



Today Farm News

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TNAU to reach out to farmers

In an effort to bridge the gap between farmers and the university, the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore, plans to provide facilitation to enable individual farmers to double their income and increase productivity.

“We will use the workhorse of the university to bridge the gap between farmers and the university. This will be done in collaboration with the departments of agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries. We will provide secondary agriculture training to students,” Vice-Chancellor of TNAU K. Ramasamy told reporters during the sidelines of an on-site workshop on Recombinant DNA Technology and Bioinformatics at Thiruvalluvar University, Vellore, on Monday.

TNAU was ready to come to individual farmers and would be more open to farmers, he noted. “Farmers can take up some kind of value addition such as backyard poultry or milch cows. We will provide a market chain for the produce, value addition and price fixation,” he mentioned.

So far, TNAU was concentrating on facilitating research scholars, staff and faculty, he said, adding that from now on, concentration would be given to empowering students.

“We are also coming up with an exchange programme for students and staff with known established Indian universities and international institutions. We are also creating a corpus for

empowering research. Experts in agriculture from across the country can come and teach as visiting professors. We are looking at 700 experts for this,” he said.

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### International workshop on animal welfare begins

A five-day international workshop on ‘Animal Welfare and Livestock Health and Production Improvement,’ the second one in a series, being organised by the British Council in association with Edinburgh University and Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU), Pookode, began at the University seminar hall on Monday.

Inaugurating the workshop, S. Ramkumar, Director, Entrepreneurship, KVASU, said the whole world was changing and a teacher should deliver lecture in the classroom by comprehending the change. The developments of the world should be brought into the classroom for quality education and it would decide the successes of the future veterinarians. “We have the content but there is a great scope for improving the quality of the content,” he said.

The methodology of teaching should change according to the need of the hour, Dr. Ram Kumar added.

K.P. Sreekumar, professor, International Collaboration, KVASU, welcomed the gathering. Leo Joseph, Dean, Veterinary College, Pookode, presided over the function.

Natalie Warren, Professor, Animal Welfare Department, and Neil Furgison, Professor, Livestock Animal Production Department, Edinburgh University, will lead the workshop. Seventeen faculty members of the KVASU would be trained at the workshop.

B. Ashok, Vice-Chancellor, KVASU, will inaugurate the valedictory function.

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## Increase procurement price, demand sugarcane growers

Sugarcane growers appealed to Pugalur Sugar Mill to increase the procurement price of cane for the current season. Growers from Karur, Erode and Tirupur district have also pointed out that with rise in open market price of sugar there was every reason to effect a price rise.

At a meeting of cane growers affiliated to Pugalur mill held here recently, the president of Erode and Tirupur District Sugar Cane Growers Association, M.V. Shanmugaraj, and Pugalur Sugar Mill Sugarcane Growers' Welfare Association president N.K.M. Nallasamy pointed out that growers had emphasized the need for the factory to revise the procurement price for the current season taking into account the ground reality.

Despite those persuasions, the management has not effected a rise in procurement price of cane bought from growers who were facing strain. With steep hike in cost of production, farmers were suffering losses and needed to be supported, they argued. The meeting resolved to ask the management for a hike of Rs.200 per tone over and above the State government fixed procurement price, but regretted that there was no reaction from the management so far on their demand.

The growers were disappointed with the attitude, the resolution noted.

The meeting also resolved to meet again on October 15 to chalk out further course of action for the growers if the management continues to ignore reality, another resolution said.

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## Weekly meetings to boost samba cultivation planned

With a view to make samba cultivation a success in the district, Collector S.Natarajan has advised officials of agriculture, revenue, PWD, and cooperation departments to organise weekly

meetings at revenue division level and review the progress of schemes. The meetings should be held at 11 a.m. every Tuesday.

Assistant directors of agriculture, assistant executive engineers of PWD, and cooperation department officials should take part in the meeting and redress grievances of farmers.

The Collector also instructed officials to conduct meetings at revenue divisional level at 3 p.m. on Tuesday in the first and third week of a month to monitor irrigation and distribution of agriculture inputs.

Outcome of these meetings will be reviewed on Friday every week at the district level, the Collector said.

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Silver Oak should continue to be exempted from timber transit rules:  
small tea growers

The Nilgiris District Small Tea Growers Association has urged the State Government to ensure that the exemption granted to Silver Oak trees from the purview of the Tamil Nadu Timber Transit Rules, 1968 continues.

Claiming that attempts were being made in certain quarters to get the exemption withdrawn, the President of the association H. Thiagarajan

has in a letter to Chief Minister Jayalalithaa pointed out that the exemption was now benefiting thousands of small tea growers.

Stating that the tea gardens of different sizes were the only source of livelihood for the majority of the small farmers, he said that till about six to eight decades ago the small growers' tea

holdings had orange trees and coffee plants as shade trees in the lower regions of the Nilgiris. Peaches, pears and plums were grown as intercrops in the higher regions.

