

Today Farm News

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Farmers' plight forcing milk price hike: Milma

After the announcement of its intention to hike the price of milk, Milma's Ernakulam region has come out with a package for dairy farmers. The farmers will be given an additional Re.1 per litre for the milk supplied to primary societies from October 1 to 31. Farmers belonging to more than 850 primary societies spread over Ernakulam, Idukki, Kottayam and Thrissur districts will benefit from the move.

Milma has been projecting a pro-farmer stand to push ahead with its efforts to hike the price of milk.

The government might find it difficult to reject the demand though an increase would mean an additional burden on the common man, already reeling under price rise of most commodities that had come in periodical doses.

Study on farmers' woes

Milma had fought a legal battle a year ago to achieve its demand for a hike. The price was hiked initially by the Ernakulam region of Milma. The LDF government, which was in power then, refused to give approval. Milma had armed itself with a study on the dairy scene in Kerala prior to submission of the proposal. The government too appointed an expert panel to find the ground realities.

Though the government committee, headed by R. Hali, an expert in dairy sector, had focused on enhancing production of milk, egg and meat, it mentioned the plight of the dairy farmer. Ultimately, the government had to approve of the proposal for a hike.

Higher input cost

One of the key issues involved in the issue of milk price rise is the subsidy on cattle feed. The steep hike in price of cattle feed has been a cause of worry for the farmer. The report highlighted the need for an increased subsidy element. "The news on cattle feed subsidy offered to farmers has generated a new wave of enthusiasm and hope in the dairy sector. It should be viewed as a social commitment for quick enhancement of milk production," the Hali report had said.

The government had identified the concept as a measure to lift milk production by providing better nutrition to the existing milch cow population. The programme will help exploit the genetic potentiality for high milk production inherent in the crossbred population, Mr. Hali said in the report.

The plight of the dairy farmer has been discussed on a wider scale by the Food and Agriculture Organisation in a report on milk production in India earlier. "The main risks of dairying identified by farmers are not having an animal in milk in any one year, the death of a lactating animal, and having to pay for straw, which is the main feed source. Occurrence of any one of these events can lead to a reduction of the already low household income by 50 per cent and would probably force the family to abandon the dairy enterprise".

The situation remains more or less the same despite new developments having had made an impact on a variety of fields in the agri-processing sector. The dairy farmer needs protection and that will be the core theme behind the demand for a hike.

The State Government has decided on a single-window clearance in agriculture through appointment of a coordination committee comprising various departments whose representatives will meet every three months.

The State Agriculture Department, Finance Department, Food & Supplies Department and Agriculture Marketing Department have representations in the committee.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been emphasising the need for single-window clearance in agriculture. "The agriculture sector should have a 'single window system', as we have introduced in the industrial sector," she posted recently on her Facebook page.

She had made a similar proposal to Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar during a meeting with him in the city earlier this week.

Single-window clearance in agriculture will ensure better facilities to farmers like issuing of loans to them and facilitating the purchase of their agricultural produce by the State.

The matter had also been taken up by the Chief Minister at a meeting of her Cabinet a few days ago.

While participating in a discussion in the State Assembly on Thursday, Ms Banerjee had said that a single-window clearance in agriculture will be of use to farmers as they will not have to approach different departments.

To facilitate this, there needs to be greater coordination among the different departments, she had said.

The State Government had set up a similar committee comprising representatives from various departments for single-window clearance for those seeking to set up industries in the State.

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Awareness workshop for farmers

An awareness workshop for farmers was inaugurated by district panchayat vice-president Subida Isahaq at District Panchayat Hall here on Friday. S. Gopakumar, Deputy Director of Economics, presided over the workshop. Principal Agriculture Officer G. Sudarshan, Deputy Director Sara Thomas, Taluk Statistics Officer R. Sivadas spoke. — Staff Reporter

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Chilli ryot to take part in CoP biodiversity meet



A progressive chilli farmer from Guntur district Mekala Satyanarayana will be participating at the XI Conference of Parties (CoP) on Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at Hyderabad.

Mr. Lakshminarayana, who was presented with the Jagjeevan Ram Kisan Puraskar in 2007 by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, would be taking part in the Global Industry Coalition Exhibit on October 2.

Mr. Lakshminarayana developed “aflotoxin-free and residual-free” chilli varieties in his farm at Revalla village in Tadikonda mandal, inspiring scores of other farmers and helping them market their yield through the Spices Board and the ITC.

