

Today Farm News

17.09.2012 A.M

17.09.2012 Sep

NABARD schemes for innovative ideas

There are various schemes for promoting agriculture and rural industries with innovative ideas and innovations, financed directly by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

This is valid for individuals or institutions who show proof of uniqueness in the activities or production either by saving cost or reducing time or procedure apart from maintaining or improving quality, said B. Uday Bhaskar, Assistant General Manager, NABARD. Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs (COWE), Hyderabad, and Alluri Institute of Management Sciences (AIMS)'s Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC), Industry Institute Partnership Cell (IIPC) and Women Empowerment Cell (WEC) jointly organised a one day Entrepreneurship Orientation Programme here.

Project

COWE's unique project 'Young COWE' was inaugurated at AIMS and the concept was explained by Ms. Veena, an active COWE member, who is also the coordinator of the project.

AIMS director Banda Prakash, Prof. G. Sithambar Swamy, Head of Business Management Department, welcomed the gathering. Prof. K.V. Satya Prakash, Chief Coordinator, EDC, was present.

Gollapudi Srinivasa Rao,

in Warangal

17.09.2012 Sep

An equipment for plant researchers



The portable plant photosynthesis analyser.— Photo: H.S. MANJUNATH

An equipment to help plant researchers is now available at the Department of Applied Botany in Mangalore University. It measures the rate of photosynthesis in plants in natural conditions and also in plants treated with radiation/chemicals.

According to K.R. Chandrashekar, Professor and Principal Investigator, Centre of Excellence, Department of Applied Botany, the battery-operated portable equipment weighing about 5 kg is designed in such a way that the measurements can be made in a non-destructive method. "Here, there is no need to uproot or kill the plant to measure the rate of photosynthesis," he said.

Prof. Chandrashekar said that the fully programmable miniaturised analyser will have a wide range of applications in the field of agriculture, plantation and forestry. “The ultimate goal of the cultivation of any plant for any purpose is to obtain the maximum yield which is nothing but its total ability to synthesise sugars through photosynthesis,” he said.

If this can be measured in the early stages of plant growth, probably it would be possible to predict the final yield. In this respect, the photosynthesis system will be a very useful instrument, he said.

What is photosynthesis?

Prof. Chandrashekar said that plants have got specialised structures in their leaf cells called chloroplasts, and the presence of these pigments imparts green colour to the leaves. These pigments are capable of fixing the carbon dioxide available in the atmosphere in the presence of sunlight to sugars. While doing so, they release oxygen into the environment. This process is called photosynthesis.

The rate of fixing of CO₂ varies from plant to plant which once again depends on various physiological and environmental factors such as light intensity, moisture content, temperature, wind etc., Prof. Chandrashekar said.

The equipment is manufactured by ADC BioScientific Ltd., U.K.

17.09.2012 Sep

Inform farmers about effects of pesticides'

The Department of Agriculture should inform farmers about the harmful effects of pesticides, High Court Judge D.V. Shylendra Kumar said here on Saturday.

Speaking at the Lok Adalat, Mr. Kumar said the government was distributing subsidised pesticides to farmers who had no idea about their damaging effects. “Research has proved that pesticides can be harmful to crops and humans, especially children. But our farmers continue to use them as the government gives pesticides at subsidised prices. This practice should be checked,” he said.

He instructed officials to form a committee and submit a report to the Lok Adalat within a month on this matter.

“Overflowing drains here can add to the spread of epidemics. Dengue is also spreading due to such contamination,” Mr. Kumar said. He instructed Gulbarga City Corporation Commissioner S. Nagaiah to take immediate steps to clear the drains.

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Redgram transplantation gaining momentum

The Agriculture department in Madurai will soon adopt the new technology in redgram transplantation, said S. Rajendran, Joint Director of Agriculture, Madurai.

Recently, a team of 12 officials led by Mr. Rajendran visited eight fields in Madivalam and Gudisathanapalli in Hosur block, where red gram cultivation has been undertaken. The visit was part of the month-long training programme in redgram transplantation for officials from different parts of State, which is underway in Hosur. To increase the area and productivity of redgram, State Government had introduced the new technology in transplantation of redgram. This technology had been adopted in Krishnagiri district for over three years and found successful.

