

THE HINDU

Today's Paper » NATIONAL » TAMIL NADU

Published: September 1, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: September 1, 2012 05:08 IST

Bridge between farmer's demands and consumer's needs

G.Sathyamoorthi

The computer engineer has set up a 1000-metric tonne capacity warehouse with the aid of NABARD

G. Karikalan. —PHOTO:R.M. RAJARATHINAM

A computer engineer's passion for the much-ignored agriculture is poised to make the agricultural community in his region self-reliant.

"I have been passionate about agriculture since my days at Vestry School, Tiruchi, and even after graduating in

computer science, it continued to haunt me. My mission is to get remunerative price for the farmer and provide agro

products at affordable costs to the consumer by eliminating the huge margin enjoyed by middlemen which is more

than 50 per cent," begins G.Karikalan, 45. "I want to provide rice, which is sold at Rs.40 a kg, at least for Rs.35 by

forming a bridge between the producer and the consumer," he adds.

Hailing from Keezhapatty, about 25 km from here, which used to look like a 'lush green carpet', he did work in

software companies in Bangalore, Ahmadabad and Coimbatore after graduation in 1991, only to return in 2003 for

taking up full-fledged agriculture, both organic and conventional. But he was forced to look after a software company

in Chennai for two years from 2007.

But, he came back home once again only to set up a warehouse with a capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes for which

National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) helped him get a loan of Rs.30 lakh. "This is the

only private warehouse in Karur district,” points out A.Parthiban, District Development Manager, NABARD, Karur.

As Mr.Karikalan was trained as a master farmer by Saraswathi Krishi Vigyan Kendra, he became proficient in system of rice intensification method, sustainable sugarcane initiative, and marketing, ‘which is the weakest link in Indian agriculture,’ says Mr.Parthiban. Thus, Mr.Karikalan made the villages around his hamlet ‘totally SRI compatible.’

He then moved on to ‘clima rice’ production with Norway-funding and support of the ICAR and the TNAU. Then he started producing seedlings, including for major sugar mills. “First five months, I produced 1.2 lakh seedlings and this year I have produced six lakh seedlings that are sold throughout the State.” In June this year, he mobilised the

support of farmers in 25 villages around his native place, made 200 of them shareholders in Nachalur Farmers’

Producer Company Ltd, each one paying an equity capital of Rs.20, 000, and incorporated it under the Company’s

Act 1956. S.Sureshkumar, District Development Manager, NABARD, Tiruchi, points out that his organisation started

promoting about two years ago the concept of ‘producers’ group’ like the one that Mr.Karikalan has now started.

Explaining the objectives of the company, Mr.Karikalan says it will first act as an ‘input supply shop’ on no-profit-no-loss basis. It will have a seed processing unit which will handle 150 tonnes of paddy and 100 tonnes of black gram.

Terrace farming getting popular

Staff Reporter

Terrace vegetable farming is fast catching up in Thrikkakara municipality with the Thrikkakara Residents' Association Apex Council (TRAAC) taking the initiative to introduce the concept in its member associations.

The project, being implemented by the State Horticulture Mission in association with the Ernakulam Agri-Horticulture Society, had already been launched in more than 600 households affiliated to more than 50 associations under TRAAC in the first phase.

“The initial plan was to introduce it in 500 households. But the reception to the project had far exceeded our expectations. Now we are planning to launch the second phase by next month,” said M. S. Anilkumar, president of TRAAC.

Office-bearers of various associations with genuine interest in farming had been selected in the first phase. The idea was to enable them to lead by example rather than merely preaching the concept.

They were being given training by experts from the District Agri-Horticulture Society to educate them on the nuances of terrace farming.

These office-bearers in turn will train other members in their associations once the projects get into overdrive.

The selected households had been given a handbook about tips on effective farming ways and to identify and fight pests that attack vegetables.

Mr. Anilkumar said that TRAAC covers about 64 per cent of the 20,000 households in the municipality. The idea was to enable the residents of the municipality to cultivate vegetables for their needs on their rooftops and help themselves to a sumptuous feast using those produce during occasions such as Onam.

Mr. Anilkumar said that the project of rooftop farming received a boost with the State government increasing the subsidy component significantly thereby reducing the initial investment

With the increased subsidy, the entire kit comes at a price of just Rs. 400.

The kit comprises of 20 ultra violet stabilized bags containing a mixture of red soil, river sand, dry cow dung, and coco peat sprayed with pseudomonas bacterium to protect against decay, and also seedlings and seeds.