As chairman of the Nagarjuna Rythu Samakhya, Mr. Lakshminarayana adapted 90 villages in 18 mandals for farm trials and provided soil health cards after testing the nutrient levels of various types of soils.

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Shortage of fertilizers in East Godavari

Farmers in the district are facing fertilizer scarcity during the midst of the kharif season as there are only 50,000 tons of stock is available against the requirement of 1.80 lakh tons.

Meanwhile, traders are selling the fertilizers at Rs.350 per bag against the normal rate of Rs. 285.

In East Godavari, farmers cultivate paddy in 2.20 lakh hectares during the kharif season and in the first phase they use urea and DAP mix. In the second stage they spray 28-28 complex fertilizers along with urea and in the third phase they go for potash and urea mix.

There are 1,218 fertilizer shops in the district and availability of stock is only around 30 to 40 per cent. The requirement of urea is 80,000 tons, while the availability is only 20,000.

Likewise, the requirement of potash is 26,000 tons and its availability is only 9,000 and complex availability is 19,000 tons against 44,000 tons.

Farmers in the upland areas who experienced rain from first week of August are in a hurry to get fertilizers and approaching the agriculture cooperative societies and agriculture officials at mandal level for more stocks.

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Trading in cotton to begin in mid-October

Trading in cotton in agriculture markets in Adilabad district is anticipated to start by the third week of October, as the crop is nearing harvest period.

Arrangements reviewed

Adilabad Joint Collector Sujata Sharma on Friday reviewed the arrangement being made for the trading season to start with a view to convenience farmers.

Farmer leaders B.Goverdhan Reddy and others wanted the Cotton Corporation of India to be prepared to launch MSP operations from day one of the season in case the price falls below the MSP.

The leaders also wanted the authorities to ensure that mill-owners did not charge farmers for re-weighment of the cotton loads in respective factories.

Officials of Adilabad Market committee said all the electronic weighing machines were ready.

They also ensured that drinking water and other amenities would be provided to farmers at the market yards.

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Trading in cotton to begin in mid-October



Widespread rain in the district for the past week has not only given a push for resumption of sowing of rabi crops but also helped the kharif crops, particularly red gram and sunflower, which badly needed rain.

Officials in the Agriculture Department told *The Hindu* here on Friday that because of the extended dry spell during August and till the second week of September, sowing of rabi crops had almost come to a standstill.

The government had fixed 4.84 lakh hectares as the cultivable area for the rabi crop and the production target was 5.16 lakh tonnes of cereals, pulses and oilseeds.

Following the rain, officials said, farmers had begun sowing in some parts of the district, particularly in Afzalpur and Aland taluks. Sowing had been completed on 26,320 ha of the rabi area.

Except Aland, where farmers could complete sowing only in 89.2 per cent of the targeted area, sowing in all other taluks was 95 per cent, with Chincholi achieving 100 per cent. Compared to last year's sowing percentage during the kharif season, there had been a huge progress. While farmers could complete sowing only on 4.71 lakh ha last year, this year sowing had been completed on 5.42 lakh hectares.

The officials pointed out that sowing of cereals and oilseeds in the kharif season in the district had witnessed a steep fall.

While farmers had completed sowing of cereals in 76.4 per cent of the targeted area, the coverage of oilseeds was only 75.8 per cent. However, the coverage for pulses was 94.3 per cent.

Red gram continued to be the favourite crop of farmers as could be seen from the coverage area of 99.9 per cent.

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PSBs to get interest subsidy on short-term farm loan

The Reserve Bank of India, on Friday, said all public sector banks would get an interest subsidy of 2 per cent annually against short-term production loan up to Rs.3 lakh to farmers.

“The government will provide interest subvention of 2 per cent per annum to public sector banks (PSBs) in respect of short-term production credit up to Rs.3 lakh during 2012-13,” the RBI said in a notification.

This subvention will be available to public sector banks on the condition they make available short-term production credit up to Rs.3 lakh at ground level at 7 per cent per annum, the Reserve Bank of India added.

The amount of subvention will be calculated on the crop loan amount from the date of its disbursement/drawal up to the date of actual repayment of crop loan by the farmer.

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Farmers demand stringent action against Karnataka



Farmers of Tiruchi district have demanded stringent action against Karnataka which has refused to abide by the direction of the Cauvery River Authority (CRA) to release 9,000 cusecs (cubic feet per second) of water to Tamil Nadu for samba cultivation.