N. Nagarajan, Personal Assistant to Collector (Agriculture), told *The Hindu* that under this technology, seedlings were raised in nurseries for about a month before being transplanted into the field with proper space between the crops. He said that by adopting this technology, farmers can reap better profit than under the conventional method of cultivation. The technology was introduced to the farmers in the district after conducting trials in the fields of progressive farmers.

As the technology was a big success, the State Agriculture Commissioner had instructed the Agriculture officials in Krishnagiri district to invite officials from all over the State and impart training in nursery practice and main field maintenance. Progressive farmers Bujji Reddy, Andippa and Chinna Ellappa, who are undertaking redgram transplantation under the new technology, shared their experience with the visiting officials. They had cultivated BRG 1 variety under the new method. The duration of the crop is 150 days.

17.09.2012 Sep

Over 5,000 tonnes of fertilizer ready for distribution in Krishnagiri

To meet the fertiliser needs of the farmers in the district for the Rabi season, the Department of Agriculture has stocked over 5,000 tonnes of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), urea, potash and composite fertiliser, said C. Pachaiyappan, Assistant Director, Quality Control, the Department of Agriculture.

The Commissioner of Agriculture, Chennai, had instructed the officials to keep enough stock for distribution every month. In view of this, 1070 mt of DAP, 850 mt of urea, 1,125 tonnes of potash and 1910 mt of composite fertilizer were moved to 26 private wholesale fertilizer dealers, 360 retail fertilizer shops and 125 Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies through TANFED in the district for the month of September.

The wholesale and retail traders have been instructed to sell fertilizers only at the maximum retail price printed on the bags. They would be monitored by the designated officials in the ranks of Assistant Directors in all the ten panchayat unions in the district. The directions in this regard were given by A. Mohamed Jabarullah, Joint Director (in-charge), Mr. Pachaiyappan said

He also said that in case of any irregularities in fertiliser distribution, farmers can bring it to the notice of Assistant Directors concerned and their contact number are - Krishnagiri 94432 40425, Kaveripattinam 94866 24828, Bargur 94422 32992, Veppahanalli 94433 15218, Uthangarai 97875 08300, Mathur 93618 12803, Hosur 94425 67999, Shoolagiri 94434 85660, Kelamangalam 81445 96115 and Thalli 93600 58044.

Farmers can also contact the Assistant Director, Quality Control, at 94434 91459, Office of the Joint Registrar, Cooperative Societies, at 04343-236006 and Office of the Joint Director, Agriculture, at 04343-237363.

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Kharif sowing still lagging as monsoon season draws to a close

Close to the end of the monsoon season, the sowing of kharif crops is still lagging by over 12 lakh hectares as compared to a normal year (average of five years), with the major shortfalls being in coarse cereals, pulses and oilseeds. This follows the September 12 statement by Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar that the output of kharif pulses, coarse cereals and oilseeds, particularly groundnut, would decrease this year.

Compared to last year, a record year of foodgrain production, the acreage under rice, coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds and cotton is lagging and the total area is short by 55.62 lakh hectares.

Late monsoon withdrawal of no help

Despite the late withdrawal of the monsoon and the erratic distribution of rainfall resulting in floods in parts of the country, it is unlikely that the unsown areas in parts of Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat will be made up. Maharashtra, too, has reported that several talukas have received deficient rain.

The official data on crop position released on Friday shows that coarse cereals acreage has decreased by 28.48 lakh hectares than in a normal year, owing to less area reported in Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.

The area under pulses is lower by 3.16 lakh hectares due to a decline in sowing in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

The area under oilseeds, too, has declined by 1.59 lakh hectares as lower sowing is reported from Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Punjab.

Though cotton sowing is on a par compared to a normal year, its acreage in Gujarat has gone down this year.