Today's Paper » NATIONAL » ANDHRA PRADESH

Published: September 1, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: September 1, 2012 05:06 IST

Rain brings cheer to farmers in upland areas

Staff Reporter

Sankhavaram and Tondangi mandals have recorded a maximum rainfall of 100 mm

Upland areas in East Godavari district have witnessed good rains for the last 48 hours and all the tanks are full to the brim. Yeleru canal, Pushkara, Sudhagadda vagu, Vedula Cheruvu, and Ragamma Cheruvu are over flowing. Incessant rain brought cheer to farmers of Kirlampudi, Sankhavaram, Rowthulapudi, Tuni, Jaggampeta, Tondangi, Rajavommangi and Devipatnam mandals which are considered upland areas. Partial upland areas such as Rangampeta and Seethanagaram also received heavy rainfall in the last two days . Sankhavaram and Tondangi mandals recorded more than 100 mm of rainfall and the lowest rainfall of 5.8 mm was recorded in Devipatnam mandal on Thursday.

“Farmers are now a happy lot and they can intensify kharif operations. Against a target of 2.24 lakh acres in kharif season, transplantation of paddy seedlings was completed only in 1.80 lakh acres. Now farmers will take up plantation in the rest of the areas,” said D. Prameela, Joint Director, Agriculture Department.

Meanwhile, Pushkara canal had breached at several places in Tuni, Gollaprolu and other mandals and as a result agriculture fields were inundated in these mandals. The coco plantation in Gavarpeta was waterlogged due to the breach in Tuni mandal. Heavy flow of water in Pushkara canal resulted in breaches to Kodavali Raju tank in Gollaprolu mandal and the canal breached at Durgada, Chinna Jaggampeta, Ragamma Cheruvu and Phidelu Cheruvu in Jaggampeta mandal inundating agriculture fields in Nagaram, Gollalagunda, Kandregula and other villages.

Water entered houses in a few colonies at Kapavaram in Bikkavolu mandal following breaches to Vedula Cheruvu. About 20 villages were cut off as the road between Lampakalova and Prathipadu was washed away due to flood waters of Sudhagadda vagu

NEW DELHI, September 1, 2012

Late rain leads to early rabi crop sowing

Late southwest monsoon rain has reduced the gap in kharif sowing, but farmers — who did not sow even short-duration crops when rainfall was delayed — are now going in for early sowing of rabi crop. They will sow by September 15 rather than October 15 to take advantage of the moisture in the soil, official sources told *The Hindu* .

Shortfall in sowing of coarse cereals and pulses, however, will remain as the kharif season comes to a close for oilseeds, cotton and sugarcane.

Even as the average rainfall deficiency has come down to 13 per cent, there are estimates that because of the delayed monsoon, the overall production, especially of coarse cereals, may drop by about three million tonnes this kharif.

Central teams have visited Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat to study the situation arising out of unsown or late-sown crops. Rajasthan says some of its districts are still rain-deficient. As per data released by the Agriculture Ministry, the overall sowing in kharif is lower by 6.61 lakh hectares compared to a normal year (average of five years). However, when compared to last year — which was a record year — total sowing this kharif is lower by 60.90 lakh hectares with shortfall in rice, coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds and cotton. The Ministry is going by comparisons with a normal year.

Compared to normal year, paddy sowing is higher by 15.25 lakh hectares. Late kharif paddy will be cultivated in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka and Maharashtra. As such, no loss of rice production is estimated due to delayed monsoon.

Sowing of kharif coarse cereals is lower by 28.90 lakh hectares owing to shortfall in cultivation in Rajasthan, where the rains came too late. Instead of delayed sowing of short-duration crops that will be ready for harvest by December, farmers will go in for early sowing of rabi pulses and oilseeds, official sources said. This would help these two crops in the rabi season.

The area under pulses is lower by 3.61 lakh hectares compared to a normal year. Parts of central Maharashtra and Marathwada did not receive adequate rain in the last three weeks affecting the standing crop. In this region, the standing groundnut crop has come under stress.

The area under oilseeds has declined by 1.21 lakh hectares due to unsown groundnut in Gujarat and the sown oilseeds coming under stress in parts of Andhra Pradesh.