A number of farmers led by P. Viswanathan, State president, Tamilaga Eri Matrum Aatrupasana Vivasayigal Sangham, submitted a memorandum to Collector Jayashree Muralidharan at the farmers' grievances day in this regard here on Friday.

The memorandum alleged that Karnataka had been behaving in a "conscience-less" fashion because it is prepared to release water to Mettur Dam only when its reservoirs reach surplus.

As Karnataka failed to respond positively to the direction of the Prime Minister, who is the chairman of the CRA, farmers demanded that action should be initiated against the State under Article 356 of the Constitution. They also condemned the Centre, which had failed to get water for Tamil Nadu and thus protect the interests of farmers of the State.

Rajachidambaram, State general secretary, Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangham, and P. Ayyakkannu, State general secretary, Bharathiya Kisan Sangam, deplored the Union Finance Minister for his reported statement on the consumption of urea by farmers and the need for hiking its price.

They lamented that prices of fertilizers had already skyrocketed thanks to the failure of the Central government to hold their price in check. DAP which was quoted around Rs.486 for a bag of 50 kilograms before April 1, 2010, was now sold at around Rs.1,200. Similarly, the price of potash had shot up from about Rs.231 per bag to Rs.840. The price of complex fertilizers had also trebled.

"If Finance Minister P. Chidambaram were to have his way, the price of urea would shoot up from Rs.251 per bag to Rs.1200. Is it possible for anyone to take up agriculture in such a scenario," wondered Mr. Rajachidambaram. He pleaded for reversing the price of fertilizers to the pre-April 2010 level. He also urged the government not to allow fertilizer companies to fix prices as they pleased.

He criticised the view of Mr. Chidambaram that agriculturists were using a lot of urea. "We do not use more than what is absolutely required. Besides, it is the duty of the government to find out how items like potash are being used by the fireworks industry. There is no sense in shifting the burden of subsidy to farmers for such materials."

Farmers also made a pitch for utilising the services of those registered with District Rural Development Agency under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) for all farming operations during the farming season. The Government Order issued in connection with deploying MNREGS workers in farming operations is not comprehensive, they said.

While the order talks of plantation works like pitting, pitting and filling, transportation of seedlings by head load, distribution of seedlings, planting, watering and weeding and soil working, it has left out quite a few other important agricultural activities including picking, they added.

To the plea of a farmer for releasing water in the Uyyakkondan channel, which has an ayacut of more than 20,000 acres, the Collector said it would be positively done on Monday (October 1).

Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation also came in for scathing criticism for the innumerable power disruptions and extraordinarily poor supply of power to farmers. "While farmers are given only three hours of power supply, industries are treated far better," they alleged.

Electricity officials who were present admitted that 40 per cent power cut prevailed in the district including for industries.

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Farmers' associations welcome SC directive to Karnataka

Various farmers' associations in the State have welcomed the direction of the Supreme Court to Karnataka to release 9,000 cusecs (cubic feet per second) water to Tamil Nadu for samba cultivation.

Mahadhanapuram V. Rajaram, working president of the Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association, welcoming the direction of the Supreme Court, thanked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who is the chairman of the Cauvery River Authority for having originally directed Karnataka to release 9,000 cusecs. He also congratulated Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa for her "indefatigable" efforts to get water to protect the samba crop and the farmers of the delta region. This was the best that could have happened to Tamil Nadu under the current

circumstances. “Though our requirement is much more, it is imperative that we shared the distress situation”.

He lamented that it had become virtually a “monotonous regularity” that Tamil Nadu had been forced to move the Supreme Court to get water from Karnataka every year and the upper riparian State had hardly bothered to worry about its “lower riparian brethren”.

Refuse release

“With as much as 75 per cent of the storage in its reservoirs, when Karnataka refuses to release any water to Tamil Nadu, it is not only illogical but also inhuman”, he observed.

Karnataka had always been treating Tamil Nadu as a “drainage” and had been releasing water only when its reservoirs surplussed, he pointed out.

Aarupathi R. Kalyanam, general secretary of the Federation of Farmers’ Associations of Delta Districts, said “the Supreme Court is the only ray of hope,” for Tamil Nadu farmers.

Unlawful activities

He alleged that Karnataka government is a “silent spectator” to all unlawful activities conducted by various associations, he added.

V. Duraimanickam, veteran CPI leader and State general secretary of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangham, while welcoming the direction of the Supreme Court, said, “9,000 cusecs is not enough and the Central Government should try its best to get more water for Tamil Nadu.”

