulator – Forward Markets Commission – under the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs and the country's largest agri-commodity futures exchange, the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX). The seminar will seek to bring together hedgers and prospective participants in the agricultural commodity markets with a view to creating awareness about price risk management.

Participants would include stakeholders such as producers, processors, trading houses, importers, exporters and others in the physical market who need to manage commodity price risks arising out of volatile market conditions.

The event is supported by chambers of commerce. B.T. Pujari, Dean (Agriculture), University of Agricultural Sciences – Raichur, will be the chief guest. Umakanth B. Nigudgi, President, Hyderabad Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and K. Shiva Shanmugam, President, Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry, will speak on the occasion.

Experts will make presentations on various topics. These include “Commodities as critical driver of India's economic growth” by G. Chandrashekar of *The Hindu Business Line*; and “Benefits of commodity futures trading and exchange perspective and price risk management” by Deepak

Sayana, Deputy Manager, NCDEX. On behalf of the event's banking partner State Bank of Mysore, K. Lakshmisha, General Manager, will speak on "Role of banks in agriculture".

There will be open house discussion and registration is a must. Contact: Ravikumar on 97310 75700.

Rubber futures stretch gain

Physical rubber prices were not available owing to a hartal announced by the traders and industrialists in the State. But according to Rubber Board, sheet rubber improved to Rs 195.50 (195) a kg at Kottayam and Kochi.

In futures, the October contracts increased to Rs 196.30 (193.91), November to Rs 193.19 (189.93), December to Rs 191.50 (189.03) and January to Rs 191.65 (189.49), while the February series dropped to Rs 192.25 (195.15) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs 177.14 (174.01) a kg at Bangkok. The October futures firmed up to ¥266.2 (Rs 177.62) from ¥265 a kg during the day session, but then finished unchanged in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

04.10.2012 A.M

Rubber Board to come out with data bank for tappers



The Rubber Board is preparing a data bank of tappers in Kerala. This is the first-ever attempt to prepare such a data base of labourers in the country.

Sheela Thomas, chairman, Rubber Board, inaugurated the programme on Monday. The data bank aims at a more active involvement of these tappers in the training programmes and

labour welfare schemes of the board, a release stated.

Rubber is planted in nearly 550,000 hectares in Kerala. It is estimated that out of this more than 400,000 hectares are in the yielding phase. Nearly 250,000 tappers are engaged in these plantations.

Tappers can register their names and details in the data bank through the Rubber Producers' Societies (RPS) and field stations of the board. It is expected that the data collection would be completed within one year. This is a collaborative programme of the Rubber Production Department of the Rubber Board and the Economic Research Division of the Rubber Research Institute of India.

The rubber sector in Kerala is facing acute labour shortage. To address this issue, the board is implementing several programmes. Tappers' training schools offers free training as well as daily stipend to persons who are desirous of undergoing training among others, the release added.

Agri commodities fall on hopes of bumper crop

Agricultural commodities harvested in winter, including soybean and castor seed, hit the lower circuit in futures trade on commodity exchanges, on hopes of a bumper crop this season and cues from global markets. On the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), both



soybean and castor seed contracts for delivery in October fell four per cent each to Rs 2,951 a quintal and Rs 3,284 a quintal, respectively.

Potato contracts for delivery in October on the Multi Commodity

Exchange (MCX) fell four per cent to Rs 903.50 a quintal. Harvesting of

summer sown crop has begun, with estimates of a record output,

especially for the soybean crop, the largest in the oilseed basket. The revival in the monsoon

rains in early August raised hopes of a better kharif crop, compared to previous estimates.

FALLING STREAK (Rs/quintal)

Commodity	Delivery month	Closing price	Change (%)
Soybean	October	2,951	(-)4
Pepper	February	38,330	(-)4
Castor seed	October	3284	(-)4
Potato*	October	903.5	(-)4
Crude palm oil*@	October	407.2	(-)4
Cardamom*#	October	945.9	(-)4

Source : NCDEX, * MCX, @ price per 10 kg, # price per kg

“A sharp revival in the monsoon in August has not only favoured kharif crop output, but also raised prospects of rabi sowing. Thus, prices of many agricultural commodities have plunged significantly from their record high levels in July. With harvesting gaining pace in the domestic, as well as global markets, primarily for oilseeds, the entire edible oil pack has come under the grip of bears,” said Naveen Mathur, associate director, Angel Broking.

