

Watermelon and weight management

Researchers including one of Indian origin have suggested that a daily slice of watermelon could help prevent heart disease by halting the build-up of **'bad' cholesterol**.

Scientists who carried out the study on mice, which were fed a high-fat diet, found that the fruit **halved the rate at which 'bad' low-density lipoprotein (LDL)** accumulated.

LDL is a form of cholesterol that leads to clogged arteries and heart disease. Researchers from Purdue University in the US also found that eating watermelon regularly helped to control weight gain and results in fewer fatty deposits inside the blood vessels. They believe the secret to **watermelon's health**-boosting properties lies in citrulline, a chemical found in the juice.

High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) has the job of transporting cholesterol back to the liver to be safely disposed of. The latest study suggests that watermelon juice could help. Researchers fed two groups of mice a high-fat diet but gave one, water to drink and, the other, watermelon juice. **"We didn't see a lowering of blood pressure. But these other changes are promising,"** the *Daily Mail* quoted research leader Dr. Shubin Saha as saying.

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

Get ready to procure paddy

Collector A. Dinakarbabu has directed officials to get ready to procure three lakh tonnes of paddy during the season.

Presiding over a meeting held at Sangareddy on Monday, Mr. Dinakarbabu said that a harvest of 3.62 lakh tonnes of paddy was expected, out of which about 3 lakh tonnes would be procured through rice millers, Food Corporation of India and Civil Supplies department.

The MRP for grade paddy would be Rs.1,280 per quintal and Rs.1,250 per quintal for normal variety.

Panel meet on irrigation projects

The advisory committee meeting of the irrigation projects of Chitturpuzha, Gayathripuzha, and Walayar will be held at Collectorate Conference Hall here at 3 p.m. on October 11. The meet will discuss the release of water for second crop of paddy cultivation from reservoirs. — Staff Reporter

Groundnut seed shortage hits sowing in Yadgir district

Shortage of groundnut seeds has hampered sowing in Yadgir district for rabi season this year.

Sources in the Agriculture Department said here that efforts were on to get the required quantity of **seeds from the Karnataka Oilseeds Growers' Federation**. **Owing to scanty rainfall during** kharif season, farmers could not sow short-duration crops such as green gram and had pinned hopes on the rabi season to make good the losses they had incurred.

During September and beginning of October, the district received good rainfall. During this period, farmers took up sowing of rabi crops. Against the average rainfall of 688 mm till the end of September, the district had received 431 mm rainfall.

While Yadgir taluk received 563 mm rainfall against the normal of 728 mm, Shahpur received 374 mm (724 mm), and Surpur 355 mm (355 mm).

Of the total area of 1.94 lakh hectares under cultivation in the rabi season in the district, the target fixed for groundnut alone was 56,000 ha.

While 20,000 ha were expected to be covered by groundnut in Yadgir, 18,000 ha each were expected to be covered by the crop in Shahpur and Surpur taluks.

The Agriculture Department had placed an order for 16,000 quintals of groundnut seeds to cover the targeted area, but the district, so far, received only 500 quintals of seeds from the

federation. The entire stock had been distributed to farmers. Due to the short supply of groundnut seeds, traders in the retail market increased the cost of groundnut seeds abnormally.

While the cost of groundnut seeds supplied by the government is Rs. 7,500 a quintal, the price in the open market is over Rs. 11,000.

Sources in the Agriculture Department said the oilseeds federation had been requested to supply seeds immediately to help farmers take up sowing in time, and also end the exploitation of farmers in the open market.

However, there is no shortage of seeds of other crops, including jowar, which is another main crop of the rabi season.

Mandya farmers told to consider alternatives to paddy

Grow crops such as ragi, which require less water: Agriculture Department



Nothing but to wait and watch: A large number of farmers, who have cultivated sugarcane and paddy across Mandya district, are a worried lot.

With the water-level in the Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir (KRS) depleting, farmers across the district, worried about losing their crops, have been advised to switch from paddy to ragi and others crops that require less water.

The State government, in order to comply with the Cauvery River Authority's (CRA) directive, has been releasing water to neighbouring Tamil Nadu from September 29. While the water-level was 109.57 ft at 6 p.m. on September 29, it was 105.2 ft at 6 a.m. on October 8.

Agriculture Department officials have advised farmers in Mandya to grow ragi and other pulses instead of paddy as a contingency plan against crop loss. Ragi and other pulses require less water than paddy.

The officials fear that the Irrigation Department may stop discharging water to D. Devaraja Urs canal, Chikka Devaraya canal, Virija canal, Bangara Doddi canal, Visvesvaraya canal, Right Bank Low Level Canal (RBLL) and Left Bank Low Level Canal (LBLL) if the water-level falls drastically.

Advice

“We have advised farmers to sow ragi, jowar and maize instead of paddy,” K. Sangaiah, Deputy Director of Agriculture Department, told *The Hindu* here on Monday.

A large number of farmers have already cultivated sugarcane and paddy across the district. The farmers who are yet to sow, should cultivate the crops which require less water, Mr. Sangaiah said.

The department has been issuing pamphlets to farmers requesting to stay away from paddy.

Scientists at the VC Farm Zonal Agricultural Research Station told *The Hindu* here on Monday that farmers are showing interest in sowing ragi, maize, jowar, green gram, black gram, horse gram, field bean, sunflower, castor, niger, soya bean, other pulses and oilseeds.

Meanwhile, the district is expected to see a steep fall in production of paddy, sugarcane, maize, ragi and other crops due to water shortage during 2012-13.

According to the officials at the Department of Agriculture, only 75.8 per cent (up to September 30, 2012) of sowing has been completed in the district.

Drought-hit taluks

All seven taluks — Mandya, Malavalli, Nagamangala, K.R. Pet, Srirangapatna, Pandavapur and Maddur — in Mandya district have been declared as drought-hit this year. Due to the failed monsoon, sugarcane, paddy and other crops on 7,153 hectares have been lost amounting to a loss of Rs. 268 crore, an official said.

Farmers flock Krishi Mela

Nearly 100 stalls have been put up at Brahmavar



People having a look at the stalls at Krishi Mela in Brahmavar on Monday.

A large number of farmers from different parts of the district attended the two-day **“Krishi Mela”** co-organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Zonal Agricultural Research Station (ZARS), and other organisations here on Monday.

The mela was held on the premises of the ZARS. Nearly 100 stalls, displaying a variety of agricultural and farm machineries, had been showcased. Many government departments had put up their stalls. A variety of vegetables such as coconuts, areca, pepper, coco, cucumbers, **papaya, and lady’s fingers, and agricultural and horticultural products were displayed.**

A model put up by the Watershed Department depicting the importance of water conservation was impressive. The vegetable-carvings stall where various vegetables were carved beautifully was eye-catching.

Chandrashekhar Gowda from Shiriyar had put up rabbits, **reared on his farm, for sale.** **“A male and female rabbit together cost Rs. 600. The female gives birth to six to eight kids, about four times a year. They can be used as pets or for meat,” he said.**

Farmers visited most of the stalls and enquired about the farm equipment on display.