“It is the duty of the Central Government and the Supreme Court to get additional quantum of water to save the samba crop”, he asserted.

He also deplored the “adamant attitude” of the Karnataka Government in rejecting the Prime Minister’s earlier direction to release water for Tamil Nadu.

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West Bengal adopts single window system for agriculture



The West Bengal government has adopted a policy to ensure single-window clearance in agriculture by setting up a coordination committee of various ministries concerned, said Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Speaking at the state assembly, Banerjee said various projects concerning farmers come under the ambit of different ministries. “We have decided to set up a coordination panel of various ministries concerned. The committee will meet every three months and take stock of the progress made in this regard,” she said. IANS

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Time to embrace evergreen agriculture?

Has the time come for abandoning the green revolution and embracing the idea of ‘evergreen agriculture’? Hans R. Herren, President of the Millennium Institute in Washington and President of the Biovision Foundation in Zurich, Switzerland, thinks so.

In his keynote address at the International Scientific Seminar on “Can GM Crops Meet India’s Food Security and Export Markets?” — organised against the background of the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biodiversity meeting here next month — Professor Herren said agriculture was at a crossroads globally.

“Green revolution is ecologically and economically unsustainable.”

Soil degradation, water shortages and biodiversity loss were causing serious problems all over the world, Prof. Herren said. Industrialisation of agriculture had led to the loss of a large number of jobs. Problems such as production in excess of needs and wastage characterised the agriculture sector today.

Extreme weather events and temperature and water stress too posed a problem.

“We are overstepping planetary boundaries. Yet, more than 50 per cent of smallholder farmers are going hungry.”

Prof. Herren said the situation called for a paradigm change — a transition to sustainable eco-agriculture or ‘evergreen agriculture’ under a systematic and holistic approach.

Animals should be brought back to farms. Even while adopting an agro-ecological approach, which encompassed organic farming and other practices, mechanisation could be adopted to lighten the workload, especially for women. Research should be in the public domain.

Evergreen agriculture, Prof. Herren argued, would lead to increase in production, employment and greater area under crops. Deforestation would come down.

The former Vice-Chancellor, National Knowledge Commission, Pushpa Mittra Bhargava said an extended moratorium should be given to trials for all GM crops. The recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee should be accepted, Ms. Bhargava said.

A laboratory should be set up in the country to test whether an agriculture produce was genetically modified or not. There should also be a monitoring mechanism.

The conference called for increased efforts in persuading governments to favour a switch to organic farming. It was hosted by Aruna Rodrigues — lead petitioner in the case seeking a moratorium on genetically modified organisms before the Supreme Court — along with the Tara Foundation and the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility.

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Fix sugarcane price at Rs. 3,000 a tonne, demands KRRS



Sugarcane growers staged a protest here on Friday demanding that the government fix a support price of Rs. 3,000 a tonne of sugarcane.

The protest was led by the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene. Scores of farmers marched to the Vidhana Soudha demanding that the unscientific methods of fixing price be abandoned. The government had fixed a price of Rs. 2,200 per tonne, when sugar is traded at over Rs. 3,300 a quintal.

“The government should act in the interests of farmers and not sugar factory owners. Why can it not link the price to the market price of the final product?” said P. Gopal, office-bearer of Hasiru Sene. Puttannaiah of the KRRS said that the government did not take into account the recommendations of its own committee.

“The government has overlooked the recommendations of the committee it had formed to fix the price for sugarcane. It has fixed the price at Rs. 2,200 a tonne to the advantage of sugar factories. We have rejected the price and won’t take part in the meeting scheduled for September 27,” Puttannaiah said. He added that the government should enact legislation to fix a State advisory price like other States do. “This will benefit farmers,” he added.

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Farmers seek 12-hour power supply for pumpsets



Farmers have strongly protested what they alleged unscheduled power cuts being implemented for agriculture pumpsets and demanded 12-hour power supply in three phases as promised by the government.

They carried candles and weeds, and walked out of the farmers' grievances day meeting on Friday. Earlier, they sat in front of Collector K.Baskaran, and shouted slogans demanding 12-hour supply.

They explained that candle symbolised the power cut and weeds signified that cultivation could not be taken up in tail-end areas where water had not reached yet.

Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) engineers said that three-hour supply is maintained as per the schedule for agriculture pumpsets due to shortage of power. Four timings are maintained for this three-hour supply: One is from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m.; second from 9 a.m. to noon; third from noon to 3 p.m.; and the fourth from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

To this farmers said, "We understand that there is power shortage. But kindly inform us before load shedding so that we can plan accordingly. Moreover, contrary to the promise of 12-hour supply, only three-hour supply is maintained. This is not enough to take up cultivation."