17.09.2012 Sep

Kuruvai harvest in pumpset irrigated areas begins



hope abounds:Kuruvai paddy harvest in progress at Madigai village in Thanjavur on Sunday.Photo:B.Velankanni Raj

Kuruvai harvest in pumpset irrigated areas has begun in Thanjavur district. Kuruvai was raised only in pumpset irrigated fields in the district this year as Mettur dam could not be opened on the traditional date – June 12.

Because of this, kuruvai cultivation has reduced to 21,500 hectares from the usual 45,000 hectares. Of the cultivated area, harvest has been completed in 4,000 hectares so far in the district.

"Those who raised kuruvai early are now harvesting. Yield is good with 6 to 6.5 tonnes per hectare," said Mohammed Yahiya, Joint Director of Agriculture, Thanjavur district. Harvest has commenced in Thiruppanandal, Kumbakonam, and Thiruvaidaimaruthur areas and in parts of Orathanadu and Thanjavur blocks.

Though Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) is yet to open direct purchase centres, farmers are getting a good price for their crop in the open market. As there is considerable demand for rice in the State, private parties are purchasing paddy directly from the field.

Farmers are pinning their hopes on the samba crop as the government has announced that water will be released for samba on Monday.

With inflow at 11,287 cusecs and discharge at 2,000 cusecs water level in Mettur dam stood at 83.66 ft on Sunday.

As per the samba package announced by the government, farmers have been advised to go in for direct sowing in some areas, raising of community nurseries in fields with borewells for supplying to needy farmers, and raising paddy under System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method. It has been planned to raise samba crop under the SRI technique in 24,000 hectares in 84 villages. Community nurseries will be raised in 2,500 acres. Farmers have already taken up direct sowing at many places in the district.

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Milk powder plant to get Rs. 100 cr central assistance

The Centre will give Rs. 100 crore to set up a milk powder plant in Karnataka, Union Minister for Corporate Affairs M. Veerappa Moily has said.

The State government should send a proposal in this connection and provide land, Mr. Moily said while speaking at the silver jubilee function of Kolar and Chickballapur Milk Producers' Cooperative Societies Limited (Kochimul) on Sunday.

The Centre had formulated a Rs. 17,000-crore scheme for the development of the dairy sector in the country and was expecting financial assistance from international banks.

Mr. Moily appealed to milk unions in Karnataka to make use of the benefits of the scheme.

"I will request Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar to give sanction to dairy projects in the State, including the proposed fodder unit at Shidlaghatta in Chickballapur district," he said.

Mega dairy

The Centre would grant Rs. 12 crore to set up a mega dairy plant in Chickballapur, Mr. Moily added.

He called upon farmers and milk unions of the undivided Kolar district to work towards procuring 20 lakh litre milk daily by 2020.

Minister of State for Railways K.H. Muniyappa released a souvenir. H.D. Revanna, MLA; Y.A. Narayanaswamy, MLC; A.V. Prasanna, KOCHIMUL president, were present among others.

Protest

Meanwhile, the police took into custody more than 50 people, mainly farmers, who staged a protest near the venue against the decision of the Kochimul administration to restrict the number of farmers who participated in the function.

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Farmers asked to offset labour shortage with mechanisation

Go in for mechanisation of agriculture wherever possible to overcome the shortage of farm labourers, said A.Tajuddeen, Dean, Anbil Dharmalingam Agriculture College and Research Institute, Kumulur. He counselled paddy farmers at a field demonstration on planting and weeding machines at Nachalur near here recently.

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Karur, based at Puzhutheri, took up the issue as all farmers cutting across socio economic stratifications in the region face labour shortage – partly as a result of the general decline in the number of trained farm hands and mostly due to diversion of agricultural labourers to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme works in non farm sector.

Mechanisation not only made farming less cumbersome, but also improved productivity and increased per capita income, the academician pointed out.

For taking up activities such as raising nurseries, spraying inputs, and carrying out weeding operations, farmers must rely more on farm implements to make good the short supply in labour, Dr.Tajuddeen added.

For taking up machine planting , mat nursery was needed and that was prepared using plastic trays filled with soil and vermicompost in equal ratio.