These trees not only provided the necessary shade to the tea bushes but also augmented the income of the small farmers. Around three decades ago due to pest attack like blight and fungal attacks the fruit trees were destroyed and efforts made by the growers to revive them failed.

Tea Research Institutes had stepped in then and recommended the growing of silver oak as a shade tree as it was beneficial to the tea plants and also a source of income to the small growers since it had commercial timber value.

Though harvesting was recommended once in 10 to 12 years, sometimes they were cleared even after the completion of the fifth year.

The Silver Oak tree (*Grevillea Robusta*), a native of Eastern Coastal Australia was introduced in the Nilgiris for its commercial timber value. Even now the seeds are brought from the Silver Oak Farms in Bangalore. Silver Oak is used in the construction industry as a centering post and as packing material in the packaging industry. Since it is softwood it is not used for making furniture and since it has a low calorific value it is not used in the tea factories as fuel.

Though ideally only 100 trees are recommended for every acre, many farmers raise about 20 per cent more by growing them along their boundaries. A lot of effort and care is required in the early stages as the tender leaves of young Silver Oak are liked by wild animals such as Indian Gaur and also domestic cattle.

A mature Silver Oak tree of 10 to 15 years has a girth of 28 to 30 inches and yields about 14 to 15 cubic feet of timber. It can fetch about Rs. 5000. The income from Silver Oak trees usually helps the small growers take care of major commitments. When the industry was in the grip of an unprecedented crisis about a decade ago the income from silver oak trees had helped farmers make ends meet.

Farmers can hope to earn about Rs. 5000 from a matured Silver Oak only if it is exempted from the Timber Transit rules. Otherwise they will get only about 50 percent of the value.

Until the exemption was granted neither the farmer nor the end user benefited. Only the middlemen were making hay. Since the harvest of the Silver Oak trees is usually followed with a re-planting operation, the Government should arrange for the supply of saplings with subsidy.

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'Marketing facilities for organic produce needed'



Ganesh Karnik, Deputy Chairman of the Non-Resident Indians (NRI) Cell, speaking at 'Organic Agriculture Mela' in Dharwad on Monday.

Ganesh Karnik, Deputy Chairman of the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Cell, has stressed the need to provide marketing facilities to organic farmers.

Speaking at Organic Agriculture Mela, held at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) here on Monday, he said that society was becoming aware of organic agricultural produce. Hence, the government should see that organic produce was bought and sold at fair prices.

He suggested setting up special marketing units to sell organic produce at the taluk level, and involve self-help groups (SHGs) in the process. Involving SHGs would also strengthen the campaign to promote organic farming. The Department of Agricultural Marketing should also set up organic storage units.

In the absence of proper marketing facilities for organic produce, there is a chance that a third party would exploit both farmers and customers, he said.

Expressing reservations over adopting foreign technology in agriculture, he said that it would not suit the Indian system of agriculture and would do more harm than good.

Vice-Chancellor R.R. Hanchinal presided over the function. He said that to attract youth to farming, agricultural graduates would be staying in villages for six months to respond to people's problems. UAS would also offer two-year diploma courses in agriculture for rural youth, he said.

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Ensure adequate supply of fodder to cattle: Shettar

As the district has been hit hard by severe drought for two consecutive years, the district administration should try to reopen all goshalas, depending on the requirement, and provide employment to job card-holders under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

Officials should ensure that beneficiaries of the scheme receive their payments within a week, Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar has said.

Speaking after reviewing drought relief measures at a meeting here on Monday, he said that the government was ready to release funds for maintaining these goshalas and for taking up drought relief measures.

Officers should collect details of fodder available with the district administration as well as farmers, and maintain adequate stock to ensure regular supply of fodder to cattle in goshalas.

"In case of shortage, the district administration should arrange to get fodder from other districts or States with financial assistance from the State government," he said.

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company personnel said that power supply had been provided to 252 of the 279 drinking water schemes taken up in the district so far. Power supply to the remaining 27 schemes would be given in the next four days.

The zilla panchayat's engineering division personnel stated that removal of silt from 68 tanks in the district had been taken up at a cost of Rs. 19.5 crore.

Silt had been removed from 59 tanks. Work on the remaining tanks would be completed in the next few weeks.

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Erratic monsoon may push down kharif output

At an estimated 117.18 million tonnes, kharif production is expected to fall short of the target by 11.84 million tonnes this year, what with the delayed and deficient monsoon hitting production of coarse cereals, pulses and oilseeds in parts of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

It is lower by 12.76 million tonnes than what was achieved during kharif of 2011-12, though the southwest monsoon deficiency has come down to five per cent after significant late rainfall in August and September.

Releasing the first advance estimates of kharif production for the 2012-13 marketing season here, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said that at 117.18 million tonnes, the output would be lower than the target (129.02 million tonnes) and even last year's final estimates (129.94 million tonnes) but was still "better than expected."