September 1, 2012

Flowers for all seasons

CHAT Keep it simple and try not to mix colours, says celebrity florist Rob Van Helden



Colourful passion Rob Van Helden

Rob Van Helden comes from the land of the tulip fields, those carpets of colour that are part of the clichés that Holland provokes. Now based in London, the florist is top-of-the-game, having done the floral designs for a Shilpa Shetty wedding here, an Elton John ball there, Pierce Brosnan's wedding somewhere down the line, with Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday party thrown in.

Helden was on a visit to New Delhi recently, to participate in 'The Wedding Atelier 2012' at DLF Emporio. Most of the flowers he has used — Singapore orchids, bells of Ireland, carnations, mini chrysanthemums, hypericum berries and Colombian hydrangeas — he explains, are locally sourced.

"I always try to make use, as much as possible, of local flowers because it is not easy to import flowers into India. You don't want them to get stuck at Customs and have no flowers on the day," says Van Helden, who's worked on around 15 weddings in India.

Love for flowers

It all started with a part-time job in Holland when he was a kid. "In weekends and in school holidays I used to help out at the local flower shop in our village. Not to do flowers — just to sweep up and clean flowers, and deliver them. Being Dutch, there's always a love for flowers. I'm one of six children. My father used to bring flowers home for my mother. And when we — my brothers, sisters and I — started earning pocket money, we used to bring flowers for mom as well. So flowers have always been a big part of our family," Van Helden recalls.

After a Management course in Holland, he joined Selfridges in London, where he asked to be put into the flower department. The job profile, though, was mostly managerial. He later put together

a small team and formed his own company, with his sister Patrice joining him in London. It's been 25 years.

As far as the flowers go, Van Helden's premise is to not over-think it. "My style is to show off the flowers' natural beauty, not to try to be too clever. Show one type of flower through a vase. I'm a big believer in the props you use as well. Flowers should be shown for what they are; that's how they're grown. One colour is more striking than trying to mix," he lists.

"Everyone's tastes are different and I try to go with everybody's tastes and come up with new ideas. I've made myself believe that every wedding or every party is my own wedding or my own party. When you stand behind the scenes and you watch the guests walk in going 'Wow! — That's the biggest compliment you can get. Money can't buy that.'"

Pretty as hell they may be, but flowers die. Is the impermanence of his medium that rankles, the effort of days withering away after one day or night?

"If I look back at the number of parties I have done and the quantity of flowers that have been used, yes. You create something fabulous for one night and then it's over and done with. That's why I always check with my client if we can send the flowers off to a hospital, so people enjoy the flowers for another day or two. The flowers that we buy are at their best on the night of the party. But then, flowers make people happy; they are there for every occasion."

September 1, 2012

World Coconut Day



Kerafed organises a seminar on different aspects of coconut production as part of World Coconut Day. Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan will inaugurate the event.

Venue : District Co-operative Bank Auditorium

Address : Kallai Road

Date : September 2

Time : 2 p.m.

September 1, 2012

Flower shower



When in bloom, they seem like a shower of flowers. Devoid of blooms, the bright green foliage lends a luxuriant look to the whole garden. Among the oldest garden plants, *Cassia* is a gardener's delight. *Cassia* are hardy flowering plants in the legume family (Leguminosae) with about 760 species of herbs, shrubs and trees distributed across continents.

Some of the *Cassia* species have long been studied and cultivated throughout the world for their medicinal properties and showy inflorescences.

Cassias are short trunked, with spreading branches and smooth bark. The leaves are soft, bright green and pinnate with eight to 12 pairs of oval or oblong leaflets.

Depending on the species, these plants are evergreen, semi-evergreen or deciduous types with white, yellow, pink, orange or red flowers. Flowers are five-petalled, bowl shaped, borne in clusters along branched or un-branched inflorescences. Fruit is legume, tubular or flattened; seeds are small and compressed.

Their long blooming period makes them a valuable addition to any landscape. Also they serve as larval host plants for many types of butterflies.

Cassias can be grown in moist but well-drained, moderately fertile and neutral soil. They need a lot of sun for optimum growth and profuse, colourful blooms.

Staking

Watering should be done according to the climate. Since Cassias require moist soil for optimum growth, regular watering is required till they are well grounded after which it can be reduced. Use less water during winter.

Fertilize the plants before the commencement of the flowering season to have a good display of blooms. Balanced liquid fertilizer shall be applied in the spring and monsoon.

With their lean stems and branches, Cassias are susceptible to wind damage. Staking (tying the plant to a long straight stick fixed in the ground to hold it erect) is needed to protect them from the wind during the initial months, till the plant stands on its own.