Filling the media and planting paddy seeds on the tray was laborious and the field demonstration would help the farmers acquaint themselves with the machine planter, he observed. Another use of mechanised farming is frugal use of water , the dean underlined.

The seeding machine can prepare 350 nursery trays per hour, which can be used for planting in around two hectares.

These seedlings could be transplanted after the 12th to 15th day of raising nursery. The field demonstration was part of the ClimaRice programme in which over 50 farmers from various villages in Kulithalai and Thogamalai blocks of Karur district participated.

A.Parthiban, NABARD, assistant general manager, Karur, interacted with farmers on farm mechanisation . Agricultural scientist Sudhakar and technician James from the ADAC&RI conducted demonstrations for the benefit of farmers.

Deputy Director of Agriculture S. Soundaram Assistant Executive Engineer, Agricultural Engineering Wing, Prasad, and Assistant Director of Agriculture, Kulithalai, Duraisamy, took part.

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: Farm owners will not find any labour shortage soon as the village panchayats will meet their labour demand by sparing rural workers who registered their names with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme for executing farm work, according to revenue

and development officials. The new system will certainly wipe out farm labour shortage to a large extent which was created by implementation of MGNREGS.

To begin with, the district administration had kick-started an enumeration of MGNREGS workers to identify total number of skilled farm workers and experts in various agriculture activities.

After enumeration, they will prepare a panchayat-wise list of workers and hand it over to the village panchayat presidents concerned.

The enumerators will group the workers within the panchayat on the basis of skills, specialisation and knowledge on the particular farm work. The Department of Agriculture or Agro-Engineering Departments will also inform panchayats the requirement of labours for executing a particular work in their area. Moreover, farmers will inform them the nature of work in their farm, duration of work and number of workers they required.

On the basis of the requirement, panchayat president will supply number of personnel to the farm.

The Revenue and Development Departments will take care of distribution of wages to them on the basis of their work. The enumeration of MGNREGS workers had commenced in all the panchayat recently. Farmers' share in wages to farm workers will be finalised with the district administration shortly.

Many farmers throughout the country complained that MGNREGS had swept away workforce from the agriculture fields creating an acute shortage of labour. The labour shortage forced farmers to go for farm mechanisation also.

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Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 75

Wind: normal

Monday, Sep 17

Max Min

35.2° | 22.2°

Sunrise: 05:57

Sunset: 06:08

Barometer: 1008

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Tuesday, Sep 18

Max Min

34° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday
Sep 19



30° | 27°

Rainy

Thursday
Sep 20



30° | 25°

Rainy

Friday
Sep 21



32° | 27°

Rainy

Saturday
Sep 22



30° | 26°

Rainy

Sunday
Sep 23



33° | 26°

Rainy

Airport Weather

Delhi



Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:07

Sunset: 06:23

Barometer: 1006



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Retail FDI, a game-changer



The announcement on notifying 100 per cent FDI in single brand retail, and opening up multi-brand retail to FDI is a welcome move, and sparks hopes of restoring investor confidence and attracting more funds from overseas. It is worth reiterating the benefits expected from this move.

The arguments against FDI in multi-brand retail range from fear of local kiranas being wiped out, to farmers being exploited or use of monopolistic practices.

But several studies have emphasised that FDI in multi-brand retailing would boost the organised retail sector, with a positive impact on stakeholders, including producers, workers, employees

and consumers. The fund inflow and technology from overseas would help bring in greater efficiencies down the supply chain.

LOWER PRICES

A more efficient farmer-to-consumer chain would reduce prices for the final consumer. In addition, quality of goods would improve with shorter time taken to reach the final consumer. It is also expected that food safety standards would improve with better testing and aggregation facilities.

The consumer would also benefit from the wide choice that a large multi-brand retailer can afford. The fear of predatory pricing by large retailers, Walmart, Tesco or Carrefour, is misplaced, considering the competition from multiple players. The government has also recently constituted the Competition Commission precisely to check unhealthy practices.

FARMER TO BENEFIT

The second beneficiary of FDI in the retail sector would be the farmer and producer whose price realisation would increase substantially through the organised retail sector.