Despite delay in sowing, the rise in yield is expected to increase this year’s soybean output eight per cent. Soybean production is estimated at an all-time high of 12.68 million tonnes (mt) this kharif harvesting season, compared with 11.65 mt in the previous year.

“The new season crop has started hitting the market...India is heading for a record soybean crop this season, despite delay in planting in the beginning of the sowing season. Scattered rainfalls, along with a recovery later in the season, helped farmers recover early loss in acreage,” said Rajesh Agarwal, Soybean Processors Association of India spokesperson.

While the benchmark Dhaanya agri index on NCDEX recorded a fall of 0.45 per cent, the MCX agri index, the MCXAGRI, fell 2.82 per cent to settle at 2,109.45 in early evening trade.

Far-month contracts, too, the lower circuit. This meant agricultural commodities in India were heading for a severe downward move, said an analyst.

For castor seed, potato and other crops, the revival in monsoon rains aided a steady recovery in crop acreage. With a positive yield sentiment, the overall output of the kharif sowing crops is estimated to be higher than earlier estimates.

Mathur said higher output estimates for domestic soybean, the record pace of soybean harvesting in the US and higher stocks of Malaysian palm oil exerted pressure on prices.

Indranil Sen Gupta, India Economist of DSP Merrill Lynch (India) foresees a drastic decline in rural farm income this year, owing to the deficient and delayed rainfall. “It is not as if rural discretionary spending will collapse. Still, the push from rural India that drove consumption is fading away for now.” He estimates kharif farm income to fall to 5.5 per cent this year from 12.4 per cent in 2011 and 37.7 per cent in 2010, owing to rainfall deficiency.

Rain deficit shrinks in Guj, farmers saved by a whisker



Monsoon revival during September has made Gujarat farmers hopeful of a fairly good kharif season. This is despite a 30 per cent rainfall deficit this year. The September rain has helped key crops, including groundnut, cotton, castor and cereals, for which sowing had improved last month.

According to the state agriculture department, kharif sowing in Gujarat this year was 91 per cent of the normal, with pulses

suffering the most due to erratic monsoon. Sowing of pulses had declined 31 per cent from normal.

In some parts, delayed monsoon had benefited sowing of crops like guar, cotton, cereals and oilseeds. But, pulses sowing this kharif season was majorly hit. Pulses production will fall and there will be price pressure amid increased dependence on imports,” said Jagdeep Grewal, vice president - commodity at Kunvarji Group in Ahmedabad.

According to him, overall sowing has improved due to good rainfall in key growing regions of the state during September. However, groundnut, cotton and guar suffered some losses due to the delay. “Guar sowing has improved this year, but monsoon in the second half of September has hampered the crop prospects as it requires dry conditions during this period. Similarly, there will be an impact on cotton output, too,” said Grewal.

SAVING THE SHOW

Sowing area of crops in Gujarat during the kharif season (in million hectares)

Crop	Normal Area	Sowing in kharif '12	% of normal
Cereal	1.70	1.40	82
Pulses	0.63	0.43	69
Oilseeds	2.50	2.16	86
Cotton	2.74	2.47	90
Guarseed	0.10	0.20	169
Total	8.80	8.00	91

The state received 453 mm rainfall in the period from June 1 to September 26, showing 30 per cent lower rain compared to the normal 648 mm, the data provided by the local met office showed.

According to the latest data provided by the Gujarat agriculture department, sowing of cereals declined 18 per cent, at close to 1.4 million hectares (ha) against the normal area of 1.7 million

ha. Similarly, area under oilseeds has dropped by about 14 per cent at about 2.16 million ha, from the normal sowing of 2.5 million ha.

