

THE HINDU

COIMBATORE, September 8, 2012

Training in making bakery products

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will organise a training in preparing novel bakery products on September 11 and 12 on the university premises.

According to a university release, the training will cover the following aspects: basic bakery formulations, varieties of breads, cakes, and biscuits. It is aimed at those seeking avenues for self employment. Those interested can attend the training by paying a fee of Rs. 1,000.

For details, contact Head, Post Harvest Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003 or call 0422-6611340 / 6611268.

NEW DELHI, September 8, 2012

Shortfall will be made up in rabi, says official

The delayed southwest monsoon has helped to reduce the gap in kharif acreage but production of coarse cereals is expected to be 10-15 per cent lower than in a normal year (average of five years), according to preliminary estimates. The total sowing area is reported to be lower by 8.96 lakh hectares than in a normal year.

According to Agriculture Secretary Ashish Bahuguna, “The shortfall in kharif will be made up in rabi. The delayed rain is good for moisture retention in soil and we expect good acreage under jowar, bajra, mustard and gram in the coming rabi season.”

However, the erratic monsoon is likely to impact production of coarse cereals, moong and arhar dals and groundnut what with delayed or unsown crop in parts of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Sounding a note of optimism, Mr. Bahuguna said: "The monsoon has not started withdrawing yet and the sowing season is still on."

So far the area under paddy is higher by 11.38 lakh hectares than in a normal year. But the area under coarse cereals is lower by 28.39 lakh hectares, pulses by 3.44 lakh hectares and oilseeds by 0.63 lakh hectares.

September 8, 2012

Egg price

With egg rate scaling to new heights, consumers have expressed shock over this hike as the retail price of egg costs between

Rs. 3.75 in petty shops and Rs. 4 in little bigger ones in Namakkal.

ERODE, September 8, 2012

No fertilizer shortage in Erode district

Farmers asked to report irregularities, if any, to control room

Unlike the previous year, the district will not be facing a shortfall in the supply of fertilizer. The Agriculture Department has ensured adequate stock of fertilizer for this irrigation season.

The district has more than 2,500 tonnes of urea, 3,700 tonnes of complex fertilizers, 800 tonnes of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) and 600 tonnes of potash, which, according to agriculture officials, is more than sufficient to meet the demands of the farming community.

"Currently, the requirement for fertilizer comes mainly from farmers in the Old ayacuts of Bhavani river. The demand for fertilizer from Lower Bhavani Project ayacut will be low as we expect a significant drop in the area of cultivation because of the shortage of water.

Nevertheless, the fertilizer stock position in the district is quite comfortable,” a senior official in the department said. The department, which received complaints about irregularities in the fertilizer trade last year, has taken steps to ensure proper supply this year. It has set up a fertilizer control room in every block in the district and appointed Assistant Director (Quality Control) S. Chinnasamy to handle the problems related to the supply of fertilizers.

Teams have been formed to redress the grievances related to the fertilizer supply immediately. The department has asked farmers to report if the traders were found to be selling fertilizers at a rate more than the maximum retail price.

“The government has fixed Rs. 268.14 as the price of a 50 kg bag of urea. Farmers should buy other fertilizers by paying the rate printed on the package. We are conducting checks at frequent intervals to ensure proper supply of fertilizers,” he said.

Officials warned of stern action against private fertilizer dealers, who collected excess money from farmers. They urged farmers to ask the traders to provide a receipt while purchasing fertilizers.

If any irregularity was found, farmers can report it to authorities in the control room over phone numbers 94434 – 57659, 0424-2339101.

NAMAKKAL, September 8, 2012

Poultry organisations ask farmers to stop expansion for atleast one year

Average dally egg production (2002-2012)

(Figures in lakhs)

2002	-	135.14
2003	-	137.14
2004	-	130.26
2005	-	162.28
2006	-	204.82
2007	-	208.48
2008	-	240.95
2009	-	237.64
2010	-	260.18
2011	-	285.40
2012	-	325.45*

(till July 2012)*

The Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers Association (TNPFA) and the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), Namakkal Zone, have resolved to advocate against expansion of the industry for atleast a year.

“This is because farmers are battling against odds such as escalating feed prices and dearth in the availability of raw materials for manufacturing feed. These factors have forced the existing farms to incur a heavy loss”, , TNPFA President R. Nallathambi told *The Hindu* .