According to a recent report by CII and Boston Consulting Group, an Indian farmer of tomatoes earns 30 per cent or less of the final price whereas in the developed countries, the farmer can receive as much as 70 per cent.

Further, technology and inputs would provide the farmer much-needed opportunities for growth.

A significant portion of the mark-up is on account of the existence of a large number of intermediaries with multiple margin payouts. So far, little investment has come for supply chain infrastructure such as cold storage, warehouses or refrigerated transport, with the result that as much as 40 per cent of agricultural produce may be spoilt or wasted.

Organised retail would help reduce wastage, adding to food security. Similarly, needless middlemen in the mandis, which are often known to promote cartelisation, would have to look for other employment.

ADVANTAGES FOR SMES

Third, even the non-farming sector, particularly the small manufacturer, would reap the advantages that modern retail provides.

These small players currently do not enjoy scale and distribution network to cover the market. With the entry of organised retail, SMEs would be able to go in for bulk production with guaranteed absorption of their product.

In addition, with quality becoming the main consideration, the SMEs would have to invest in modernisation and upgradation leading to a better product for the consumer, the end beneficiary.

A recent study on the impact of organised retailing on the unorganised sector by the Indian Council for Research on International Relations (ICRIER) did not show any evidence of a downtrend in employment following the entry of organised retailers.

Instead, the study said, small retailers evolve as they add new product lines and brands, go for better displays, renovation of stores, introduction of self-service, and more credit sales and acceptance of credit cards.

It is also not uncommon to hear about local kirana stores being wiped out as a result of organised retail. But against the total retail business worth billions of dollars, the present cash-and-carry retail chains account for a market share of only about seven per cent.

In the case of Metro Cash and Carry outlets, the kirana operator benefits from sourcing his products from the German MNC at a much cheaper price. Similarly, today, corporate retailers, the kirana merchant and the local vegetable vendor co-exist side by side, with the ultimate beneficiary being the consumer.

EMPLOYMENT CREATION

Finally, in terms of employment, it is expected that organised retail would generate over four million new direct jobs which would earn an incremental income of 15-30 per cent over other alternatives.

As many as six million new jobs would be created in the infrastructure segment with logistics, packaging, housekeeping and security. Most of these are expected to come in from the back-end in rural areas.

The total retail market, according to the CII-BCG study is projected at \$1,250 billion by 2020 based on macro economic factors including GDP growth, private consumption growth and mix of goods and services. Currently, organised retail trade in the country is estimated at \$28 billion, just about 6-7 per cent of the total retail market. This is expected to shoot up to \$ 260 billion by 2020.

Even then, organised retail would be just about one-fifth of the total market, the rest being covered by local stores. Organised retail would extend to food and beverages, clothing and accessories, electronics and appliances, furniture, health and personal care in addition to food services and sporting goods.

Thus, the new policy announcement can be expected to be a game-changer for India's retail sector. The Government has undertaken multiple stakeholder consultations in working out the details of inviting FDI in retail, both single-brand and multi-brand.

The resulting stipulations are prudent and designed to encourage investments in the supply chain as well as add jobs. In particular, rural areas would benefit from stronger connectivities to the urban markets.

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Making better use of water resources



Farmers in many parts of the country utilised groundwater to save their crops when monsoon played truant this year.

Groundwater's use for agriculture assumes significance since only 44 per cent of the net sown area of 140 million hectares is irrigated.

OVER USE

Due to unplanned development, overexploitation of ground water resources has resulted in considerable decline in ground water.

About 15 per cent of the blocks, talukas and mandals in the country are currently in the over-exploited zones.

Also, the over-use of surface water has resulted in drainage problem in irrigation, causing water logging in some areas.

POLLUTION

Pollution of river and deterioration in the quality of ground water are other added problems.

Pollution has mainly been caused by untreated sewage from the urban areas and effluent from the industry.

Excessive use of chemicals and fertilisers and pesticides is another reason for pollution.

These issues call for further development of water resources to meet the growing demand, particularly for irrigation, industrial use and drinking.