Shivaram Poojary, a farmer who owns one acre and 35 cents of land in Someshwara-Nadpal village, said there was a variety of useful farm equipment at the mela, including sprinklers and pesticide sprayers.

“But I cannot buy them because I have financial problems. I visit the mela every year. I collect pamphlets from the stalls and distribute them to farmers in my village so that they can become **aware of the latest equipment,”** he said.

Krishna Salian, a farmer who owns 25 cents of land at Uppinakote village, said farmers got **many ideas by attending such melas.** “Last year, I had purchased some seeds and saplings,” he said.

“Farm equipment at the mela is impressive. But I feel their rates are high for me,” said Chandrashekhar Hegde who owns three acres of land at Shiroor-Mandarti village.

Another farmer Veerappa Naik from Amasebail village, who owns two acres and 71 cents of land, **said he was attending the mela for the first time.** “I have seen some farm equipment and am planning to **make a purchase,”** he said.

Egg export from Namakkal doubles in a month

M.K. Ananth

(Values in lakh)

Monthly egg export from Namakkal In 2012	
	
April	- 415.64
May	- 240.88
June	- 89.74
July	- 136.97
August	- 212.54
September	- 415.64

Reopening the export market in Oman has helped egg export from Namakkal almost double the figures in September, compared to August 2012.

Statistics from the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) shows that 212.54 lakh eggs were exported in August, which increased by 196 per cent to 415.64 lakh eggs in September.

Egg export from Namakkal zone touched its lowest figures of just 89.74 lakh (19 containers with 4.72 lakh eggs in each container) in June 2012, a month after Oman banned procurement of eggs from India, citing the bird flu outbreak in North India as the reason.

Export in September has equalled the highest egg figure for the financial year 2012-13. Monthly export stood at 415.64 lakh eggs (88 containers) in April.

Poultry farmer and exporter Dr. P.V. Senthil told *The Hindu* that the export market in Oman opened only on September 21, but in just 10 days the country imported 20 containers - 94.4 lakh eggs. **“Oman was the biggest export market of eggs from Namakkal before the ban came to effect in March,”** he noted.

Farmers and traders initially feared that export would drop after egg price soared to a record high of Rs. 3.65 (till September 23), but they said that export increased as the price hike was **nullified by the rupee depreciating against the US dollar.** **“This has a direct impact on export because we quote export orders in US \$,”** he said.

Last month, Indian eggs were exported at 28 US \$ for a box of 360 eggs. This price was much cheaper than the price quoted by exporters in United States, Europe, Brazil and Taiwan - the biggest competitor for Indian eggs. Those countries priced a box of egg between 38 and 40 \$ - about 40 per cent more than the price quoted by exporters from India, Dr. Senthil observed.

However, increasing export has not brought much smile on the face of poultry farmers, as they claimed that they are not reaping any big returns out of exports. They claimed that they sell **eggs to exporters at the price that does not match the cost of production.** **“At present, we get Rs. 2.70 per egg when the cost of production is around Rs. 3.40,”** they said. Traders make good profit in export as they fix a margin before exporting.

This is unlike the European market where farmers and traders fix a profit of at least 1 \$ per carton (360 eggs), farmers said. On the other hand exporters claimed that they are quoting around 26.5 \$ per carton due to local competition.

Farmers felt the need for farmers and traders to sit together and fix the price of export eggs in a manner in which farmers also get a marginal profit.

Farmers said that their only consolation is that increasing export has stopped the wholesale price of egg from dropping further in this dull season.

Exporting more than four crore eggs has stopped the stagnation of eggs at 12 crore eggs, else it would have been more than 16 crore eggs, industry sources said.

Water level increases at Mettur

When the Mettur dam, the lifeline of the Cauvery delta, clocked an inflow of about 27,400 cubic feet per second (cusecs) on Monday morning, this was the highest quantity of Cauvery water realised by the dam since the **beginning of this year's water year (June-May)**.

In other words, the inflow was equivalent to 2.4 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft). Given the present drawal of water from the dam, it would have met the requirement for two days had 2,000 cusecs more been received.

In the morning, the water level of the dam stood at 71.84 ft (capacity: 120 ft) with a storage of 34,301 tmc ft (capacity: 93.47 tmc ft).

The outflow was 14,705 cusecs. At 4 p.m., the level rose to 72.05 ft.

Heavy rain

Officials of the Water Resources Department in Mettur attributed the enhanced flow to heavy rain upstream Mettur. At one point on Sunday, the inflow was as high as 29,926 cusecs.

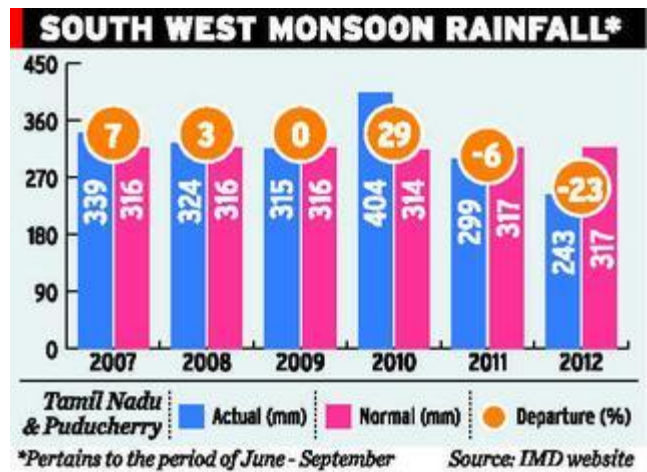
As a sequel to the Supreme Court's directions early last month, the realisation of the Cauvery water at Mettur was around seven tmc ft between September 12 and September 19, the day the

Cauvery River Authority (CRA) held its meeting. Since September 20, the State realised around 12 tmc ft. Totally, the cumulative receipt was about 19 tmc ft.

Since June 1, the State, till now, received approximately 36 tmc ft. Going by the interim order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, the shortfall was nearly 110 tmc ft.

20 districts received much less than normal rainfall

T. Ramakrishnan



Twenty out of 32 districts in the State received much less rainfall during this year’s southwest monsoon (June-September) than the normal.

One district – Tuticorin – registered almost nil rainfall of 0.4 mm. It fell under the category of scanty rainfall (minus 60 per cent to minus 99 per cent). Nineteen others, including Chennai, Madurai and Tiruchi, fell under the classification of deficient (minus 20 per cent to minus 59 per cent).

Describing the rainfall received by the State as disappointing, Y.E. A. Raj, Deputy Director-General of Meteorology, says there were expectations that the State would experience more rainfall in the later part of the monsoon. But, it did not happen.

Coimbatore, Erode and Nagapattinam were among the districts that came under the category of normal rainfall (deviation: plus or minus 19 per cent).

Theni and Tiruvannamalai, representing the southern and northern regions, were the only two districts having positive values of departure. Both experienced normal rainfall.

Unlike 2011 when Chennai registered 75 per cent more rainfall during the southwest monsoon than the normal, the city recorded 347 mm, a deviation of minus 21 per cent. But, Madurai, which registered deficient rainfall of minus 43 per cent last year, posted a deviation of minus 44 per cent this year too. The rainfall received by the district in 2012 was 187.5 mm.