The area under cotton has suffered a loss of about 10 per cent at 2.47 million ha against the normal of 2.74 million ha. However, pulses sowing has suffered the most with a drop of about 31 per cent at 428,700 ha this kharif season against the normal 624,500 ha. Overall sowing in the state stood at about eight million ha against the normal 8.8 million ha.

“Kharif pulses production may fall by at least 20 per cent in Gujarat. But overall farm production will meet the previous numbers. There will not be much impact on oilseeds production as well,” said a market source. However, the government has not come up with estimates on overall kharif production.

According to trader sources, cotton prices may firm up in the next year as sowing has dropped and erratic monsoon conditions would also hamper yield, which is likely to remain around 620 kg per ha.

“We expect cotton output in Gujarat to remain in the range of nine million bales, which is about 25 per cent down from previous year’s production of about 12 million bales. This will firm up the prices of the commodity,” said Arun Dalal, a cotton trader and exporter based in Ahmedabad.

Interestingly, there is a sharp increase in the sowing of castor and guarseed this kharif season. Castor sowing has increased by 27 per cent, while the area under guarseed has increased by 69 per cent from the normal 140,900 ha to about 237,500 ha this season.

“More and more farmers have turned to guar sowing as it yielded good returns in the past. But delay in monsoon has adversely affected the crop prospects and we would see lesser production despite sowing being high,” said Grewal.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

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Farmers' prosperity key to growth: Chief minister Nitish Kumar

PATNA: Chief minister [Nitish Kumar](#) has said Bihar's progress would be possible mainly by increasing the income of farmers as 89% people live in villages and 76% depend on agriculture.

Speaking at the function held to formally release the state's second agriculture road map here, the CM said the road map has been drafted after consulting farmers and agriculture experts and this would usher in a rainbow revolution in Bihar. "Our previous (agri) road map yielded good results and helped increase production. Our farmers created world record in production of rice," he said and added that under the new road map all villages having a population of 250 would be connected with road, there would be dedicated power feeder for irrigation, new survey of land settlement would be done in three years and 'chakbandi' would be completed in five years.

He pointed out that altogether 18 departments have been involved in preparing the road map and an estimated Rs 1.50 lakh crore would be spent through the state's own resources, central assistance as well as private investment.

Nitish did not forget to raise the demand of special category status for [Bihar](#) and urged the President to visit the state regularly. However, President [Pranab Mukherjee](#) avoided reacting to this issue during his speech.

Governor Devanand Konwar said Bihar was the first state to chart out an agriculture road map and congratulated the CM for it, saying he was a very conscious administrator who took timely initiative to give agriculture a big boost. He said instead of going for a second or third green revolution, Bihar should go for evergreen revolution.

Deputy CM [Sushil Kumar Modi](#) welcomed the President and urged him to visit Bihar once a year. Agriculture minister Narendra Singh proposed a vote of thanks at the end of hourlong

programme which was attended by all the ministers, MPs, legislators, bureaucrats and farmers at [S K Memorial Hall](#).

Gejjalagere: Hamlet of perennial protests against Cauvery water release to Tamil Nadu

MYSORE: [Agitation](#) comes naturally to the people of Gejjalagere, a nondescript village located on the [Bangalore-Mysore highway](#). Each time the [Cauvery](#) crisis erupts or any other issue angers the locals, [Gejjalagere](#) becomes the epicentre of protests.

The entire village unites to throw vehicular traffic on this busy state highway out of gear. Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation, well acquainted with the ways of the people of Gejjalagere, either withdraws its services or diverts buses through other routes. Somanahalli village, from where external affairs minister SM Krishna hails, is located further down the same road.

On Tuesday, there were more than 700 people on the road to protest the release of water to Tamil Nadu, including 200 women and 100 children below the age of 15.

As soon as the village decides to protest, the elders make arrangements for food. They pitch a tent which doubles as a makeshift kitchen and shelter from the scorching heat. Rice mixed with vegetables and pulses is prepared and distributed to the protestors. Arrangements are also made to entertain the gathering by bringing in folk singers.