"We expect the shortfall to be made up in the rabi (summer crop) season as delayed rain has helped to restore moisture in the soil, especially in the rainfed areas," he said, after inaugurating the rabi campaign for 2012-13 to decide on sowing strategies with State government representatives.

"The target for next wheat harvest is set at 86 million tonnes." Wheat production in 2011-12 was a record 93.90 million tonnes.



Kharif rice production is expected to be 85.59 million tonnes against the target of 89 million tonnes. In the past five years, the output was 85.51 million tonnes.

Coarse cereals production is expected to be 26.33 million tonnes against the target of 33 million tonnes. Of this, jowar output is expected at 2.63 million tonnes, bajra at 6.60 million tonnes and maize at 14.89 million tonnes. Jowar and bajra output last year was 3.50 million tonnes and 10.05 million tonnes.

Mr. Pawar said pulses output was also likely to be lower, at 5.56 million tonnes, compared to 6.16 million tonnes last year. "There is a decline in output of moong and moth, though urad will be higher and tur will be as per expectation."

Against the target of 20.78 million tonnes, oilseeds production is expected to be 18.78 million tonnes. This includes groundnut 3.82 million tonnes, castor seeds 1.40 million tonnes, soya bean 12.62 million tonnes and sesamum 0.76 million tonnes. The "encouraging" soya bean production, Mr. Pawar said, would offset the decline in groundnut (owing to lower sowing in Gujarat and parts of Karnataka).

Cotton output is expected to be 334 lakh bales of 170 kg each, against 352 lakh bales in 2011-12. Sugarcane output is likely to be 335.33 million tonnes, compared with 357.66 million tonnes in 2011-12.

"The late rain in August and September improved the situation as well as the storage in reservoirs. I give full credit to farmers and our scientists that despite [the] erratic and delayed monsoon, they could achieve this result," Mr. Pawar said.

Asking the States to keep up the momentum of 3.3 per cent annual growth rate achieved during the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan, he said the overall target for grain production in 2012-13 was set at 249.52 million tonnes. Last year, against the target of 245 million tonnes, the country produced 257.44 million tonnes. Answering a question on the rising prices, he said there were enough stocks of wheat, rice and sugar, and he saw no reason for their prices going up. "[The Food Ministry] should release more sugar in the open market to keep prices under check."

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'T-bias' upsets oil palm growers of coastal Andhra



Mounds of oil palm fresh fruit bunches dumped outside the processing plant of the AP Oilfed for crushing at Pedavegi in West Godavari district.— Photo: A.V.G. Prasad

The oil palm growers from the coastal Andhra region are up in arms against the government's alleged skewed priorities in favour of the Telangana region in establishing processing plants. The reported decision by the governing board of the Andhra Pradesh Oil Federation (AP Oilfed) recently to establish a major processing plant with

20-40 tonnes crushing capacity (per hour) either at Dammapeta or at Aswaraopet area in Khammam district by investing

Rs.60 crore has raised the hackles of the growers from the coastal region.

A delegation of the Pedavegi Area Oilfed Farmers' Association met Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy during his Pallenidra programme at Jangareddygudem last month seeking a level playing field in oil palm cultivation. The factory at Pedavegi processes the oil palm fresh fruit bunches (FFBs) supplied from two mandals in West Godavari and four mandals in East Godavari district at the rate of 20 tonnes per hour.

The Oilfed, a State-owned agency, is also running another plant capable of crushing 15 tonnes per hour at Aswaraopet. The fruits harvested in over 5,000 ha from 25 mandals in the district are supplied to the plant for crushing.

Undavilli Venkata Rao, who led the delegation to the Chief Minister, said the proposal to set up a plant with 5-10 tonne crushing capacity at Prattipadu in East Godavari district had failed to

take off due to the regional compulsions of the government that allegedly went in favour of the Telangana region.

A source from the Oilfed said around 85,000 tonnes of FFBs were expected to arrive in the plant at Pedavegi next year for crushing from its crop area. “The fruits could be processed by increasing the plant capacity up to 25 tonnes per hour with the yield at 85,000 tonnes. But it will serve the purpose if the yield goes up to 1 lakh tonnes in the next two years as expected by the government in the wake of a boom in oil palm cultivation. The increase in yield will necessitate the need for a major plant with 40 ton crushing capacity at Pedavegi”, the source said. Mr. Venkata Rao apprehended that the Oilfed had decided to complete the new plant in Khammam district by 2014 while remaining ‘indecisive’ over the need for an expansion programme at Pedavegi.

The oil palm crop suffered a setback in 2008 as a result of the economic downturn, which saw a price crash and felling of plantations by the growers.

However, there has been a two-fold increase from 65,000 acres in the three coastal districts and Khammam in Telangana region together in the last four years as a result of the turnaround on the price front.

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Rice to be procured directly from millers

Rice will be procured directly by the State government from millers from October 15 to meet its requirements for the public distribution system, mid-day meal scheme and other such schemes being implemented to provide food security to the poor.