Mr. Baskaran said that there has been a shortfall in the area of coverage of kuruvai this year for want of water. Kuruvai was raised only in 21,655 hectares. In samba, this shortfall would be made up and for this the government has announced various schemes.

Kuruvai harvest has been completed in 12,500 hectares. With respect to samba, the crop has so far been raised in 5,000 hectares.

Adequate stock of fertilizers is available for samba and thaladi season. There is a stock of 5,116 tonnes of urea, 3,507 tonnes of Di ammonium phosphate, 2,644 tonnes of potash, and 2,644 tonnes of complex.

S.Suresh Kumar, District Revenue Officer, and Mohammed Yahiya, Joint Director of Agriculture, were present.

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Sericulture becomes an ideal option for poor

Low gestation period and high returns make sericulture an ideal programme for people of poor economic background, said Collector S.Natarajan at Needamangalam in Tiruvarur district recently.

Inaugurating a one-day district level awareness campaign on "sustainable income through sericulture" at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at Needamangalam, he said that sericulture can be taken up with very low land holding and even with 0.75 acre of mulberry garden for silk worm rearing. Of those involved in the sericulture activity, including garden management, leaf harvesting, silk worm rearing, women constitute about 60 per cent of the workforce. The State government is implementing several subsidy schemes in the form of drip irrigation, shed for silk worm rearing, and purchase of essential equipments for silk worm rearing in order to promote the sericulture among farming community. Complete dedication and hard work can bring sustainable and permanent income of Rs.20,000 to a family.

Dr.Balakrishna, senior scientist, Regional Sericulture Research Station, Salem said that the station was conducting sericulture awareness programmes in Krishnagiri, Tirupur and Salem.

T.Senguttuvan, head and professor of KVK, Needamangalam said that Tamil Nadu government

is aiming at doubling food production and tripling farmers' income. Sericulture, as an alternative farming activity, can provide monthly income to a family and will be an ideal component in integrated farming, said a release.

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Relief for dry lands sought

Farmers demanded assured supply of power for their agricultural pumpsets at the farmers' grievances day meeting' held at State-level Agricultural Extension Management Institute (STAMIN) Training Centre at Kudumiyanmalai, near here on Friday. They complained that unscheduled power supply affected their agricultural operation.

Raja Subramanian, a farmer of Tirumayam, said that though the State government had assured uninterrupted power supply for agricultural pumpsets for three hours a day, the supply was erratic. Farmers' efforts to utilise the available water for irrigation proved a futile exercise, he said.

G.S. Dhanapathy, district chairman, Farmers' Forum of India, said that a large number of farmers had skipped cultivation due to failure of rain this season. He wanted a cash relief of Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 10,000 an acre for dry and wet lands respectively.

Both Mr. Dhanapathy and Durai Manickam, another farmer from Avudaiyarkovil, pleaded for clearing of encroachments on the supply channels and on the tanks in the district.

Kamaraj, a farmer from Tiruvarankulam, complained that non-availability of technical personnel delayed the repair and maintenance works on the transformers which, in turn, affected irrigation.

Mr. Raja Subramanian suggested that wide publicity be given to the execution of 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme' in private agricultural lands, so that farmers would benefit to a great extent. Muthu Rasu, another farmer, said that the implementation of the scheme resulted in scarcity of agricultural labourers and should be suspended for a few months particularly if prospects for 'samba' cultivation improved in a few weeks with the onset of monsoon.

He also wanted the road leading to the jack farms in Vallathirakottai area to be re-laid to benefit jack fruit farmers in transporting the produce.

P. Emperumal, Joint Director of Agriculture, said that the district registered a rainfall of 29.19 mm this year till September 25, against the average 49.52 mm. About 2,000 hectares had been brought under paddy cultivation. The Agriculture Department has stocked 214 tonnes of paddy seeds and 38 tonnes of pulses seeds and 21.7 tonnes of oil seeds.

The fertiliser position was also safe. About 2,850 tonnes of urea, 1,560 tonnes of DAP, 1,520 tonnes of potash fertiliser and 2,360 tonnes of complex fertiliser were available now.

K. Nagarajan, District Revenue Officer, who presided over the meeting, said that he would initiate action to redress the farmers' grievances. He would also impress upon the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation officials at Madurai, to ensure power supply for agricultural pumpsets.