This spontaneous reaction of the villagers to the alleged injustices meted out to them is not of recent origin. Their protests date back to the seventies and eighties, when the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha was a fledgling organization. The killing of two farmers in police firing in 1981-82, during the tenure of R Gundu Rao as CM, had raised the Sangha's hackles.

However, the protests are never violent or harmful. "Not once have our people damaged vehicles or harmed the people," said Sunanda Jayaram, once a firebrand KRRS leader.

Farmers, traders at loggerheads over market shifting

INDORE: The farmers of the [Bharatiya kisan union](#) (BKS) and flower producers association on Wednesday spread tonnes of flowers on road near Harsiddhi flower market. They were protesting against traders' reluctance to shift to Choithram market.

"The administration has not initiated any action against flower traders. We will protest against the administration too," BKS leaders said.

Twenty six traders said that by moving to new flower market in Choithram, they may lose business as many customers frequent Harsiddhi market. The flower traders were supposed to carry out their businesses from the new market by October 10. The farmers and producers maintained that there seems to be no sign of any shifting.

"We have decided to protest and will continue with the same," said the BKS leaders.

Mettur dam level worries farmers

CHENNAI: Sand quarrying picked up in Cauvery in the early 1990s. Till the 1980s, sand was quarried only for local use, noted R Nandakumar, a lawyer who has filed a series of cases against indiscriminate quarrying in the [Cauvery riverbed](#) and its branches.

"But with urban infrastructure development picking up in the 90's, people started taking sand from Cauvery to other parts of the state and even across the border," he said. This has, in turn, hampered discharge into the connecting canals that feed water to the fields as the riverbed is much lower than the mouth of the canal in many areas. Unless the volume is heavy and force of the current is high, water from the Cauvery is unable to enter the feeder channels. Going by conservative estimates, more than 7,000 truck loads of sand used to be taken daily from government-run licensed quarries in the Cauvery and Coleroon until the Madras high court ordered closure of many of them in August this year.

The court laid down strict guidelines while permitting 10 quarries to function for three months. They were told not to engage more than two earthmovers at each quarry and the timing was restricted to 10 hours a day. But a visit to some of these quarries show that these restrictions are thrown to the winds. At Koviladi village near Grand Anicut on the Coleroon river bed, TOI found that four earthmovers were used for sand quarrying.

Meanwhile, farmers are worried about the dipping water level in [Mettur dam](#). Tamilnadu

Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association general secretary S Ranganathan, a geologist himself, cautioned that water level in Mettur has already dipped from 84 ft to 72 ft in just two weeks. "Water needs to be used judiciously by both government and farmers," he warned. At present, water should be released only for wetting the field on a turn basis so that all areas can be covered even with a reduced supply, he said. In the past, government has managed the crisis by resorting to a system of supply by which every area is covered in turns by blocking supply to other regions. It ensures equitable distribution to a large extent.

This year too, after the initial two weeks of release to all regions, the turn system was introduced on September 30. Thanjavur district collector K Baskaran said, "We have de-silted all A, B and C channels in the district at a cost of Rs 16.6 crore. Since turn system has started, we hope to cover all fields soon." Nagapattinam collector T Munusamy also said desilting of channels was completed before the season started. "So far, farmers have not reported to me about water not reaching their field. If we get specific complaints, we will act immediately," he said.

Cauvery Farmers' Protection Association general secretary V Dhanapalan has gone for direct sowing on his 100-acre field in Oorkudi in Nagapattinam district to tide over the water crisis. Paddy, which sprouted in the rains, has already grown to half a foot height. But, there is no water to wet the field to remove weeds. "The statistics that the district administration gives is not based on ground reality. Not even a drop of water has reached the fields in my area," said Dhanapalan.

Andhra Pradesh still stuck with 4 crops

HYDERABAD: Despite sitting on an expansive agricultural land bank of two crore acres, Andhra Pradesh grows just about four crops, cotton, paddy, [maize](#) and [groundnut](#), all through the year. In fact, according to government statistics, these crops make up for 70% of the state's total cultivable land, leaving a meagre 30% space for other crops. Reason? The "unhealthy" rise in modern agricultural technologies, say experts.