According to the Ministry of Water Resources, there is a need to bring more cropped area under assured irrigation to increase productivity and production.

A policy paper of the Ministry has estimated the irrigation potential of the country at 140 million hectares. Surface water is seen meeting the requirements of 76 million hectares and ground water the rest.

WATER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Ministry is in constant dialogue with various arms of the Government to harness the available irrigation potential.

In fact, the Centre prefers to see irrigation potential beyond the identified 140 million hectares through better water management practices. Given the hydrological features and topographical constraints in the country, this is a challenging task. But surplus flood water is one source that can be utilised to tap the irrigation potential.

POSSIBILITIES

One way for this could be interlinking of rivers and this is seen as helping to provide irrigational facilities for 35 million hectares.

Artificial recharge of ground water could also help in additional water availability of about 36 billion cubic metres that can be utilised for various purposes included irrigation.

Water is seen as the solution to challenges of food security and climate change impact in developing countries.

Though the impact of climate change on water resources is yet to be made, various studies say that this could lead to intensification of the variation in the availability of water. In particular, there could extreme events of flood and drought.

SAVING METHODS

The emerging situation calls for various methods to save water. One of the ways could be to harvest rain water.

Very few States in the country have taken the initiative. The other way could be to construct check dams so that water can not only be preserved but the groundwater can also be recharged.

Recycling water for irrigation and industrial use can be another way. Also, water for irrigation is free in the country and power to draw water is also free in most States.

A review of these is another way to preserve water besides ensuring its proper usage.

17.09.2012 Sep

Onion exports rise 23% in volume, drop 27% in value terms



Onion exports from the country increased by 23 per cent in volume during April-August but dropped in value by 27 per cent during the period.

Exports in the first five months have been pegged at 7.9 lakh tonnes against 6.41 lakh tonnes during the same period a year ago. Earnings from exports were pegged at Rs 547.90 crore against Rs 756.50 crore.

Shipments increased primarily since they were offered at costs that were 40 per cent lower than last year. For the whole of last year, the unit value of realisation from a tonne of onion was Rs 13,790. This year, the realisation, so far, has been Rs 6,934.

The competitive offering of onions has been possible mainly since the Centre lowered the minimum export floor price (MEP) for onion to \$125 a tonne since April. During the same period last year, the MEP ranged between \$200 and \$250.

A feature of this year's export has been that shipments were over 1.5 lakh tonnes every month, barring August when it dropped to 1.39 lakh tonnes. One reason for the drop was buyers placing lower orders in view of monsoon, while poor quality of arrivals was another reason.

August and September are periods when exports slow in view of monsoon. Also, it is when farmers generally tend to run out of stocks or would prefer to push only those grades that are vulnerable to damage.

Expectation of the new crop that generally arrives during September-end in the market also adds to the factor.

CONSTANT DEMAND

According to export sources, there has been a constant demand this year from the Gulf countries in particular. In addition, there has been good buying from Far-Eastern nations, especially Indonesia.

The Centre had begun fixing the MEP to check exports which were seen as a primary reason for onion prices soaring to over Rs 100 a kg in retail outlets during December 2010 and again in February 2011. In fact, the Centre had banned exports in January 2011 before removing it in February following protests from growers.

Onion production during 2011-12 was a record 15.39 million tonnes against 15.11 million tonnes the previous year. Of this, Maharashtra's contribution was 5.03 million tonnes (4.9 million tonnes) during the period despite the area under the crop being lower.

17.09.2012 Sep

Urban agriculture for food security



Few of us might be aware that 2008 was the first year in history, when the world's urban population (more than three billion), exceeded the number of those living in rural areas. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), by 2020, the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America will be home to some 75 per cent of all urban dwellers.

The situation in India is no different. Indian cities are home to an estimated 340 million people, almost equivalent to 30 per cent of the total population. As evident in majority of the industrialised countries, India is experiencing a shift over time from a largely rural and agrarian population residing in villages to urban, non-agriculture centres.