This decision has been taken in line with the Centre’s instructions to the States to introduce “decentralised procurement system” enabling them to undertake rice procurement to meet their requirements, relieving the Food Corporation of India of this responsibility.

**Procurement in 7 districts**

A proposal by the State government to go ahead with direct rice procurement through the AP Civil Supplies Corporation as part of the proposed new system was approved by Union Minister of State for Food & Consumer Affairs K. V. Thomas following discussions by him with Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy and Civil Supplies Minister D. Sridhar Babu at the Secretariat on Monday.

Accordingly, direct rice procurement would be undertaken from October 15 in seven districts, to start with -- Karimnagar, Warangal, Nalgonda, Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore and Chittoor -- as an experiment. Civil Supplies Commissioner Harpeet Singh later said the State would sign an MoU with the Centre soon to implement the experiment.

Mr Sridhar Babu said while the State required 40 lakh tonnes of rice annually for PDS and other schemes, it would procure 15 lakh tonnes under the experiment.

#### **Normal system in other districts**

Answering questions, the Minister clarified that the normal system, however, would be followed in all districts for paddy procurement through self-help groups of women, primary agriculture cooperative societies, farmers' societies and district central marketing societies, offering MSP.

He said the government had opted to introduce the decentralised system to procure rice only in phases because it lacked trained personnel.

Now, all vacancies would be filled and personnel trained to extend the experiment to other districts.

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State not to take up new minor irrigation schemes

The government has taken a policy decision not to take up any more minor irrigation projects and instead streamline and strengthen the existing ones so that the farmers of their ayacuts will get better service.

Announcing this to reporters after discussions with Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy here on Monday, Minor Irrigation Minister T. G. Venkatesh said the efficiency of the existing minor

irrigation tanks would be improved by way of de-silting and clearing of weeds and the ayacut under them doubled to 40 lakh acres in two years. The estimated potential of the minor irrigation tanks is 55 lakh acres.

### **Repair works**

As part of the programme, the details of 20,000 out of 65,000 tanks would be displayed on the net for the present.

Referring to a promise made by the Chief Minister at the meeting that there was no dearth of funds, he said repairs to all the minor irrigation tanks would be undertaken on a war-footing now, as Rs. 600 crore was available to his department under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. He said all the vacancies of engineers and other posts in his department would be filled soon through regular recruitment.

### **Extension centres**

Three extension centres of Water Land Management & Training Research Institute (WALAMTARI) would be set up in each district to train farmers on optimum utilisation of the available water and on opting modern techniques of cultivation.

An official press note said that the Chief Minister instructed officials to undertake repairs to at least one-thirds of the total number of minor irrigation tanks annually. A Rs 1,137-crore JICA-aided AP Irrigation and Livelihood Improvement Project had been launched to construct 55 minor irrigation projects and train water users' associations.

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**Nigerian Minister addresses ICRISAT symposium**

Nigerian Agriculture Minister Dr. Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina said that International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) represents the best hope of farmers in the semi-arid tropics, crucial for the economic prosperity, and food and nutritional security of the dry land poor.

In his keynote address delivered at the 40th anniversary science symposium of ICRISAT held Patancheru in Medak district on Monday, the Minister acknowledged the relentless passion in helping Africa and the developing world through its 40 years of research-for-development work that has left footprints of success globally.

With groundnut remaining an important crop for resource-poor farmers in Nigeria, Minister Adesina announced the launch of a significant three-year collaborative partnership programme between ICRISAT and Nigeria's Ministry of Agriculture to bring back his country's lost glory as a leading groundnut exporter.

He said that ICRISAT's research work made semi-arid Ethiopia a major exporter of chickpeas, revolutionised food production through large-seeded pigeonpea varieties in Tanzania, improved yields through disease-resistant groundnut in Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia and Mozambique, and has helped farmers across Africa's semi-arid tropics through innovation, fertilizer micro-dosing.

Dr. Robert Bertram of the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Food Security noted the potential for ICRISAT to play its role in these transformative approaches. ICRISAT Director General William Dar expressed commitment to collaborate with Nigeria in increasing productivity.

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Cumbum Valley farmers get ready for second crop

With sufficient water released from Periyar dam and permission to advance second crop, farmers in Cumbum Valley have started preparing the land for the second crop in the double cropping areas.

Farm activities are in full swing in many parts of the valley.

Farmers in some parts of the valley have raised nurseries using the water released from the dam. Transplantation will take place soon, opine farmers.

Agriculture Department officials believe that the yield from the single crop this year will be more than the yield obtained in the previous year. All nutrients in the field will be fully utilised by the first crop.

Sufficient stock of hybrid paddy seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other agriculture inputs are available with the Agriculture Department for distribution.

In the meanwhile, illegal tapping of river water is rampant in many areas. With acute power cut, farmers do not hesitate to use diesel engines to pump water from the river and this resulted in slump in required quantum of water to the farmers in the tail-end areas. They appealed to the Public Works Department engineers to stop illegal tapping.