In the case of Tiruchi, this year's rainfall was 204 mm, 60 mm less than that of the previous year. While the figure of departure was minus 31 per cent this time, it was minus 10 per cent last year.

Coimbatore, which had a surplus rainfall (33 per cent) last year just as Chennai, received 161.9 mm, a deviation of minus 15 per cent.

Northeast monsoon

As for the onset of the northeast monsoon, Dr. Raj points to the two previous years (2009 and 2010) when the advent of the monsoon was on October 29, though the normal date is October 20 with an allowance of seven days.

In 2011, the onset took place on October 25.

The monsoon is likely to be normal this time, going by different indications, he adds.

Vaigai dam level goes up

Heavy rain in Theni and Dindigul districts



pool: Rainwater flooding a road at Chinnalapatti near Dindigul on Monday.— PHOTO: G.KARTHIKEYAN.

Torrential showers that rocked the district on Sunday night cheered farmers bringing the mercury level to the bottom. People in urban and rural areas, who suffered from the scorching heat, heaved a sigh of relief.

Rainwater flooded prime roads in Theni and nearby areas. The total rainfall in the district was 160.7 mm and the average 13.39 mm. Good news to farmers was the marginal increase water level in the Vaigai dam. After a gap of three months, the dam registered a marginal increase in storage. Water level rose to 31.86 feet from 31.73 feet (level on Sunday.) Inflow shot up to 130 cusecs from mere 26 cusecs. However, discharge was restricted to 60 cusecs.

Inflow to other major dams in the district and in the Periyar dam in Kerala too increased sizably. Water level in the Periyar dam reached 117 feet. Inflow to the dam was 402 cusecs and 400 cusecs being discharged to meet irrigation needs of first crop on 5,000 and odd acres and also of second crop in other parts of the double-cropping area in Cumbum valley.

Transplantation of paddy crop, second crop in the double cropping areas at Veerapandi and nearby areas, is in full swing. (The district administration encouraged farmers to advance the second crop in October as the first crop was failed in the Cumbum valley, owing to poor storage in the Periyar dam.) Water level at Sothuparai rose to 26.73 feet from 26.51 feet and storage in the Manjalar dam was 37.2 feet.

Rainfall recorded at various places in the district at 8 a.m. in mm: Periyakulam 15, Vaigai dam 12, Manjalar 24, Andiipatti 38.2, Aranmanaipudhur 5.6, Veerapandi 21, Thekkadi 15.6, Periyar 12, Goodalur 3, Bodi 5.6, Uthamaplayam 7 and Sothuparai 12.

Dindigul

Heavy rain hit many parts of the district flooding main roads in Dindigul and surrounding areas and disrupting normal life on Sunday night. The district received 388.8 mm rain on Sunday and the average rainfall was 38.8 mm. Kamatchipuram recorded 81.8 mm rain, highest in the district.

Moderate to heavy rain was recorded in Palani, Kannivadi, Natham Batlagundu, Vadamadurai, Nilakottai and other parts of the district.

Rainfall recorded in Dindigul district in mm was: Dindigul 6, Kodaikanal 16, Kodaikanal observatory 20.3, Natham 36, Nilakottai 12.4, Palani 6, Veda sandur 54, Chatrapatti 22, Veda sandur tobacco research station 78.30 and Marudhanadhi dam 28 mm.

Rubber Board to issue soil health cards

The Rubber Board has launched a scheme to issue soil health cards to rubber growers in traditional rubber growing areas in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The cards will be issued after ascertaining the bio-chemical properties and fertility status of the soil in **each grower's** land, according to a press note issued here.

Those interested in joining the scheme have been requested to bring soil samples from their holdings, to the nearest soil testing laboratories of the board, on or before October 31.

The reports will be issued on a first come first served basis. New fertiliser recommendations based on soil analysis will also be mentioned in the soil health cards. The growers have been advised to test their soil at different stages of growth of the rubber and record the changes in their cards.

They should also change their manurial practices in accordance with the new recommendations mentioned in the card.

Promoting monoculture plantations harmful for biodiversity, says activist

Expansion of monoculture tree plantations like that of eucalyptus as replacement of biologically diverse forests would lead to destruction of biodiversity, warned Simone Lovera, Executive Director of Global Forest Coalition.

“These monoculture plants have so much less biodiversity and provide less resources to local people,” she told *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the inaugural session of the UN's

11th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) here on Monday.

Destructive

Ms. Lovera maintained that reforestation and afforestation by such monoculture plantations was harmful for biodiversity. For instance, in Brazil, eucalyptus was being planted in around 11 million hectares. **“Eucalyptus is very destructive. It sucks up lot of water and lot of pesticides too are used in these plantations,” she observed.**

Under the REDD + (Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and enhance Forest Carbon Stocks) Norway was giving massive amount of money to Indonesia and **Brazil for tree plantations. “This actually doesn’t work,” she added.**

Ms. Lovera stressed the need to give forest rights to local people as they would actually avoid monoculture trees and plant different types, including fruit-bearing ones.

Agriculture officers told to clear non-subsidy amount

Commissioner of Agriculture in a circular to the Joint Directors exhorted them to use their good offices to get agriculture officers (AOs) to pay up ‘non subsidy amounts’ that were still with them.

The Commissioner in a circular dated October 4 said he was ‘very unhappy with the action taken so far’. While Rs. 33 lakh non-subsidy amount was due from AOs of Krishna district alone, the amount due from AOs in all districts in the State runs into crores.

In an ultimatum to the Joint Directors of Agriculture, the Commissioner set the last date for collection of the amounts as October 9. Referring to instructions issued to the JDs on August 31 and office memos on September 1, 7 and 15, the Commissioner asked them to give reports on the officers who were having dues above Rs.1 lakh so that disciplinary action could be initiated against them.

The Commissioner asked the JDs to take “personal” interest and send the reports by October 9. He said action would be taken against the JDs if they did not follow his instructions.

Food security becoming a major challenge

Reduction of fertile land, water shortage and climate change adding to the problem



Start: Chandrashekhar Biradar, Professor at the University of Oklahoma, U.S., inaugurating a seminar on food security in Gulbarga on Monday.

Reduction of fertile land owing to urbanisation, and water shortage coupled with climate change were posing a serious challenge to food security in the world, said Chandrashekhar Biradar, Research Professor at the University of Oklahoma, U.S.

Concern

Inaugurating a seminar on 'Food security and natural resource management' organised by the Faculty of Science and Technology, Gulbarga University, here on Monday, Prof. Biradar said that a decade ago, nobody thought food security would be a concern, but it had emerged as a major challenge.

Prof. Biradar, who has specialised in the use of satellite-based information to study shortage of foodgrains and loss of agricultural land, said food security had become a major cause for worry across countries. Efforts to increase area of agricultural land had suffered a setback as fertile land around big cities were increasingly being converted into residential plots. Also, water scarcity had hampered efforts of the government to increase land under the irrigation network to boost foodgrain production.

Climate change

Climate change in recent years had added a new dimension to the problem. While areas such as Amazon forests were receiving scanty rainfall, deserts were witnessing heavy rains. Prof. Biradar said that increasing population also posed a threat to food security. The world population was around 2.3 billion in the 1930s, and now it had risen to 6.3 billion.