Rapid urbanisation in developing nations is accompanied by a rapid increase in urban poverty and urban food insecurity. This scenario is further aggravated by the fact that high food inflation, which by now is a global phenomenon, is expected to continue.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates, by 2050, global food demand will increase by 70 per cent in order to feed the global population of 9.3 billion. This is going to put tremendous pressure on already scarce land and water resources implying an urgent need for an alternative way to combat food shortages. Urban agriculture, although not a panacea for food insecurity, has the potential to provide millions with some secure access to food.

WHAT IS URBAN AGRICULTURE?

According to FAO urban agriculture can be defined as: “An industry that produces, processes and markets food and fuel, largely in response to the daily demand of consumers within a town, city, or metropolis, on land and water dispersed throughout the urban and peri-urban area, applying intensive production methods, using and reusing natural resources and urban wastes to yield a diversity of crops and livestock.”

Along with the urbanisation process, particularly in developed nations, urban agriculture has evolved from a simple, traditional and informal activity into a commercial and professional initiative and a key element in food security strategies.

Urban agriculture was officially recognised by the 15th FAO-COAG (Council of Australian Governments) session in Rome during January 1999 and subsequently at the World Food Summit in 2002.

ADVANTAGES OF URBAN AGRICULTURE

Easy access to fresh, nutritious food for lower income consumers, and income generation potential.

Supply to urban food markets, street food and food processing, providing additional employment and income

Water harvesting, water re-use, and urban wastes re-cycling to provide water, animal feed and fertilisers to provide for the requirements of urban agriculture

Integration of urban agriculture with urban greening programmes which can provide fuelwood for urban residents, reduce urban pollution and temperatures, as well as offer recreation opportunities to improve quality of life for all urban residents
Urban Agriculture – The Indian Context

Urban agriculture in India is just witnessing the beginning with few initiatives in some of the cities, such as:

- Composting and vermiculture (prominent in cities such as Kolkata and Chennai)
- Advances in dairying/animal husbandry in urban and peri-urban areas (Bangalore)

- Urban Agro-forestry (Hyderabad)
- Horticulture production activities in cities (Delhi) and
- Terrace farming in Mumbai

In Hyderabad, it was found that households that produce vegetables saved 20 per cent of their total food expenditures by retaining part of the produce for household consumption

As India progresses towards a rapid phase of urbanisation and as the concept of sustainable cities becomes increasingly acceptable, there are opportunities to build environmentally and economically sound urban agriculture systems, involving waste and water management that can be incorporated from the beginning itself and make it an integral part of urban planning.

WAY FORWARD

Urban agriculture is probably the most efficient tool available which can help manage city's waste by utilising it for food cultivation and creating jobs. It creates a diverse ecology where fruit trees, vegetable plantations and even fishing, etc. could coexist and build a wholly ecologically sustainable scenario. In India, the concept is still at nascent stage and there is a need for greater awareness about urban agriculture. Socially-oriented enterprises can play a significant role to diffuse knowledge-intensive techniques in this area.

The Government at the same time should facilitate urban agriculture through different various bodies such as municipalities, cooperative societies etc.

Land policies in and around cities need to be designed in such a way that it accepts agriculture as a legitimate usage of land. Urban agriculture has to be integrated in the agriculture policies and urban planning; and should, therefore, be brought under the purview of regulatory framework. Similar to the different countries such as China, Australia, the US, South America, Europe, etc. where targets have been set to make cities greener and sustainable, India should also promote urban agriculture which is necessary for the sustainability of its bursting cities and people.



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What is urban agriculture?

According to FAO urban agriculture can be defined as: “An industry that produces, processes and markets food and fuel, largely in response to the daily demand of consumers within a town, city, or metropolis, on land and water dispersed throughout the urban and peri-urban area, applying intensive production methods, using and reusing natural resources and urban wastes to yield a diversity of crops and livestock.”

Along with the urbanisation process, particularly in developed nations, urban agriculture has evolved from a simple, traditional and informal activity into a commercial and professional initiative and a key element in food security strategies.

Urban agriculture was officially recognised by the 15th FAO-COAG (Council of Australian Governments) session in Rome during January 1999 and subsequently at the World Food Summit in 2002.