The PWD officials had released water through 17 channels for irrigation purpose. Water released through two channels only had been used by farmers who raised the first crop with initial release. With the advancement of second crop, entire release will be utilised by farmers for irrigation.

On the other hand, filling of rural tanks in dry belts of Cumbum Valley is also in full swing to help farmers raise at least one dry crop during this season. (Normally, water will be stored in irrigation tanks during second cropping season only.)

With failure of monsoon and poor storage in Periyar dam, the district administration had stopped discharge from the dam and advised farmers not to raise the first crop in the double cropping area and asked farmers who had raised nurseries and some who had even completed transplantation, with the initial release of 200 cusecs, to stop all farm activities and abandon the standing crops. Transplantation was completed in almost 2,000 acres in Cumbum, Goodalur and Uthamapalayam blocks. With the blessings of rain god, farmers had managed to protect their crops.

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## YSRCP asks Chief Minister to stay put in delta farmer's residence

YSR Congress Party has challenged Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy to stay put in delta farmer's residence to understand their plight, during his visit to the district.

YSRCP wrote an open letter to the Chief Minister here on Monday. Releasing a copy to press, YSRCP agriculture wing convener M.V.S. Nagi Reddy said 'palle nidralu' should not be just for officials. The Chief Minister should also stay put in a village to understand the predicament of farmers, more particularly tenant farmers, he said.

The Congress government had repeated the mistakes of TDP government by not releasing water to delta region. In 2003 also former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had released water from Jurala project though there was a widespread farmers' agitation up to September 15.

The delta farmers were not up in arms against the release of waters from Jurala project. But, they would like to know why the government denied riparian rights of delta farmers, he said, adding, the government with its inefficient management had pushed the delta farmers into doldrums.

As much as 60 percent works of Pulichintala project were completed during Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy tenure. The government, thereafter, could complete only 12 percent of the works.

Had the government completed the Pulichintala, which would ensure irrigation waters to delta region for 50 days, the regional disparities and differences would not have cropped up. Likewise, the fate of Polavaram project is hanging in balance. The government has no commitment to complete the projects and put the State on development track, he alleged.

The government, instead of spending crores of rupees on false propaganda, needs to resolve the problems faced by the people. A 'white paper' on achievements of the present government vis-a-vis YSR government with a special reference to rural areas would speak volumes of failures of the Congress government, he said.



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## Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 81.24 feet on Monday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,762 cusecs and the discharge, 14,991 cusecs.

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Food output fall by 10%, Sharad Pawar says don't worry

NEW DELHI: The government on Monday projected a 10% fall in foodgrains output during the [kharif](#) season this year at 117.18 million tonnes due to a deficient monsoon but expects the shortfall to be made up by winter crops.

While production of rice - a major kharif (summer) crop - is estimated to fall by 6.48%, coarse cereals is likely to decline by 18.32% and pulses by 14.6%. Oilseeds, cotton and sugarcane output has also been pegged lower than last year.

Notwithstanding [the fall](#) in kharif output, agriculture minister [Sharad Pawar](#) said the total foodgrains production in 2012-13, from both kharif and rabi (winter sowing) seasons, would be enough to meet annual domestic demand of 238MT.

"As per the first advance estimate, total foodgrains production is expected at 117.18MT in the kharif season of 2012-13 crop year, lower than the last year but higher than the average production of 113MT in last five years," he said.

Foodgrains output was 129.94MT in last year's kharif season. Rice production is estimated to decline to 85.59MT from 91.53MT this kharif, while output of coarse cereals could fall to 26.33MT from 32.26MT and that of pulses to 5.26MT from 6.16MT.

The expected fall in production is due to "delay in onset of monsoon along with rainfall deficiency in many parts of the country," Pawar said, adding the total deficit has come down to 5% now. Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan have declared drought in over 390 taluks. "Whatever shortfall we have seen in kharif season will be covered in rabi," the minister said.

"Last year's stock of wheat and rice is extremely good. There is no problem. I am worried prices of wheat, atta and sugar are going up."

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GM crops may not resolve food crisis, scientists say

NEW DELHI: Genetically modified (GM) crops have so far been promoted as the 'breakthrough' technology that will help resolve food insecurity in India. But a group of prominent agricultural scientists, who addressed the media on Monday in Delhi, said that [GM crops](#) may not help feed India's booming population. They suggested that India use a mix of ecological farming, supported by conventional breeding and make optimum use of local knowledge and natural resources instead.

"How we grow our crops, what kind of crops will be grown, where and by whom are in fact the critical questions", said Prof Hans Herren, Co-chair of International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), who was awarded the World Food Prize in 1995. "India must invest in rural infrastructure and institutions".

The scientists stressed that transgenic approaches are incompatible with sustainable agriculture and livelihoods. "What we really need is a shift in paradigm, where a holistic approach drives our interventions in agriculture without reductionist solutions hogging the centre-stage and taking away precious resources", Herren added.