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Don't collect more for farm equipment

Stern action would be initiated against those lending farm equipment for high charges, said Collector N. Venkatachalam.

Presiding over an agriculturists' grievance redress meeting here on Friday, he said that only prescribed charges should be collected.

Rainfall in September had been far less than the average for the month. The district had received 20.3 mm rain against the average of 89.5 mm. Average rainfall in a year till September was 418.1 mm, but the district had received just 226.5 mm only. The slump in rainfall was around 50 per cent.

Farmers' grievance day meetings, used to be conducted in the last week of the month, would be held in the third week from October.

The Collector asked agriculture officials to display list of tur dhal cultivators and place of cultivation and date and time of training programmes at the village notice board and at the agriculture extension offices to enable other farmers to visit fields to get hands-on experience.

Soil card would be given to farmers who tested soil at the soil testing institute.

Kurumbapatti Odai will be desilted by the District Rural Development Agency. Large-scale efforts were being taken to desilt all streams and tanks. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) workers were also being roped in for desilting tanks and channels and for adoption of various techniques, he said.

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Sluggish credit flow in agriculture

Monsoon failure, severe power crisis and continuing high interest rates have resulted in sluggishness in credit flow in agriculture and SME (small and medium enterprises) sectors in the district during the first quarter of the current financial year.

Banking sources indicate that the slump in credit disbursement might end up even worse in the second and third quarters if the predominant rain-fed farmers did not get favourable monsoon and industries are not able to obtain quality power to optimally utilize production capabilities. In the first quarter, overall credit disbursement in the district, covering agriculture and allied activities, SME and services sectors, had fallen short by about 14 percent of the proportional Annual Credit Plan (ACP) projections for the said period.

The figures just compiled by Lead Bank stated that overall credit disbursement was Rs 1,314.84 crore in the first quarter of the current fiscal against the target for the period of Rs. 1,529.68 crore.

“This has been primarily due to the substantial shortfalls in agriculture and SME sectors even as lending to service sector was above the target,” official sources told *The Hindu*.

In the agriculture and allied activities segment, the credit disbursement was Rs. 362.41 crore against the target of Rs. 393.93 crore between April 1 and June 30 this year (ie. first quarter).

Likewise, the SME sector witnessed shrinkage in credit outgo with advances in the first quarter of the fiscal stood at Rs. 788.48 crore against the proportional target of Rs. 973.43 crore.

Industry experts like Senthil Kumar, a former chairman of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (Tirupur branch) opined that there need to be some drastic steps taken to improve the power supply to industries if the credit flow had to improve.

Besides this measure, Reserve Bank of India should bring down the short-term bank rates to facilitate reduction of interest rates on advances which at the moment is high, Mr. Senthil Kumar observed.

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People's Biodiversity Festival from Oct. 13

A 'People's Biodiversity Festival' with the theme 'Unity for Diversity' will be organised at the Exhibition Grounds, Nampally, from October 13 to 16, with the aim of offering people's perspective on issues related to biodiversity.

A collaborative endeavour from groups of farmers, NGOs and people's movements across the country, the festival will be radically different from the 'Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity' (CBD-COP 11) scheduled to begin here from October 1, a press communiqué from the organisers informed on Friday.

"In stark contrast to the CBD... the People's Biodiversity Festival presents people's voices in united resolve to protect our immense natural wealth and rich bio-cultural heritage, free from the ravages of powerful economic interests and monopolistic Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)," read the communiqué from Narasimha Reddy Donthi on behalf of the organisers.

Comprising seminars, workshops, film screenings and cultural presentations, the festival will assert people's right and obligation to save and regenerate the "collective commons" for future generations, it said.

Coming down heavily on CBD, the organisers alleged that it was gravely compromised, and dominated by business and industrial lobbies. The Convention has already bent backwards to

accommodate the latter's interests at the cost of the basic needs of people. Yielding to IPRs on life forms and plant varieties, it has allowed the carving of private slices of the 'genetic pie', undermining sustainability and equity, the statement alleged.

Even while free sharing between communities has declined, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) recently offered four lakh varieties of germplasm to MNCs, it said. The varieties include drought-tolerant rice, terminal-heat tolerant wheat and salinity-tolerant crop varieties, naturally adapted to different geographies.

As part of the festival, about 60 stalls by different groups will display several thousand varieties of crop seeds. Indigenous breeds of livestock will also be put on exhibition, as also books, ecological products, traditional crafts and indigenous foods.