He said the gap between supply and demand of foodgrains was widening. Immediate attention should be given to improving storage facilities, he added. Disparities in consumption of food between developed and developing countries should come **down**. **“At present, there are a billion people who are obese and about three billion who are malnourished,”** he said.

Prof. Biradar warned that if the present situation continued, an average family would have to spend a third of its income on foodgrains. To meet the challenge of food security effectively, people should change their dietary habits and stop wasting food, he added.

Overdependence

Prof. Biradar said overdependence on genetically modified crops would prove harmful in the long run, and, hence, farmers should turn to indigenous varieties and natural farming methods.

Climate change issues should be tackled effectively and population growth should be stable.

Blackstone to buy 12.5 % in International Tractors

Structured transaction valued at \$100 million (Rs. 520 crore)



Akhil Gupta

The Blackstone Group, a leading private equity player, announced that its affiliate Blackstone Capital Partners (Singapore) is to acquire 12.5 per cent of International Tractors Ltd. (ITL) in a structured transaction valued at up to \$100 million (Rs 520 crore).

A part of Sonalika Group, ITL was incorporated in 1995. It has a turnover of around \$500 million, and nearly 10 per cent share in the domestic tractor market. It exports to over 70 countries.

It makes tractors under the Sonalika brand from a power range of below 20 HP to over 90 HP. ITL has its manufacturing plant in Hoshiarpur, Punjab.

“Favourable macro-economic trends such as rising minimum support prices and rising labour costs are leading to increased adoption of mechanization by farmers,” Akhil Gupta, Senior Managing Director and Chairman, Blackstone India, said in a statement.

“ITL’s cost effective manufacturing facilities with deep value engineering and strong product development capabilities provide it with a competitive advantage to capture this market,” Mr. Gupta said.

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Tuesday, Oct 9

Max Min

33.9° | 24.8°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 66

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:58

Sunset: 05:53

Barometer: 1009

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Wednesday, Oct 10

Max Min

32° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday Oct 11	Friday Oct 12	Saturday Oct 13	Sunday Oct 14	Monday Oct 15
33° 26° Rainy	31° 26° Rainy	29° 26° Rainy	31° 26° Rainy	32° 25° Rainy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:18

Humidity: 65

Sunset: 05:57

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1011



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

08.10.2012 P.M

09.10.2012 A.M

Tea prices set to rise on lower crop



If the present situation is any indication, the outlook for tea globally does not appear to be terribly exciting.

The shortfall in production in Kenya, Sri Lanka and India at present exceed 43 m kgs compared to the previous year, according to **J Thomas & Company Private Ltd, the world's largest tea auctioneers.**

The adverse weather conditions across the globe have affected the supply of tea in the world market. With the exception of China, which is the largest producer of green tea and growing crop exponentially, extreme and erratic weather has affected production in Asia and Africa.

Green leaf crop

Climatic conditions and pest attacks, particularly in North India, have ensured a deficit of 15.4 m kgs till end July, and 21 m kgs all India. While August crop in India is likely to show a small surplus, September harvest in North India is expected to be well below that of last year. The deficit in crop, therefore, is expected to get even wider by end October. Current green leaf

prices are on their way up which would signal the hardening of prices at the bottom of the market, as well as a shortage of green leaf availability.

Liquoring Assams continue to hold levels in spite of normal arrivals in auction centres at present. With increased purchasing power and discerning tastes, the consumer is willing and able to pay significant premiums for good quality. Medium Assams and Dooars are, at present, irregularly easing in value, but overall averages continue to be well above last year. Demand for these categories is also expected to increase as the supply line gets squeezed.

The supply of quality Assam teas for the rest of the year will be limited as the production season gradually draws to a close. In North India, factories close down by end of December as the cold weather inhibits leaf growth, and resume operations only towards end March.

Low stocks

Most upcountry markets are low on stock and the usual winter stock buying will commence shortly. With domestic consumption growing at over 2.5 per cent annually, an additional 20 m kgs of tea would be required, further accentuating the supply shortfall.

Crop shortages traditionally impact year end prices the most. Already the year to date North India auction average is up by Rs 25 over the previous season. Continuing shortfall in production, increased demand and low stocks at buyer's destinations all indicate that tea prices are clearly poised for a further strengthening. In spite of this, tea prices, per se, continue to remain below the commodity and inflation index.

Drop in production and increased costs have negated price increases for producers. Recent wage revisions and sharp hikes in input costs like fertiliser and fuel have added to the burden of the planter, which even the buoyant prices, have not managed to mitigate.

8th oct 2012 P.M

Spot rubber prices stretch losses

Rubber prices continued to record losses on Monday. Declines in domestic futures and the absence of genuine buyers dampened the sentiments during the first trading session of the week.

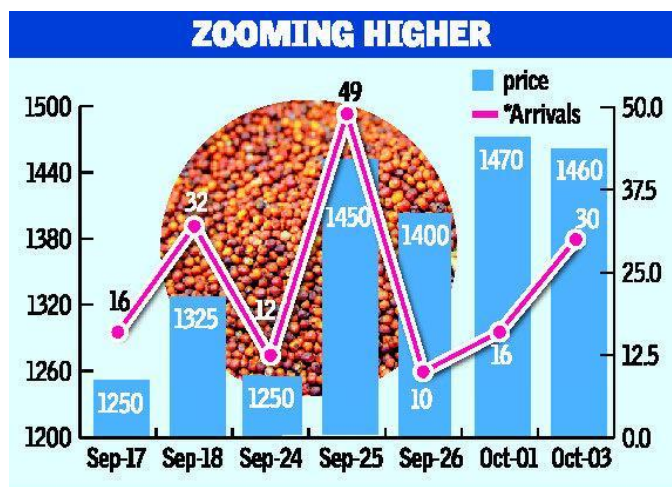
Meanwhile, the trend-setting Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM) remained closed on account of 'Health and Sports Day'.

Sheet rubber weakened to Rs 190 (193) a kg, according to traders. The grade dropped to Rs 191 (193.50) a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, as reported by the Rubber Board.

In futures, the October series declined to Rs 189 (191.13), November to Rs 182.90 (186.27), December to Rs 180.72 (183.79), January to Rs 182.34 (183.52) and February to Rs 184.35 (186.82) a kg, while the March series improved to Rs 192.75 (189.95) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) dropped to Rs 172.75 (173.58) a kg at Bangkok.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 190 (193); RSS-5: 187 (188); ungraded: 178 (180); ISNR 20: 175 (176) and latex 60 per cent: 128 (128).

Ragi prices gain on fears of lower crop



*Arrivals in tonnes; modal price in Rs/quintal at Arasikere APMC in Karnataka
Source: Agmarknet

Ragi (finger millet) prices, especially in South India, have firmed up by Rs 200 a quintal due to projections of lower output.

However, delayed rains have kindled hopes of an average maize production in the State.

“In the absence of back-up rains, the ragi crop has been badly affected in Hosadurga and at few places in old Mysore,” B.V. Gopal Reddy, Vice-President, Karnataka Maize Merchants’ Association, told *Business Line*.