Dr [Doug Gurian-Sherman](#) of the Union of Concerned Scientists, USA quoted a study on productivity of transgenic crops in the USA. He said that their studies had shown that conventional breeding and farm management continue to greatly out-perform transgenic technology when it comes to yield improvements.

Another scientist, Professor Jack Heinemann from the School of Biological Sciences, [University of Canterbury](#) gave the example of South America where GM technology has failed to solve food crisis "Only two countries in the world, both in South America, grow GM on more than 40% of their agricultural land and both are suffering from increased food insecurity. Most of their poor neighbors that have not adopted GM have improving food security statistics," he said.

They gave the example of high-tech GMO technology in the USA. "Adopting GM technology has been accompanied by greater consolidation of resources and power for few seed companies, higher seed prices, greater risk for farmers and less choice in varieties with hardly any increase in productivity," they said.

The media briefing by scientists on 'Can GM Crops Meet India's Food Security and Export Markets?' was organized by Aruna Rodrigues, lead petitioner in a public interest litigation seeking moratorium on GM testing in India. Adding to the doubts over the success of GM technology in food is a study by a molecular biologist, Prof Gallis Eric Seralini of University of Caen in France.

It is one of the first studies to be done over the entire lifespan of laboratory rats and is the longest health impact study of genetically modified (GM) crops and herbicides on laboratory animals. Seralini's study was recently published in Elsevier journal, found that herbicide tolerant GM maize treated with and without herbicides had some serious health implications on rats.

There were increased cases of mortality among rats fed with GM corn, increased liver and kidney damages seen in the case of male rats fed with GM corn, increased tumors both in the case of male and female rats that have been fed with GM corn.

Also, the effects were sex dependent with the female rats fed with GM crops, developed mammary tumors and pituitary gland failure.

*Scientists have discovered the genes that influence [flavour](#) and [colour](#) in wild and traditional tomato varieties.*

The discovery could make more [tomatoes](#) taste like heirlooms, said the international research team headed by a [University of California](#), Davis, plant scientist.

The finding has significant implications for the U.S. tomato industry, which annually harvests more than 15 million tons of the fruit for [processing](#) and fresh-market sales.

"This information about the gene responsible for the trait in wild and traditional varieties provides a strategy to recapture quality characteristics that had been unknowingly bred out of modern cultivated tomatoes," said Ann Powell, a biochemist in UC Davis' Department of Plant Sciences and one of the lead authors of the study.

"Now that we know that some of the qualities that people value in heirloom tomatoes can be made available in other types of tomatoes, farmers can have access to more varieties of tomatoes that produce well and also have desirable colour and flavour traits," she said.

For decades, plant breeders in the tomato industry have selected varieties that are uniformly light green before they ripen, in order to produce tomatoes that can be harvested at the same time.

However, this characteristic is accompanied by an unintended reduction in sugars that compromises the flavour of the fresh fruit and its desirability for processing.

Powell's UC Davis research team began studying the genes influencing tomato fruit development and ripening after spending two summers screening tomato plants for transcription factors that might play a role in both fruit colour and quality. Transcription factors are proteins that regulate genes, or turn them on and off. These factors themselves are manufactured or

expressed by genes.

The UC Davis researchers were particularly interested in tomatoes they observed in the field that were unusually dark green before they ripened.

Partnering with researchers at [Cornell University](#) and in Spain, who were mapping regions of the tomato genome, the scientists discovered two transcription factors, called GLK1 and GLK2, which control the development of chloroplasts. Chloroplasts are the structures in the plant cells that enable plants to photosynthesize, converting the energy of sunlight into sugars and other compounds that influence flavour and colour.

The researchers scoured a collection of mutant and wild species of tomatoes established at UC Davis by the late Professor Charles Rick beginning in the 1950s.

They discovered that dark green tomatoes that naturally express GLK2 produced ripe fruit with increased levels of sugars or soluble solids, important for processing tomatoes, as well as higher levels of the health-promoting compound lycopene.

"Nature presents numerous important genes and their variants, like uniform ripening, that breeders employ to facilitate the needs of growers, processors and consumers," said Jim Giovannoni, a [USDA](#) plant molecular biologist with the Boyce Thompson Institute at Cornell University.

"Understanding the genes responsible for these characteristics facilitates the challenging process of breeding crops that meet the needs of all components of the food-supply chain," he added.

The study will be reported in the June 29 issue of the journal *Science*.

*Imagine the idea of plucking your own [herbs](#) and vegetables. No, you don't have to go to a far away place, but be right in your homes! More and more people are taking to redefining the idea of fresh greens and vegetables and shrinking the distance between the ingredients and the pan.*

Mint, coriander, curry patta, lemon grass, wheatgrass, chillies and all herbs you can think of, even vegetable plants like tomato and lady finger are being nurtured in homes.

Nurseries vouch for the multiplying sales of herbs and vegetable plants that don't require much space. (In fact, the nurseries have seen quite a change too. At many places, women are at the helm of the affairs. Maybe this could be a reason that the pots being taken [home](#) these days are fruit bearing!)