Capturing the largest share of land are [cotton](#) and paddy, most of them genetically developed breeds, which cover almost 104 lakh acres of the area. So much so that AP, as per national records, now produces 80% of the country's hybrid rice. And while government authorities consider this as a matter of pride, experts squarely blame such over-production for the death of biodiversity in the state. "What is the need to grow only cotton and [paddy](#) when the state can also cultivate oilseeds, pulses and millets," questioned G V Ramanjaneyulu, executive director

of city-based Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA), during an event held by the organization on the third day of the international biodiversity meet (CoP-11) underway in the city. A study conducted by the body, primarily on Bt cotton and Bt rice, reveals that neither have helped in improving yields or arresting farmer suicides, as was promised by its promoters (read: government authorities).

On the contrary, yields, across the country have dropped following the entry of hybrid crops, [CSA findings](#) stated.

If the percentage rise in production of cotton prior to the aggressive marketing of Bt varieties was an impressive 70%, it fell to just about 2% thereafter. Further, national crime bureau records put the total number of farmer suicides in the last 17 years at a jaw-dropping 2.7 lakh. In AP, the figure is an unfortunate 33,000. That most of them were cotton and paddy growers is another story. "Sadly, even our research institutes have turned a blind eye to this agrarian crisis. What they are instead promoting is biotechnology and all other modern agricultural methods that have driven farmers to commit suicide," said Sridhar Radhakrishnan, convener of a coalition on GM-free India, comprising scientists, citizens and other concerned individuals.

Participants highlighted that modern methods have killed the Indian biodiversity story. For instance, as against 50,000 varieties of rice, India today has just about a dozen. And 85% of its rice demand is met through only 10 varieties. Considering many of them are technologically 'raised', their nutrient content remains highly questionable. "The country traditionally had an array of rice breeds including those that are drought-tolerant, flood-tolerant and even salt-tolerant. Now, we have lost all that and are trying to grow them genetically," Ramanjaneyulu said, along with questioning the Bt varieties reducing the use of pesticides. Quoting from data released by the Directorate of Plant Protection, the agricultural scientist said how the usage had in fact shot manifold across cotton growing states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab over the last six decades. "We cannot afford to move ahead with such risky methodologies when it is burdening the exchequer as they have to bear the subsidies of bringing such technologies to the country," said Kavita Kuruganti, convener, Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture.

Chemical pesticide usage increasing in GM crops as resistance spreads: Study

DELHI: Planting [genetically modified](#) (GM) [crops](#) should reduce the use of chemical pesticides, right? A study of 16 years of growing GM cotton, soyabean and corn in the US contradicts this. It shows that herbicide use on such crops has grown by 239 million kilograms between 1996 (when GM crops were first introduced in US by Monsanto) and 2011. Insecticide usage has declined on Bt crops by 56 million kilograms in the same period.

The study was carried out by Charles Benbrook, research professor, at the Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources at the [Washington State University](#) in US, and published on Monday in the peer-reviewed scientific journal Environmental Science Europe.

Monsanto officials had no immediate comment. "We're looking at this. Our experts haven't been able to access the supporting data as yet," said Monsanto spokesman Thomas Helscher reports Reuters.

The findings could have repercussions in India where cotton is the only commercialized GM crop with Bt cotton being planted on over 10.6 million hectares in 2011. In the US, over 69 million hectares are under GM crops. In most of Europe, GM crops are banned.

Approximately 95 percent of soybean and cotton, and over 85 percent of corn, in US, are planted with varieties genetically modified to be herbicide resistant. The main chemical that they are made resistant to is glyphosate. Then the farmers spray a glyphosate based herbicide called Roundup made by Monsanto, or its equivalent, killing all weeds.

But over the years two dozen herbicide resistant [weeds](#) have evolved bringing all this effort - and expense - to nought. Farmers planting the GM crops have to use more and more of the older herbicide to eliminate these resistant weeds.