“Late sowing is likely to see partial recovery of the crop in Nagamangala, Bellur, Adichunchangiri, Chikkanayakanahalli, Channarayapatna, Hassan.

“Late rains have revived the crop estimate in Mysore and Chamarajnagar districts,” he said.

According to the Karnataka Agriculture Department, ragi coverage (as on September 24) was down by 12.82 per cent at 6.32 lakh hectares against normal coverage of 7.25 lakh hectares.

Due to delay in crop arrival, ragi prices have firmed up by Rs 100-200 a quintal in Bangalore market in the last two weeks.

Reddy said: “Currently, superior variety (red) ragi is trading between Rs 1,600 and Rs 1,650. Ordinary variety (black) is quoting at Rs 1,500-1,550.”

“Farmers are holding substantial quantity of last year’s crop. This is the main reason for prices firming up. At present, they are waiting for new crop to release the old one,” he added.

Maize

Rains during Ganesha festival have boosted hopes of good maize output in the State.

Reddy said “With good rains in key maize growing areas, we estimate 65-70 per cent of the crop. But still, one more shower during Diwali is crucial. This year, we see about 10 per cent higher crop area but yield could be low.”

Maize coverage (as on September 24) is down by 6.22 per cent to 11.60 lakh hectares against last year’s coverage of 12.37 lakh hectares.

Post-Ganesha festival, maize prices have been unchanged and are quoting at Rs 1,600 for Bangalore delivery.

Jowar

This year, jowar arrival in Karnataka has been delayed due to late sowing. Currently, crop grown in Nandyal and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh is entering the market with prices quoted at Rs 1,450-1,550.

“Since the kharif jowar did not materialise in central and north Karnataka, farmers are preparing for rabi sowing at present,” said Reddy.

New office-bearers for tea bodies

Sunil Goyal, Managing Partner, Akshaya Tea Industries, Aravenu, has assumed office as Chairman of Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) for 2012-13. Yogendra Bhasin, Managing Partner, Ganga Sons, Coonoor, has assumed office as Vice-Chairman.

Bought-Leaf Association: Ramesh Bhojarajan has assumed office as President of The Nilgiris Bought-Leaf Tea Manufacturers' Association, representing the owners of private small-scale factories. A. Ramu (Vice-President), P. Sajeev (Secretary) and N.K. Dhanujay (Treasurer) have also assumed office.

Small Growers Association: H. Thiagarajan has taken over as President for 2012-13 of The Nilgiri Small Tea Growers' Association. Joseph (Vice-President) and M.R.B. Mani (Secretary) have also assumed office of this Association.

Mavens Biotech to launch hybrid onion seeds

Mavens Biotech, a research-based agriculture input company, plans to introduce high-yielding hybrid onion seeds this rabi season.

It intends to produce five tonnes of 'Pune Furshungi' type onion seeds on a pilot basis for the ensuing rabi season. These seeds have the potential to yield 20-25 per cent more output compared with the conventional variety.

Rahul Fulfagar, Director, Mavens Biotech, said the company plans to set up a quality seed production centre to cater to the growing need for quality planting material.

Among onion growing states, Gujarat tops the list with an average yield of 24 tonnes a hectare, followed by Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar with 23 tonnes and 20 tonnes, respectively. The average onion yield has been hovering about 15 tonnes a hectare for the last several years.

With production of over 15 million tonnes of onion annually, India is ranked the second largest producer in the world after China.

The average yield for a hectare in India is among the lowest with Korea at 67 tonnes, US at 57 tonnes, Spain 53 tonnes, Netherland 49 tonnes and China 22 tonnes.

Stalemate in cardamom trade continues



Even as the stalemate in cardamom trade continued for the second week with no trading activities and a solution in sight, growers and traders are understood to have sought the help of the judiciary to find a suitable solution.

About 90 per cent of the growers are said to be happy with a minimum bidding rate of Re 1 as recommended by the Empowered Committee, constituted by the Spices Board.

They said growers are understood to have approached the Kerala High Court, while the traders said to have sought the help of the Madras High Court for finding an amicable solution to the issue.

Suspension in trading activities during the peak harvesting season has rendered workers in the plantations and as well as in the trading hub, Bodinayakannur, jobless, market sources in Bodi told *Business Line*.

The Spices Board has raised the minimum bidding rates to Rs 5 from Rs 0.50 from September 25.

Traders rejecting this decision abstained from the auctions from that date and, as a result, trading has come to a standstill since then.

While some of the growers claimed that raising the minimum bidding rates would help increase prices at auctions, a good number of growers argued that it was in no way going to help the growers as bidding rate is not a problem. Even at the minimum rate of Rs 0.50, cardamom prices shot up to Rs 2,000 a kg a couple of years ago, they said. A Bodi-based trader pointed out that the minimum bidding rate for tea auction is Re 1 while that for several other major commodities including gold was only Rs 0.50.

Hundreds of workers in the trading hub Bodinayakannur have lost their wages for over a week now as no sieving and grading activities are taking place. No trading activities have been reported from the open market also.

It is the peak harvesting time and, hence, the capsules harvested will be piling up. Inordinate delay in resumption of auction would deteriorate the quality of the material, such as fading of the colour, they said.

On the other hand, when trading is resumed, markets would be flooded with cardamom which, in turn, would push prices down, an auctioneer pointed out.

Fertiliser overuse has made soil infertile

Soil in Indian farms has lost its fertility because of overuse of chemical fertilisers, according to C.T. Ravi, Karnataka Higher Education Minister.

Inaugurating an agriculture awareness camp, organised by the Department of Agriculture here on Monday, Ravi said that organic farming was part of traditional Indian agriculture a few decades ago. The irony is that awareness campaigns on organic farming have to be conducted now for farmers, he said.

This is because most Indian farmers have become used to chemical fertilisers. They need to be informed of the harm that chemical fertilisers cause and practise organic farming, he said.

The Minister said people have lost confidence in agriculture. Many farmers see it as economically unviable.

In the olden days, farmers were not dependent on market for various agriculture inputs such as seeds and fertilisers. All these inputs were available to them either in their fields or in their neighbourhood.

Now each of these inputs is sourced from the market, making it unviable for them to grow many crops, he said. When expenses go up, the farmer falls into a debt trap.

Social factors are also driving them away from agriculture, he said. Explaining this, Ravi said many parents prefer to marry their daughters to a doctor, engineer or a government servant. Yogish Bhat, Deputy Speaker of Karnataka Legislative Assembly, presided over the meeting. An exhibition of farm products and implements was organised on the occasion.

Extended winter likely to hit walnut output in India, says USDA



The USDA report said the recent rain in the Kashmir valley will not affect output, but it may have some impact on quality.

Walnut production in India is expected to decline by 12.5 per cent to 35,000 tonnes (in shell basis) due to extended winter in Kashmir during the peak flowering period from April to May, says a USDA report.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in a report said that the recent rain in the Kashmir valley will not affect output, but it may have some impact on quality.

“Indian walnut production is expected to reach 35,000 tonnes (in shell basis) in marketing year 2012-13 (August-July), down 12.5 per cent from previous year,” the USDA said.