Says horticulturist Anusha Babbar, "Particularly, in the last two-three years, the number of people taking home vegetable and herb saplings and pots has increased." She says, "All one needs to ensure is that the plants get ample sunlight, whether you keep them at a big window sill or a balcony. And if it's a terrace, then it's perfect,"

And, bringing these plants home is bringing in goodness, one way or the other. While horticulturists insist, and it isn't hard to accept either, that to most Indian homes herbs like pudina, curry patta and tulsi plants are not new, the vegetable bearing such herbs came into flats for educational purposes. Says Neha Shah, a mother of two growing up children, "As a kid, I remember spending my holidays in our village, where my grandfather would grow vegetables and fruits. In the city, children miss out on all that. So I thought of bringing home a tomato and a ladyfinger plant for my children to see how nature blesses us." Her kids love to see how their food comes into being, and she says because of its freshness, the food tastes very good too.

Vandana Shah, who once had a sprawling garden on their bungalow's terrace, agrees, "Vegetables from our own garden were definitely tastier. In fact they need lesser masalas." It was her father-in-law Padmashree Dr Ramesh Doshi, who brought city farming to suburbs. He

was considered one of the initiators of the Green Revolution of the 1960s. And without doubt it's said that their terrace farm yielded five kg of fruits and vegetables throughout the year. Taking the family's project forward, she's convinced some of her friends too to grow arvi leaves. "It's very easy to grow, and the leaves are tasty and not fattening too. They almost grow on their own in this season," explains Shah.

Chefs like Arindam Bahel also sing praises of fresh ingredients used in cooking. "We have a small kitchen garden, a semi-organic, vermiculture project where shives, mint, and garlic are grown. The quantity is minuscule, but we do utilise it in our oriental restaurant. The fresh ones are rich in their vitamins and minerals. This can be felt on our taste buds too. And of course, he says, "The heightened tastes also come from psychological play. It's the fruit of our own labour. And we know exactly how fresh it is. It lends pure pleasure to the experience of cooking and eating."

For Zarina Khan, her herb plants have made life very convenient for her. "I once just tucked a pudina strand in my pot and it began to grow. Now, whenever I am cooking and I need mint, I just go to my window and pluck fresh leaves."

Think about it: Already most of us have potted flowering plants or the hassle-free money plant for a little green to soothe our visual senses in the midst of the concrete jungle. But city farming could well add value to your meals too. A pot or a basket is enough and you have the freshest vegetable to dish up your daily meals — all organic and almost free!



Today Farm News  
25.09.2012 A.M

25.09.2012 Sep

Weather

Chennai

## Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Sunny

**Tuesday, Sep 25**

**Max Min**

35.2° | 24.3°

**Rain:** 0

**Humidity:** 59

**Wind:** normal

**Sunrise:** 05:58

**Sunset:** 06:02

**Barometer:** 1008

### Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

**Wednesday, Sep 26**

**Max Min**

30° | 27°

### Extended Forecast for a week

**Thursday**  
**Sep 27**



30° | 26°

Rainy

**Friday**  
**Sep 28**



31° | 26°

Rainy

**Saturday**  
**Sep 29**



31° | 26°

Rainy

**Sunday**  
**Sep 30**



31° | 25°

Rainy

**Monday**  
**Oct 1**



28° | 25°

Rainy

### Airport Weather

Delhi

**Delhi**

**Rain:** 0

**Humidity:** 52

**Wind:** normal

**Sunrise:** 06:11

**Sunset:** 06:13

**Barometer:** 1009



# Business Standard

Today Farm News

25.09.2012 A.M

25.09.2012 Sep

Is govt cornering wheat market?

Excess procurement of wheat by government agencies has stirred a demand for intervention by the Competition Commission of India (CCI), on the ground that the state is creating a near-monopoly over the grain trade.

The argument has gained support from the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) itself, the government's nodal agency for setting floor prices of farm commodities. In its latest report, on the rabi crop price policy for 2012-2013, it has said this action by the government has made state-owned Food Corporation of India (FCI), the biggest hoarder of wheat in the country.

India's wheat stocks as on September 1 were estimated at 46.2 million tonnes, about 230 per cent more than the requirement. Overall foodgrain stocks (also comprising rice and coarse cereals) were estimated at 71.9 mt, much more than the required 21.2 mt.

In the 2012-2013 wheat crop marketing season, state agencies had procured 38.1 mt of wheat from farmers till the middle of July, almost 95 per cent of total market arrivals. FCI's own share in total wheat procurement has been 13-20 per cent in the past five years but in many places, state agencies procure on behalf of it.

The complaint is that this massive procurement, plus inadequate release of stocks in the open market, has created a situation of near-monopoly in the country's wheat market, leaving very little for private trade. Public monopoly is as bad as private monopoly; hence, CCI should immediately look into the matter, the CACP report had said.

“In Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, the government is selling wheat from its inventories at a rate higher than the one in southern India, which goes against the basic economic logic, as commodities in producing areas should be priced lower than in non-producing areas,” said Veena Sharma, secretary of the Roller Flour Mills Federation of India, to Business Standard.