Advantages of Urban Agriculture

Easy access to fresh, nutritious food for lower income consumers, and income generation potential.

Supply to urban food markets, street food and food processing, providing additional employment and income

Water harvesting, water re-use, and urban wastes re-cycling to provide water, animal feed and fertilisers to provide for the requirements of urban agriculture

Integration of urban agriculture with urban greening programmes which can provide fuelwood for urban residents, reduce urban pollution and temperatures, as well as offer recreation opportunities to improve quality of life for all urban residents
Urban Agriculture – The Indian Context

Urban agriculture in India is just witnessing the beginning with few initiatives in some of the cities, such as:

- Composting and vermiculture (prominent in cities such as Kolkata and Chennai)

- Advances in dairying/animal husbandry in urban and peri-urban areas (Bangalore)
- Urban Agro-forestry (Hyderabad)
- Horticulture production activities in cities (Delhi) and
- Terrace farming in Mumbai

In Hyderabad, it was found that households that produce vegetables saved 20 per cent of their total food expenditures by retaining part of the produce for household consumption

As India progresses towards a rapid phase of urbanisation and as the concept of sustainable cities becomes increasingly acceptable, there are opportunities to build environmentally and economically sound urban agriculture systems, involving waste and water management that can be incorporated from the beginning itself and make it an integral part of urban planning.

Way Forward

Urban agriculture is probably the most efficient tool available which can help manage city's waste by utilising it for food cultivation and creating jobs. It creates a diverse ecology where fruit trees, vegetable plantations and even fishing, etc. could coexist and build a wholly ecologically sustainable scenario. In India, the concept is still at nascent stage and there is a need for greater awareness about urban agriculture. Socially-oriented enterprises can play a significant role to diffuse knowledge-intensive techniques in this area.

The Government at the same time should facilitate urban agriculture through different various bodies such as municipalities, cooperative societies etc.

Land policies in and around cities need to be designed in such a way that it accepts agriculture as a legitimate usage of land. Urban agriculture has to be integrated in the agriculture policies and urban planning; and should, therefore, be brought under the purview of regulatory framework. Similar to the different countries such as China, Australia, the US, South America, Europe, etc. where targets have been set to make cities greener and sustainable, India should also promote urban agriculture which is necessary for the sustainability of its bursting cities and people.



Today Farm News

17.09.2012 A.M

17.09.2012 Sep

Diesel factor? Sugar prices skyrocket

Steep hike in the diesel price coupled with low production of sugarcane has soared up the sugar prices in the Capital. Resultantly, the consumers have not just the hiked diesel price and the limit on subsidised LPG cylinders to worry about but the increase in prices of essential commodities such as sugar are also affecting the family budget by a great deal.

The traders and the transporters have blamed the surge in sugar price on the increased transportation cost while the manufacturers of sugar have attributed the price rise to low production of sugarcane. Sugar which was being sold at Rs40-42 till Thursday last week is now being sold at Rs45-50.

Delhi Transporters Association held the Government responsible for the price rise and said that the prices of not only food items but all goods may go up by nearly 15 per cent due to increased transportation cost. President of the Delhi Transporters' Association RC Juneja said, "Prices of commodities ought to be raised post the steep hike in diesel price as it has not only increased the fuel charges but also the freight charges. Unfortunately, we cannot do anything about it. The Government is responsible for this mess."

The manufactures of sugar, however, said that hiked diesel price cannot be held solely responsible for increased sugar prices. An official of a sugar manufacturing unit, on condition of anonymity said, "Though diesel price hike is one of the factors for sugar price rise, sugar production has been relatively low this year. Both the factors have jointly led to increased sugar prices."

Nina Sharma, a housewife and a mother of two, held the Government responsible for the price rises. She said, "My husband is the only working hand in the family. His salary has not been hiked significantly since last year but the prices of almost everything have gone up steeply. The government has made our lives a miserable. Running a family with earning of one person has become impossible."

Strangely, the Delhi Government has no mechanism to keep a check on retailers and wholesale sugar distributors.