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Tamil Nadu farmers hope SC order will salvage crops

CHENNAI: The Supreme Court order directing Karnataka to release 9,000 cusecs of Cauvery water to [Tamil Nadu](#) has neither enthused nor disappointed farmers in the Cauvery basin districts. Though Mettur dam was opened recently, nearly three months behind schedule, water has not reached many tail-end areas in the delta. Farmers are guarded in their reaction to the Supreme Court order and hope that the north-east monsoon will save the samba, which is the long-term crop of about 150 days.

Many farmers have gone in for direct sowing and they hope the water released would at least recharge the groundwater, which at present is very salty. "It is a consolation given the circumstances. But the water has to be released, only then can we transplant the paddy crop and save it from the onslaught of north-east monsoon," Arupathy Kalyanam, general secretary, federation of farmers associations in delta districts told TOI.

Having given up the kuruvai (short-term) crop this year due to lack of water, farmers hope the SC order will salvage the samba crop at least. "It is a welcome move. With the water released, we can manage samba crop till the onset of monsoon," said Mannargudi Ranganathan, general secretary, [Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association](#).

"It is partial relief. The water released from Mettur has not reached the tail-end areas and the groundwater is also salty. If Karnataka releases water as per the SC order, it will recharge the groundwater and farmers can make use of the borewells to cultivate their land," said Raja Chidambaram state secretary, [Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangam](#).

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Delta farmers wary, Karnataka set for protests

CHENNAI/BANGALORE: The Supreme Court order directing [Karnataka](#) to release 9,000 cusecs of [Cauvery water](#) to Tamil Nadu has neither enthused nor disappointed farmers in the Cauvery basin districts . Though Mettur dam was opened recently , nearly three months behind schedule, water is yet to reach many tail-end areas in the delta region . Farmers are guarded in their reaction to the Supreme Court order and hope that the north-east monsoon , expected to set in by the first week of October , will save the samba crop.

In Karnataka , various groups geared up to protest the Supreme Court order. Cauvery Hitaraskahana Hoarata Samiti chief and former MP G Made Gowda described the SC order as "unrealistic ." He said , "We will ask hundreds and thousands of farmers to sleep on the river bed as a form of protest ." Meanwhile , a group of farmers staged a dharna and blocked vehicular traffic on the busy Bangalore-Mysore state highway in Maddur , Shivapura and Mandya towns as news broke out about the SC directive . "When Karnataka has no water , how can it abide by the SC order ?" asked opposition leader in the Karnataka legislative assembly Siddaramaiah . "At the same time we cannot violate the court direction . Karnataka should file a petition urging the court to review its order ," he said .

In Tamil Nadu's rice bowl, the water crisis has forced many farmers to opt for direct sowing and those using traditional methods of cultivation are hopeful that the water released would at least recharge the groundwater , which at present is very salty . Some have also expressed doubt over whether Karnataka will actually honour the Supreme Court order . "It (the Supreme Court directive) is a consolation given the circumstances and also gives us hope . But the water has to be released as per the orders only then we will be able to transplant the paddy crop and save it from the onslaught of north-east monsoon ," federation of farmers' associations in delta districts general secretary Arupathy Kalyanam told TOI.

Farmers hope to transplant the crop and grow it at least up to 3ft so that it is not submerged if the north-east monsoon is vigorous . "It is a welcome move . Karnataka should not find it difficult to release the water as their cropping season is almost coming to an end ," said Cauvery [Delta Farmers](#) Welfare Association general secretary Mannargudi Ranganathan . With the water released farmers can manage samba crop till the onset of monsoon . "Crop production in eight districts is dependant on the Cauvery and Karnataka shouldtakethisinto account and release water immediately ," hesaid .

Representatives of some of the farmers' associations in Trichy said the Centre should make Karnataka implement the Supreme Court order . "It is a partial relief . The water released from Mettur has not reached the tail-end areas and the groundwater is also salty .IfKarnataka releases water , it will recharge the groundwater and farmerscan makeuseof theborewells ," said Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangam state secretary Raja Chidambaram .

29.09.2012 Sep

Tamil Nadu hikes support price for paddy

CHENNAI: The state government on Friday increased the minimum support price (MSP) for procurement of paddy from farmers in the state.

In a statement , the chief minister said the Centre has fixed the MSP for paddy for the October 2012-S eptember 2013 Khariff season at 1,250 and 1,280 per quintal for ordinary and fine variety of paddy . In line with this decision , an additional 50 and 70 per quintal wouldbe providedfor ordinary andfine variety paddy.