She said the government logic was taxes in Punjab, Haryana and UP were higher than in southern states, raising the cost of purchases. However, with the abnormally high prices, the government was discouraging the growth of value-added industry in the main wheat producing states, she said.

The government, on its part, said it had already allocated around eight mt of wheat for sale in the open market to bulk consumers such as flour millers and biscuit makers, to check rising prices. Of this, around 1.3 mt has been sold and another 1 mt will be sold in the next few weeks.

A senior panel of government officials has also decided to release a minimum 2-2.5 mt of wheat in the open market every month from October, to quell the price rise.

Ramesh Chand, director of the National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research, however, disagreed with the proposition that the government holding of large quantities of wheat made this a fit case for CCI to investigate. “It’s a free market and anyone who pays more could purchase wheat; in this case, it is the government. Besides, the government can create a monopoly in the public interest,” Chand said.

He said only courts could direct the government to release more wheat in the open market.

India harvested a bumper wheat crop of 93.9 mt in the 2011-12 crop year (July-June).

25.09.2012 Sep

Export curb likely on rice, wheat, sugar & cotton



The government might soon review its export policy for rice, wheat, sugar and cotton. Shipments abroad of these commodities might be curbed till the full harvest arrives and the festival season ends.

Their export is currently allowed under Open General Licence, meaning no permission is required. According to officials, the departments of food and consumer affairs have both objected strongly to the free commercial export of rice, wheat and sugar, with their high prices in the domestic market. Rice and wheat stocks available in storages were for maintaining buffer stock levels and for the Public Distribution System (PDS); these could not be diverted for retail consumption in the domestic market, they said.

The domestic price of rice has been going up. The first advance estimates of the Union agriculture ministry says rice output is being projected at 85.6 million tonnes (mt), compared to a record 91.5 mt last year. Official sources said the recommendation is to restrict free export of rice for the rest of this financial year, except for the top-end basmati rice, mainly produced for export. The price of rice across the country has gone up by two to 30 per cent year over the year, barring the eastern states, which are having a second crop.

Sugar is witnessing a rise in prices and officials feel even if the output of cane is high, productivity (conversion to sugar after crushing) will be lower due to lack of rain. Export of sugar had stopped since domestic prices began rising. The ministry has recommended banning export till at least December, when the festive demand is over and the second harvest will arrive in the market.

Across the country sugar prices have gone up by 25-58 per cent year on year and might go up further. Output this year is estimated to be the same as last year.

A ban on sugar export, say officials, wouldn't hit millers, as the government proposes to raise the price of levy sugar for the PDS to Rs 22 a kg from the Rs 13.5 a kg fixed since 2002. This would help the industry recover around Rs 12 a kg from selling sugar under PDS.

A shortage in cotton output is expected due to erratic rain. The free export policy comes to an end in a month. The textile ministry had already recommended a ban on export till the market showed surplus availability for the domestic industry.

Cotton prices in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have risen 25 per cent over a year. The first advance estimates, show cotton production at 32 million bales (of 170 kg each), compared to last year's 35.2 million bales.

25.09.2012 Sep

Area under castor sowing dips by 0.32 mn hectares



After having registered a record sowing and production last Kharif season, the area under castor seed sowing during the ongoing Kharif season has declined by 0.32 million to 0.85 million hectares as on September 13. The castor acreage across the country was recorded at 1.17 million hectares in 2011.

However, as per the data provided by the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA), the area covered under castor crop at present is still higher than the normal sowing area of 0.78 million hectares. "Area coverage during Kharif 2012 is lower by 0.32 million hectares compared to the corresponding period of Kharif 2011. The dip in castor acreage is due to less area covered in Gujarat," said BV Mehta, executive director, SEA. Also, the year 2011 was an exceptional year when the sowing of castor crop touched the historical high in the wake of record prices of the oilseed luring increased number of farmers go for the castor sowing. "The prices of castor in 2011 surged to whopping \$2,700 per tonne freight-on-board (FOB). Though the acreage is lower this year, it is still higher than the normal area covered under castor crop," he added.

This year's dip is also attributed to lower sowing of the commodity in Gujarat, which accounts for almost 80 per cent of the total castor seed production in India. As per the data available with the state agriculture department of Gujarat, around 0.65 million hectares have been brought under castor cultivation in the state as on September 19 as compared to 0.77 million hectares last Kharif season.

As per the market players, the spot prices of castor are ranging from Rs 680 to Rs 730 per 20 kg in various markets of North Gujarat, a major castor growing and trading region in Gujarat. It may be mentioned here, that castor spot prices in 2011 had surged to an all time high of Rs 1,240 per 20 kg.

As per SEA's castor crop survey, castor production in India was estimated at 1.61 million tonnes for 2011-12 season (October-September), showing a growth of about 30 per cent over 1.25 million tonnes recorded in 2010-11.