Cassia plants are generally hardy and resistant to pests and diseases. Cassias, with their prolific branching, develop a tangle of branches. Prune the lower branches on young plants and the drooping branches in mature ones to keep the canopy well structured. Remove dead wood. Cutting back the branches by a third after flowering season will bring in profuse blooms the following season. But heavy pruning before flowering can disrupt its natural timing.

Cassia plants can be propagated through seeds. But it is not easy because the seeds are very hard and watertight. With seeds being generally dormant, the process of germination takes time. So they have to be pre-treated with acid (scarification) and soaked in water for about a day for speedy sprouting.

N. CHANDRAMOHAN REDDY

Published: September 1, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: September 1, 2012 05:09 IST

Ryot electrocuted

A 22-year-old farmer, Gaddam Naveen, who erected barricades with electricity wire around his maize field at his

native Savel village in Balkonda mandal, was electrocuted on Friday morning.

However, he came in contact with the live electricity wires early in the morning and died on the spot.

Most farmers refuse to sell turmeric



Erode, Aug 31:

A few farmers sold turmeric below Rs 9,000 a quintal on Friday but a majority of them refused to sell.

“On Friday, turmeric markets received a total of 1,721 bags. The highest price quoted was Rs 7,183 a quintal in Regulated Marketing Committee and Rs 6,969 in Erode Cooperative Marketing committee.

Only 25 per cent farmers accepted and confirmed the price.

A majority of farmers did not confirm the price and refused to sell their turmeric for such price.

They told traders that if they quote Rs 9,000, they will sell. But traders were not willing to buy the turmeric for such price, as they have not received any fresh orders from North India. Sales and prices were higher compared with Thursday,” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric merchants Association.

Fifty-five per cent of the stocks was sold.

Stockists who intended to build inventories purchased almost all the offerings.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, due to arrival of best varieties of turmeric, prices increased and 90 per cent of the stocks were sold.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,236-6,659; the root variety Rs 3,634-6,085.

Salem hybrid crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,811-7,300; root variety Rs 5,509-6,471. The arrival was 753 bags and 244 were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 6,523-7,183, the root variety Rs 6,089-6,666.

Out of 662 bags, 588 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,687-6,839, the root variety Rs 5,400-6,177. Of 47 bags of turmeric, only 21 were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,819-6,969, the root variety Rs 5,469-6,429. Of 309 bags of turmeric, 229 were sold.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 1, 2012)

Absence of bulk buyers pounds wheat



Karnal, Aug. 31:

After touching a record high last week, dara wheat and flour prices witnessed some correction on Friday. Dara wheat and flour prices went down by Rs 50-60 for a quintal and 90-kg bag respectively.

Sewa Ram, a wheat trader, told *Business Line* that slack buying and expectations of new tenders for flour mills mainly pulled dara wheat down. Despite not much buying in the market, any major alteration in wheat prices is unlikely and it may rule around current levels for the next few days, he said.

Bulk buyers are keeping themselves out of the market at present as they are waiting for the prices to come further down, he added. In the physical market, dara went down by Rs 50 and quoted at Rs 1,540-1,550 a quintal. Around 45 tonnes of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh . Mill

delivery was Rs 1,540-1,545 while delivery at the chakki was Rs 1,550 . On the other hand, Desi wheat was ruling between Rs 1,950 and Rs 2,070.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for September delivery increased by Rs 12 to Rs 1,585 a quintal. Spot wheat on the exchange was traded at Rs 1,664.35.

Flour Prices: Following a downtrend in wheat, flour prices too went down by Rs 60 and sold at Rs 1,530 for a 90-kg bag. On the other hand, Chokar went up by Rs 30, after ruling flat for almost a week and sold at Rs 700 for a 49-kg bag.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 1, 2012)

Sugar may rise on festival demand



Mumbai, Aug 31:

Sugar prices shot up Rs 40-60 a quintal in Maharashtra on higher demand on Friday. Naka rates went up Rs 50-70 on eased selling pressure while in the Vashi wholesale spot market, pressure from mills to lift stocks and higher arrivals kept the price rise limited to Rs 20-30. Traders expect a further jump on higher retail demand for the new month Ganeshotsav festival. A Vashi-based wholesaler said that buying from eastern side continued in Maharashtra for the fourth consecutive day. Maharashtra's mills sold two rail rake (each 27,000 bags) of S-grade at the price of Rs 3,410 – Rs 3,436 to eastern side buyers on Thursday evening taking total volumes to 8-10 rakes (more than two lakh bags) this week.