The typical harvesting season extends from August through September, but this year will carry into the first week of October with market arrivals peaking later in the month, it added.

In India, walnuts are generally grown in rocky terrains of Jammu and Kashmir and to a lesser extent in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and North eastern India.

Walnut consumption in marketing year 2011-12 is estimated to have reached 22,000 tonnes with about 32 per cent of the domestic production dedicated to the export market, it said.

“Assuming normal market conditions, walnut consumption is expected to grow to 25,000 tonnes in the current marketing year. About 40 to 50 per cent of Indian walnut production is consumed domestically of which nearly half is consumed during the festive season (September-January), it added.

An estimated 10 per cent of domestic consumption goes to the bakery, confectionery and ice-cream industries, the USDA said.

Roughly 3 to 4 per cent of walnuts (typically lower quality nuts) are used for oil extraction by soap and cosmetic manufacturers, it added.

Demand drives up prices in Kochi tea auctions

Good demand perked up prices of almost all varieties in the Kochi tea auction last week. The demand for CTC dust category was good and the quantity on offer was 8,13,000 kg.

The market opened irregular and easier by Re 1 to Rs 3. It declined further as the sale progressed. However, a few select best and popular marks were sold around last, a statement issued by auctioneers Forbes, Ewart and Figgs Pvt Ltd said.

The quantity on offer in the orthodox dust grades was 9,000 kg. The market was lower with some withdrawals.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted at Rs 96/103, RD grades at Rs 99/105, SRD at Rs 100/106 and SFD at Rs 100/115.

Leaf sales also witnessed good demand and the quantity on offer in Orthodox grades was 141,000 kg. Highgrown bolder broken, whole leaf was fully firm to sometimes dearer following quality. Corresponding Fannings was irregular and lower by Rs 5 to Rs 10.

Medium well made clean black bolder broken, tippy grades and whole leaf were fully firm to sometimes dearer following quality. Medium Fannings remained steady.

Of the quantity of 99,500 kg in the CTC leaf grades, the market was irregular and lower by Rs 3 to Rs 5 and sometimes more.

In the dust category, Injipara (Prm) SRD quoted the best prices of Rs 132 followed by Injipara (Prm) RD at Rs 130. In the leaf varieties, Kundalay Pekoe quoted the best prices of Rs 225 followed by Grahamsland Pekoe at Rs 222.

Groundnut oil heats up on export hopes



demand. It has jumped by Rs 200 in the past three days after the Union Government's decision to allow export of edible oil in consumer packs.

Groundnut oil loose gained Rs 30 at Rs 1,170-1,175 for 10 kg. New groundnut oil tin for 15 kg was traded higher by Rs 50 at Rs 1,945-1,950.

Telia tin price moved up Rs 45 to Rs 1,803-1,804 for 15 kg. About 50-70 tonnes of groundnut oil were traded.

Arrivals of groundnut stood at 5,000 bags in Rajkot and offered at Rs 950-1,100 while arrivals in Jamnagar stood at 450 bags and offered at 716-915 and Gondal recorded 700 bags and quoted at Rs 950-1,050 for 20 kg.

HPS jawa quality 80-90 discount was offered at 77,000 a tonne.

"Groundnut oil export was restricted for last one year and after recent permission, we are expecting good demand from overseas markets. As the festival time is set to begin, we expect retail demand to come up soon in the market," said an oil miller.

Soyabean may gain post-Dasara



Soya oil ruled stable on weak global cues and scattered buying support.

Soya refined, in spot and delivery, ruled at Rs 625-30 for 10 kg (Rs 622-25) on subdued buying support.

Soya solvent declined a tad to Rs 585-90 (Rs 585-95) on weak buying support and foreign projections.

In futures also, soya oil traded lower with October contract on the NBOT closing Rs 2.70 lower at Rs 622.30.

Similarly, on the NCDEX, soya oil futures traded lower with its October and November contracts closing at Rs 635.25 (down Rs 4.30) and Rs 619.70 (down Rs 5.35).

Soyabean declined marginally to Rs 2,850-3,000 a quintal (Rs 2,850-3,100) on rise in selling pressure as arrivals in State mandis on Monday swelled to 4 lakh bags against 2.50 lakh bags on Saturday.

Plant deliveries in soyabean inched up to Rs 3,100-3,150 a quintal. Rise in plant deliveries was mainly due to lower availability of soyabean with crushers as stockists are building inventories of soyabean with them to get higher returns in the future.

Soyabean futures also traded lower on weak foreign and CBOT projections as October and November contracts on the NCDEX closed at Rs 3,086 (down Rs 53) and Rs 3086 (down Rs 71). Arrival of soyabean in State *mandis* had declined to 2-2.5 lakh bags last week with farmers holding up their produce to get higher prices. Tradere foresee soyabean prices going up to Rs 3,500 a quintal post-Dasara festival.

Against arrival of around 4 lakh bags of soyabean in Madhya Pradesh, Indore mandis recorded 14,000 bags, Ujjain - 18,000 bags and Dewas mandi recorded arrivals of 20,000 bags .

Pepper moves up on buying support

The pepper market moved up on buying support and consequently all the active contracts **ended above the previous day's closing on Monday.**

There were limited activities as is evident from the sharp fall in the turnover. There was good additional buying.

The trade alleged that many could not get the benefit of staggered delivery as the goods deposited by them last week had not yet reached their accounts despite the system being electronic. They urged the authorities to resort to manual warehouse receipt system which they claimed is working effectively in other exchanges such as NMCE for rubber.

On the spot, 18 tonnes of farm grade pepper arrived and they were reportedly traded to different directions.

October contract on the NCDEX increased by Rs 280 to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 43,285 a quintal. November and December also went up by Rs 160 and Rs 205 respectively to the LTP of Rs 43,235 and Rs 42,065 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover decreased by 3,005 tonnes to 886 tonnes showing sharp fall in activities. Total open interest increased by 175 tonnes to 7,644 tonnes, showing good additional buying.

October open interest declined by 42 tonnes to 2,808 tonnes while that of November and December increased by 179 tonnes and 32 tonnes respectively to close at 3,642 tonnes and 848 tonnes.

Spot prices remained unchanged on limited activities at the previous levels of Rs 40,000 (ungarbled) and Rs 41,500 (garbled) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$8,600 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and \$8,900 a tonne (c&f) for the US and remained totally outpriced, they said.

Turmeric futures gain marginally

Turmeric futures on NCDEX gained 0.11 per cent at Rs 5,582 a quintal on Monday after it lost 2 per cent the whole of last week.

Commodity market regulator Forward Markets Commission had directed NCDEX to find out if there are any trades logged in to keep turmeric prices artificially low.

Higher stocks with the stockists also pressurised prices.

However, a reduction in the special cash margin to 20 per cent from 40 per cent on the buy side supported the prices whenever it dipped sharply.

Arrivals in Erode and Nizamabad spot market was at 4,000 bags and 1,000 bags respectively on Friday.

Turmeric production in 2011-12 is projected to rise sharply to 90 lakh bags (of 70 kgs each) compared to 69 lakh bags registered in the same period last year. Erode is expected to produce 55 lakh bags of turmeric, a rise of 29 per cent compared to previous year.