Claiming that her government had been providing additional support price to encourage farmers over and above the amount fixed by the Centre, Jayalaithaa said farmers would get a MSPof 1,300for ordinary variety of paddy and 1,350for thefine variety.

She also directed the district collectors to accord permission to Civil Supplies Corporation

authorities to open more paddy procurement centres in the Cauvery delta where the paddy yield was higher.

29.09.2012 Sep

Vicious spiral of big crops, bigger losses

PURSURAH (HOOGHLY): Every time there is a bumper crop in his field, Kashinath Maity of Uttarpara feels jittery. To him, a bumper crop only means distress sale and huge input losses. "Last year, the price plunged to such a low that I sold off my harvest at Rs 25 per 50-kilo 'packet' (50 paise per kilo). I know many of my fellow potato growers threw their year's labour into the ponds," said Kashinath.

This year production is balanced and the price seems to be stabilized. The production this year is 85 lakh metric tonnes against 1.05 crore metric tonnes in 2011. By the time prices were jacked up last year, the distress sale was over and thousands of farmers ruined. "Only big farmers, who could overcome the fear of distress sale, got Rs 180 per packet. But even they could not recover input costs," said Kesab Ghosh, [Tarakeswar Krishi Samabai Samity](#) chairman.

The state government may be rooting for the traditional marketing chain, but it has not been able to control the fluctuation of prices, the manipulation by middlemen, and the hoarding by mahajans that have tormented farmers for decades. The potato market is still controlled by a section of very influential middlemen. They are the ones that make or break a potato-grower. "The fear of distress sale is so ingrained in us that I sold high quality [Chandramukhi potatoes](#) at Rs 320 a packet (50-kg sack), which makes it Rs 6.40 a kg," says Nitai Mondal, who has to do odd-jobs so that his family does not go hungry.

Mondal knows that the potato he sold to the foreys (middlemen) at Rs 6.40 per kg is now being sold in Kolkata at Rs 18 per kg. Wonder why the price rises by 300% by the time it reaches your para market in Kolkata? It's due to a long chain of foreys (middlemen) who thrive at the expense of farmers.

The farmer sells part of his produce to middlemen. The rest goes into cold-storages, which issue bonds against the stored potatoes. When the stocks are 'released', another brand of

intermediaries - unemployed youths of the village - comes into the picture. They collect the bonds against the prevailing market price and usually get a margin of Rs 5 per packet when they sell the bonds to mahajans (big intermediaries). However, in the fluctuating market, these bond-sellers also incur losses if the mahajan's price plunges below the farmer's bond-price.

The mahajan is the biggest fish in the food chain. He has a big role in determining the price of potatoes to maximise his profit. It is here that potatoes are hoarded and deliberately coated in ela soil and brick dust to cheat on weight. "When the potato comes from the fields it is very clean. Dust is added to it later. The ela-clay makes the potato harder and worsens the taste," said Kesab Ghosh.

TOI met one such mahajan, Haripada De, in his sprawling gaddi. He was reluctant to divulge his trade secrets and only said that he invests Rs 6 lakh at harvest time and takes home a neat 200% profit. He insisted he was small fry. "There are much bigger mahajans who deal in crores," he said.

Once the potatoes reach the urban wholesale markets, there is another chain of intermediaries - dala-party, which keeps a margin of Rs 10 per packet, haat palla, which keeps another Rs 10-20, and finally Khaoke party (retailer). By the time, you stand before your friendly neighbourhood potato seller, the long chain has inflated the price to Rs 18 a kilo. Yet the likes of Kashinath Maity stare at another year of selling potatoes at Rs 6.4 a kilo - if they are lucky.

Today Farm News
29.09.2012 A.M

29.09.2012 Sep

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Rainy

Saturday, Sep 29

Max Min

32.5° | 24.5°

Rain: 0.2
Humidity: 84
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:58
Sunset: 05:59
Barometer: 1008

Tomorrow's Forecast



Rainy

Sunday, Sep 30

Max Min

28° | 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday Oct 1	Tuesday Oct 2	Wednesday Oct 3	Thursday Oct 4	Friday Oct 5
30° 26° Rainy	30° 26° Rainy	30° 26° Rainy	32° 27° Rainy	30° 26° Rainy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0
Humidity: 52
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:13

Sunset: 06:08

Barometer: 1012