As September to November is festival season, domestic consumer demand for sugar could rise.

Higher rates in domestic futures markets kept the sentiment bullish in the physical market. Arrivals and local dispatches were higher on Friday. Freight rates ruled steady.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, said in press release that the Ministry has been consistently getting reports about some sugar mills, resorting to the

practice of issuing of sale invoices in the last of the month while the actual financial and physical transaction happens subsequently.

In Vashi market arrivals were higher at 58-60 truck loads (each of 100 bags of quintal each) and local dispatches were 57-58 loads. On Thursday evening, about 16-17 mills sold more than 1.30 lakh bags including two rail rakes (52,000 – 54,000 bags) to eastern buyers in the range of Rs 3,410-3,436 and sold about 83,000-85,000 bags (each of 100 kg) to local traders in the range of Rs. 3,390-3,460 (Rs 3,360- 3,420) for S-grade and Rs 3,470-3,570 (Rs 3,420-3,520) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 3,512-3,572 (Rs 3,485-3,552) and M-grade Rs 3,586- 3,731 (Rs 3,561- 3,711).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,500 -3,530 (Rs 3,440 - 3,480) and M-grade Rs 3,600-3,650 (Rs 3,530-3,630).

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 1, 2012)

Coonoor tea auction turnover hits 14-week low

P.S. Sundar
Coonoor, Aug. 31:

This week's turnover of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction that ended on Friday has declined to the lowest level of the last 14 weeks, reveals an analysis of market reports.

Although prices had increased over last week, the volume sold was dismally low. On an average, every kg fetched Rs 90.10 against Rs 87.34 last week. This was the highest price fetched in 12 weeks.

However, the high price reduced the offtake. Only 9.17 lakh kg could be sold this week against 11.74 lakh kg last week. This was the lowest volume sold in 14 weeks. Consequently, the turnover fell to Rs 8.27 crore from Rs 10.25 crore last week. This was the lowest turnover in 14 weeks. On May 25, the turnover was Rs 7.56 crore but ever since then, it had been more than this week's level.

This also meant that in just one week, the turnover has declined by Rs 1.98 crore or 19.32 per cent.



Poultry business to get a boost

Also, a surge in demand from Kerala may aid business

Komal Amit Gera / Chandigarh September 01, 2012, 0:58 IST

Poultry farmers across India are expecting brisk business in the coming days. They feel a further revision in egg prices is on the cards, as the month of Sharavan is over. Also, a surge in demand from Kerala may aid business.

The rise in prices of eggs this month, from Rs 2.40- 2.50 per egg to Rs 3.00-3.20 per egg, had helped poultry farmers tackle escalating feed costs. P Tamil Arson, owner of Namakkal-based Pepe Farms (which has about 500,000 birds), said with stable demand, the revision in egg prices offered relief to farmers, as input prices were likely to remain high.

Arson added though poultry farmers used substitutes of conventional feed like soya, maize and rice bran, these didn't help. "If we substitute the conventional feed with cheaper alternatives like guarmeal, cotton seed and palm cake, we save about Rs 2 a kg on feed, but it effects production. So, we land up in the same situation," he said.

Devender Ahlawat, general secretary of Haryana Poultry Farmers Association, said DDJS (distillery-based feed) available at Rs 6-7 a kg few months ago, was now sold at Rs 30 a kg. So, now, if the demand for a new variety of poultry feed rose, so would prices.

Poultry farmers feel the overall price revision of the food basket has fetched better prices for eggs, as the cheaper options (vegetables and pulses) are unavailable to consumers.

K K Sardana, joint managing director of Surjit Starch and Chemicals, said the prices of corn gluten (protein-based poultry feed) almost doubled in the last few months, owing to a rise in maize prices. This drove many farmers to buy cheaper alternatives. Currently, maize prices stand at Rs 1,160 a quintal (in Bihar) and Rs 1,300 a quintal (in Delhi).

The rise in egg prices has also stretched the culling period of birds from 60 weeks (two months earlier) to 72 weeks. Ideally, a bird should be culled after 80 weeks. But rising feed costs have made it unviable for poultry farmers to rear birds for long. If egg prices rise, the culling period of birds may also increase, said a poultry farmer.