Bulk buyers await N. India orders for turmeric



Spot turmeric prices decreased by Rs 100 a quintal on Monday as traders continued to wait for orders from North India.

“The prices are fluctuating, but not increasing more than Rs 5,800. No exporter has received fresh order from North India. Prices have almost remained at Rs 5,800 and below for the past 15 days and exporters and bulk buyers are awaiting upcountry orders,” said R.K.V.

Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

These days only 2,500-3,000 bags arrive, and only 45-50 per cent stocks are sold. Main buyers are stockists and local traders buying for turmeric powder units.

The turmeric farmers said that the current price is not feasible for them. The Fine variety Salem crop increased by Rs 250 and all were sold.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,250-5,534 a quintal, the root variety Rs 3,829-5,079.

Salem hybrid crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,150-6,100, the root variety Rs 4,800-5,295.

Of 652 bags on offer, only 40 per cent were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,611-5,676, the root variety Rs 4,514-5,299.

Of 723 bags put for sale, 655 found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,040-5,860, the root variety Rs 4,311-5,469. Of 340 bags for sale, 327 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,089-5,920, the root variety Rs 4,910-5,410. All the 216 bags were sold.

Onset of new season weighs on sugar



Cautious and slightly weak sentiment continued in sugar market on Monday, tracking higher selling. In the Vashi wholesale market, spot prices declined by Rs 10-20 a quintal.

Naka rates were marginally down, while mill tender rates remained almost unchanged.

The beginning of new crushing season weighed on sentiment though traders were positive about the higher demand during Dasara festival from next week.

Freight rates from Kolhapur – Karad line increased by Rs 5-10 a bag on increased fuel cost.

Sources said that increased resale selling pressure for contracts having nearby due dates for lifting pulled down spot and *naka* rates, while mills tender rates ruled **steady on stockists'** buying.

New buying interest from Eastern States may continue in the coming days.

Arrivals in Vashi continued to rule higher while improved local demand kept market sentiment positive.

Sources said that last week Maharashtra's mills sold about four – five rail rakes (each of 27,000 bags) to Eastern side buyers.

During Navaratri - Dasara and Diwali sugar consumption usually rises.

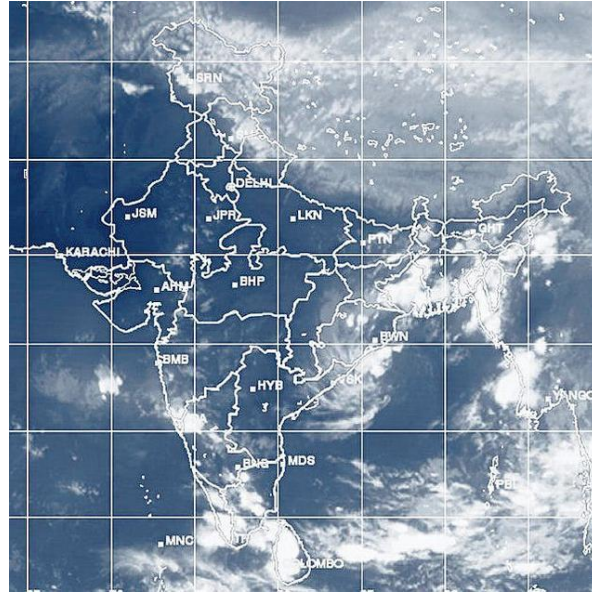
Market may witness tight supply for quality sugar as mills producing fine variety M-grade are not very keen to sell at lower rates, said sources. In Vashi market, arrivals were about 66-67 truckloads (each of 100 bags of quintal each) and local dispatches were about 64-65 loads.

On Saturday evening, about 17-18 mills offered tenders and sold 84,000-85,000 bags (each of 100 kg) to the local traders in the range of Rs 3,380-3,440 (Rs 3,380-3,440) for S-grade and Rs 3,460-3,540 (Rs 3,480-3,550) M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 3,522 – Rs 3,575 (Rs 3,522 – Rs 3,622) and M-grade Rs 3,592- 3,701 (Rs 3,610- 3,701).

***Naka* delivery rates:** S-grade Rs 3,450 -3,500 (Rs 3,460 -3,480) and M-grade Rs 3,530-3,620 (Rs 3,550-3,650).

Rajasthan, Delhi region seen slipping into chill



Maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to fall by 2-3 deg Celsius over plains of north-west and central India during the next three days.

With South-West monsoon having exited these regions, this signals transition to northern hemisphere autumn to be followed by winter.

WEATHER DECIDER

Warm, cold and wet climates will now on be decided by the movement of itinerant western disturbances originating from as far northwest as from the Mediterranean.

Temperatures warm up as western disturbances arrive with their low-pressure **'heads'** but leave the region cold on their trail.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts sees entire Rajasthan and the Delhi region slipping into a chill during October-November-December.

Elsewhere in northwest and Central India, the winter temperature regime is expected to remain around the normal during this period.

In the south, unusual warmth is indicated for western parts of the peninsula as also extreme south.

RETREAT DISRUPTED

As for rain, northwest and Central India may witness normal rainfall while some deficiency is indicated for north peninsula (west Maharashtra and adjoining north interior Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa).

On Monday, after clearing Uttar Pradesh, parts of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Bihar, the retreat of South-West monsoon has got once again disrupted.

A persisting circulation over Maharashtra accompanied by the low-pressure area over north-west Bay of Bengal Orissa is putting up some resistance.

The withdrawal line passed through Raxaul, Varanasi, Jabalpur, Hoshangabad, Vadodara and Porbandar, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday.

RAPID PACE

In fact, overnight rain was reported from many places over Konkan and Goa and at a few places over north Interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

The IMD expects the rains over peninsular India to last for a couple of more days.

Subsequently, the withdrawal is expected to take place at a rapid pace.

In fact, by October 15, the winds are shown to change direction from southwesterly to easterly to northeasterlies over land and the Arabian Sea.

This would mean the South-West monsoon would have exited the entire land mass and Arabian Sea ahead of the onset of North-East (reverse) monsoon.

Business Standard

TODAY FARM NEWS

09.10.2012 A.M

Punjab offers dairy subsidies to farmers



In order to develop dairy farming and encourage the youth to adopt it as a lucrative business in Punjab, the state government has decided to give a 25 per cent subsidy on the purchase of milch cattle.

An advanced institute of dairy farming would be set up in the state in collaboration with Israeli firm Dairy Farming Solutions.

The institute would also provide technical assistance for the scientific handling and processing of milk. Announcing this here on Monday, Punjab Dairy Development Minister Sarwan Singh Phillaur said that hi-tech dairy units would be set up in the state and the subsidy funds for setting them up with two to 10 animals would be deposited in the accounts of beneficiaries once the unit was set up.

The minister also said that in order to promote dairy farming as an alternative venture to agriculture, the dairy development department has launched a comprehensive training programme for young dairy farmers in the state.

Cauvery farmers await help as seawater flows in

NAGAPATTINAM: Not all farmers in the Cauvery delta are in need of water. Some in the coastal plains of Thanjavur, Thiruvarur and Nagapattinam, in fact, have too much of it. The water that enters their fields flows in with the turn of the tide, saline in content and corrosive for soil and crop.