"Resistant weeds have become a major problem for many farmers reliant on GE crops, and are now driving up the volume of herbicide needed each year by about 25 percent," Benbrook said.

Although insecticide use has declined, another threat is looming on the horizon. Recent emergence and spread of insects resistant to the Bt toxins created in Bt corn and cotton has triggered off increasing insecticide use, and it is expected to rise further in the future, the study

says. Ironically, to stop corn and cotton insects from developing resistance, farmers planting Bt crops are being asked to spray the insecticides that Bt corn and cotton were designed to displace.

"Without doubt, GE crop technology has profoundly changed corn, cotton, and soybean pest management, but the unintended impact on pesticide use is a harsh reminder that farmers should not put all their eggs in one pest control basket," says Benbrook.

Sweet makers seek cheap, fast detection of adulterants in milk



Fast, cheap and convenient methods for detection of adulterants in milk, food safety norms, increasing shelf life of khoya, safe storage and transportation of milk were major areas of focus during a one-day interface on 'Milk Quality Assurance and Dairy based Health Foods' organised jointly between National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal, Central Institute of Post Harvest Engineering and Technology and Halwai Association Punjab on Wednesday where the objective of the interface was to increase awareness among sweet-makers to improve quality by adopting latest technologies developed by institutes of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

The programme was organised in association with National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP).

President of Punjab Halwai Association Narinder Pal Singh lamented that they had no system for detection of adulterants and quality of milk. Saying that they want to collaborate with CIPHET for establishing lab for food safety, he said that they need fast, cheap and convenient methods for detection of adulterants in milk. Terming safe storage of sweets as a major problem, he said that they need some technology to increase shelf life of khoya.

Dr Y S Rajput, head of Biochemistry division, NDRI, spoke on kits developed by NDRI for detection of bacterial contaminants, detergent and other adulterants in milk.

Some 30 scientists of different faculties from the NDRI interacted to create awareness amongst the sweet-makers about various kits which could be used for detection of adulterants in milk and technologies/products developed by the premier institute in dairy research. Scientists from NDRI gave presentations on rapid tests for detection of bacterial contaminants and adulterations, better shelf life, protein enrich iron fortified bajra biscuit, dietetic dahi , whey-based beverage, arjuna herbal ghee, reconstitute rasmalai and basundi mix, carbonated sweetened beverage and functional milk drink.

“This is the first time that such a large number of NDRI scientists have come to train sweet makers outside their institute and it is a historical moment for us,” said Director NDRI, Dr A K Srivastava.

Saying that India produces 121 million tons of milk every year, he said that, “ we consume 70 percent directly as milk and rest was used for various products. Sweet-makers need to follow food safety norms and develop small ready-to-eat packages to cater to requirement of present time. NDRI has developed number of low calorie products, which could generate high demand from health conscious consumers.”

Director CIPHET Dr U S Shivhare said that sweet makers should focus on maintaining quality and adopt latest technologies developed by ICAR.

Head transfer of Technology Division Dr D R Rai informed that two years back they had organised a meeting of scientists with Halwai association on food safety. “This meeting is a follow up to provide better technical input from NDRI,” he added.

Dr G R Patil, Joint Director of Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), informed that after World Trade Organisation agreement food safety norms need to be followed at all levels.

Engineering innovations national seminar to begin at PAU today

The College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology (COAE&T) of the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) is all set to hold a two-day national seminar on “Engineering interventions and

innovations for opportunities and challenges in Indian agriculture (EIIOC-2012)” on October 4-5 which will witness the launching of “Professor Mason Vaugh Memorial Lecture” series.

Dr M.M. Pandey, Deputy Director General (Engineering), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), will be the chief guest while Dr Gyanendra Singh, former Vice-Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramoday Vishwavidyalaya (MGCGV) , Chitrakoot, Madhya Pradesh, will be the guest of honour. Dr Singh will deliver the first Prof. Mason Vaugh Memorial Lecture. Dr Baldev Singh Dhillon, Vice-Chancellor, PAU, will preside over the seminar.