Seawater incursion in at least three districts along the eastern flank remains a clear danger, threatening to ruin future prospects and produce. At its deepest point, sea water is carried 20 km upstream by the Vettar river. Farmers affected by seawater incursion in coastal regions of the Cauvery delta are now pinning hopes on a Rs 1,550-crore, Asian Development Bank-funded project to construct tail-end regulators across all rivers in the delta to reclaim wasteland. A proposal, prepared by the government, is awaiting clearance from the Central Water Commission. Of the total funds, Rs 1,200 crore is meant for Nagapattinam district, said T Munusamy, collector.

Apart from constructing bed dams and regulators at the tail-end, the project also seeks to desilt all canals in the delta. Once the work starts, it would take five years for completion, said an official in the water resource organisation, a division of the public works department. If implemented, the ADB-funded project would help preserve more than 50tmcft of water annually, said Cauvery Farmers' Protection Association general secretary V Dhanapalan.

However, such systems, if not operated properly, would result in high level of acidity in the soil and waterways and render land mass dependent on a higher dose of fertilizers, said retired superintending engineer of Kerala Water Authority, Ramavarma Appan Thamburan.

Referring to similar structures in Kuttanad, Kerala, he said, "The Thanneermukkam bund in Alappuzha has killed Kuttanad. When sea water does not flush river mouths, the natural cleansing process stops and waterways get converted to sewage bowls. A regulator constructed at Kanackankadavu near Mala in Thrissur was later demolished because of such adverse effects."

However, farmers in the coastal delta region are keen on getting regulators. Their plight is that of the proverbial ancient mariner. Despite water being available everywhere, not a drop of it is usable for irrigation because of its high salinity.

Sea water incursion has left paddy fields in coastal regions of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts uncultivable. Backwater has pushed fresh water back by 20km at Vettar in Nagapattinam district. The 35 other rivers too feel smothered at their mouths, said Dhanapalan. A one foot increase in sea level during high tide leads to saltwater incursion to about 12km into all delta waterways, he said.

The Cauvery delta, which sources its water from the Grand Anicut constructed by Karikala Cholan in 180AD, is one of the oldest mono crop cultivating regions in the world. Until two decades ago, paddy used to be cultivated in areas close to the sea. The rivers and canals in the delta, downstream of the Grand Anicut, totally measure 25,663km in length, which is 64% of earth's perimeter along the equator, said S Ranganathan, general secretary of Tamil Nadu Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association.

Octogenarian K A Ambalavanan, a member of the Indian Organic Farmers' Movement at Sikkal in Nagapattinam district, has suffered a tsunami and three cyclones. He started as a farmer, cultivating paddy on about 20 acres. But that is a six-decade-old story. Today he has to look for alternatives. "Our problems started in 1987 when Tamil Nadu's share of Cauvery water reduced owing to Karnataka constructing new reservoirs," he said. "Tamil Nadu did nothing to overcome

that challenge. We could have constructed check-dams upstream and water regulators and bed dams at the tail-end to preserve precious water, which otherwise gets wasted in the sea as run-off."

Don't burn paddy straw, PAU urges farmers

Director of Extension Education of Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) Dr M S Gill has urged **the state farmers not to indulge in paddy straw burning** “as it leads to serious health hazards and environmental pollution through emission of gases such as carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, methane, nitrous oxide and aerosols”.

Cautioning the farmers against the ill-effects of stubble burning, he said the burning of the residue ended up in the non-renewable loss of precious nutrients. The heat generated by the straw burning led to loss of useful microbes in soil, adversely affecting soil properties.

Dr Gill called upon the farmers to adopt eco-friendly technologies like the use of paddy straw for fodder, composting, energy generation and raising of mushrooms.

As per him, PAU has recommended a lighter and low-power Happy Seeder machine which helps sowing of wheat into paddy stubbles. The technology offers a number of benefits such as less weed growth and improved soil health.

Cannabis eases sclerosis stiffness



Use of cannabis extract helps ease painful muscle stiffness among patients with multiple sclerosis (MS), according to a large trial published on Tuesday in the Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry.

The "Phase III" test -- the final stage in a process to vet a new drug or medical process -- took place among 22 centres in Britain.

Over 12 weeks, 144 patients were given daily tablets of tetrahydrocannabinol, which is the active ingredient in cannabis, and 135 were given a dummy pill, also called a placebo.

Doses were gradually escalated, from 2.5 milligrams to a maximum of 25 mg for two weeks, following top-up doses for the remaining two weeks.

At the end of the study, 29.4 per cent of people in the cannabis group said they had experienced relief from muscle spasms, compared to 15.7 per cent in the placebo group, according to an 11-point rating.

They also reported improvement in sleep quality. Side effects were nervous system disorders and gut problems, but none was severe.

MS, a disease that affects the brain and spinal cord, occurs when the immune system attacks the fatty myelin sheaths that insulate nerve cells.

Painful stiffness in the muscles occurs among up to 90 per cent of patients at some time, often leading to poor sleep and impaired mobility.

The trial, led by John Peter Zajicek of Britain's Clinical Neurology Research Group, says standardised doses of cannabis extract can be useful in easing pain and spasms in this disease.

Previous Phase III trials on cannabis and MS have thrown up conflicting results, partly because of the scale by which users report any change in their symptoms, the MUSEC researchers said.

ATMA to educate farmers

The updates in technology are given to the farming community in East Goda-vari by the Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) the nodal agency of both Union and state governments. Though it came in to existence in the year 2007, the same was being extended to agriculture sector since the year 2010.

With the fully framed guidelines by government of India, the full fledged project office was started in the district about three months ago to provide the latest technology development in agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, sericulture and horticulture the five wings under its belt.

East Godavari is one among the 591 districts in the country selected under the Prime Minister's special rehabilitation project for effective implementation.

In the present year of 2012-13 an amount of Rs.1.92 crore was sanctioned for taking up the activity in a big way in East Godavari. Of this amount, the Union government shares 90 per cent

and the rest is being provided by the state government. The ATMA activities are subjected for monitoring at both district and block level.

In total 18 blocks were formed in the district. While the collector heads the governing body at district level, the block level activities will be monitored by block technology team headed by divisional and mandal level officials of agriculture and allied departments.

At these two levels the farmers advisory committees acts in co-ordination with the officials in passing on the information to farmers and in taking up various awareness programmes on technology updating and observation.

The members of the farmers advisory committee and the lead farmer (Rytu Mitra) will play key role in taking up awareness programmes to farmers at inter-district, inter-state levels. Apart from organising district-level agriculture exhibitions, kisan call centres, planning on technology updating, the ATMA committees will be in touch with DoT centres, krishi vijnana kendras and with agriculture research centre (ARS) at Marteru in West Godavari to pass on the updating to the farming community in all the above said five branches.

The ATMA East Godavari project director (PD), Mr K. Sitarama Raju, said that apart from all this activity, they arrange the farmer-scientist meet frequently as part of technology upgradation.

“We also stress the need for farm mechanisation, use of organic fertilise and better agriculture practices in all the five identified wings under ATMA,” the project director disclosed.