Giving programme contours, Dr PPS Lubana, Dean, COAE&T, informed that the seminar aims at bringing all stakeholders, policy makers, scientists and engineers on a common platform, to deliberate on contemporary and futuristic issues, for providing advanced farm solutions to Indian agriculture.

He said that there is an urgent need for capacity building and translating the challenges into opportunities and also to explore the ways and means by which the agriculture and rural sector contribute in speedy economic resurgence of the nation commensurate with its workforce and vast untapped potential.

Noida sec 75, 120 construction stayed



Projects of at least 6 builders in Noida hit, petition says land wasn't formally acquired from farmers.

The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday stayed construction of multi-storey residential projects of nearly half a dozen private developers in Sector 75 and Sector 120 of Noida.

The court took the decision while hearing of a petition, which alleged that the Noida Authority allotted land to private builders without formally acquiring the plots from farmers.

A division bench of Acting Chief Justice Amitava Lala and Justice P K S Baghel gave two weeks to the respondents to file their replies. The matter will come up for hearing after three weeks.

The bench said the allegations in the petition raised the question whether any public authority has the power to allot land to a third party without acquiring it from the land owner.

The petition filed by Kalu, a farmer of Sarsabad village, through counsels Shiv Kant Tripathi and Amrita Rai, said a notification under Section 4 (indicating the intention of the Authority concerned to acquire land) of the Land Acquisition Act for 120 hectares in Sector 75 and Sector 120 was issued on April 7 last year.

The land concerned falls within Sarsabad village.

Nearly 600,000 square metres of land, which is roughly half the total area for which the notification was issued, was allotted to builders between 2010 and 2012 without completing the acquisition process, the petition alleged.

“Our contention is that 17 months after the notice under Section 4 was issued, the acquisition process has not moved forward. In accordance with the norms, the notice under Section 6 (pertaining to finalising the plots to be acquired) of the Act should have been issued within a year. Our objection is that land could not be allotted to private builders before it was acquired from farmers,” Mishra said.

He said all private developers involved have started construction on the allotted land.

The petition demanded quashing of the notice issued under Section 4 and cancelling of the lease deeds awarded to the private developers.

DECCAN Chronicle

TODAY FARM NEWS

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Survival of paddy worries farmers

Though the farmers heave a sigh of relief following a reprieve in the rainfall in the last several hours, but they are more concerned about the survival of the paddy and other horticulture crops which were submerged in rain water. A majority of the farmers have taken up delayed sowings of the paddy during kharif season for want of supply of adequate quantum of water through canals.

In addition to this, scanty rainfall also forced the farmers to delay sowings in rain-fed areas in upland and Agency mandals.

At present the paddy crop is in the stage of tillering to panicle initiation and the flowering is yet to start. As rain water entered into the fields and remained stagnant following incessant rains in the last few days, it may cause damage to crops.

However, authorities maintain that as there is no rainfall in the last several hours except the sky remained cloudy and humidity content is more in the air, stagnant rain water may start receding slowly. They say that they can assess the extent of damage only after water recedes from the fields.

However, they sound confident that as the paddy fields were submerged in the rain water only for three to four days, it may not affect the standing paddy crop. There are no reports of the standing paddy crop getting lodged in the fields as the rainfall was not accompanied with high velocity winds which is a normal phenomenon during the cyclonic storm.

On the other hand, agriculture fields located near canals, drains and tanks face the risk of silt deposit as huge water from the water bodies enter into the fields carrying the silt.

In West Godavari, paddy crop suffered damage in about 18,147 hectares land while black gram in 220 hectares, groundnut in 100 hectares and maize in 20 hectares. Vegetables suffered

damage in about 150 hectares land mainly located at Jangareddygudem and Yalamanchali mandals in the district.

Authorities maintain that 197 houses suffered complete damage, 215 partial damage while nearly 2,000 people were rehabilitated.

In East Godavari, paddy suffered damage in nearly 8,774 hectares land while cotton in 250 hectares and maize in 20 hectares. Vegetables suffered damages in about 500 acres in the district.