“Mr. Nallathambi and Chairman of the Namakkal Zone, NECC, P. Selvaraj said that they would soon be sending requests to banks not to sanction loans to start new poultry farms or to expand the capacities of existing farms. The average daily egg production in Namakkal Zone increased by an average 22.54 lakh eggs a day (10.95 percent) in the year 2010 compared to the previous year.

Senior bankers who requested anonymity made it clear that they cannot stop issuing loans to a particular industry based on requests made by an association. “It is up to the Reserve Bank of India to take policy level issues such as sanctioning loans for an industry. This cannot be decided by any bank’s State, Regional or Corporate office,” they added.

NAMAKKAL, September 8, 2012

Egg price is Rs. 3.49

The wholesale price of egg went up to Rs. 3.49 from Rs. 3.45 an egg. With egg rate scaling to new heights on a daily basis, consumers have expressed shock over this hike as the retail price of egg costs between Rs. 3.75 in petty shops and Rs. 4 in little bigger ones in Namakkal. Shopkeepers said that they could not manage with this price on Friday as the price at which they got egg from the traders stood at Rs. 3.49. “Our present slab is Rs. 3.75,” they added. Retail price has reportedly gone higher in other districts.

On the other hand double yolk eggs that cost about Rs. 3.25 has now climbed to Rs. 4.50 on Thursday.

PUDUCHERRY, September 8, 2012

Rice prices soar in Puducherry

Failure of summer paddy crop in Karnataka main reason



Prices of branded rice and basmati varieties have gone up by around Rs.10 per kg in the past two weeks.— Photo: T.Singaravelou

With southwest monsoon playing truant, prices of rice have shot up in Puducherry over the past few days.

Though the rice market has seen upward trend during the last two months, sudden and steep rise in prices of a few popular varieties has caused concern among consumers.

The best quality of boiled rice is being sold at Rs.45 in retail market. The best variety of IR 20, commonly used for preparing idly and other dishes, has touched an all-time high of Rs.30 a kg.

As per the price list of the Puducherry Agro Product Food and Civil Supplies Corporation Limited (PAPCSCO), which is running a number of “cost price” outlets in Puducherry, a kg of “Krishna” ponna (boiled) is being sold at Rs.44. It was sold at Rs.41 till a few weeks ago. The price of Ponmani (idly rice) has gone up to Rs.30. The price of the same variety was Rs. 24 about 10 days ago.

The price of Mayur ponni (raw) has been priced at Rs.40 against Rs. 37 per kg earlier. The prices of Steam Ponni Deluxe, Deluxe Ponni, ADT 39 raw and others have been increased at least by Rs. 3 to Rs. 4 .

In private retail outlets, these varieties have been sold at least a rupee more than PAPCSCO stores.

Similarly, prices of branded rice and basmati varieties have gone up by around Rs.10 per kg in the past two weeks.

“Though the prices of almost all varieties have been rising up gradually, the prices of a few select varieties have gone up to a great extent suddenly. The sudden decline in arrival to the market here is the main e reason. It seems the prices might increase further in coming weeks,” an employee of PAPCSCO in Puducherry said.

Wholesale traders and rice mill owners said that the prices of rice are fixed based on various factors in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry. The failure of summer paddy crop in Karnataka, which is meeting nearly 30 to 40 per cent of rice requirement in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, has been cited the main reason for the steep rise in prices. The failure of southwest monsoon, Kuruvai paddy crop in Tamil Nadu and possible drought in Tamil Nadu had also contributed to the rise in prices.

“We are supplying 10-month-old rice varieties to the market. By this time, we should have got paddy produced during Kuruvai in Tamil Nadu. But, we have till date not received new arrival because of total failure of Kuruvai and summer crops, which actually determine the prices of rice in last quarter of every year. It is the main reason for the price rise,” said R. Yuvaraj, president, Pondicherry Modern Rice Mill Association.

He added that the prevailing power crisis in Tamil Nadu was also among the reasons for the price rise. The present trend suggested that the prices might not decrease in the near future.

SALEM, September 8, 2012

Farmers asked to take preventive management practices

With incidence of diseases in some patches of turmeric fields reported in the district, farmers have been asked to adopt preventive management practices to control diseases in the tuberisation stage itself. Scientists at Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Sandhiyur, B. Geetha, P.S. Kavitha and programme coordinator S. Manickam said that turmeric is an important commercial spice crop grown in the district. But during rainy season and heavy wind flow, the leaves get damaged leading to poor rhizome development which in turn affects the productivity and profitability of turmeric growers. Since the infection has started now, farmers were asked to take preventive measures.

The disease, caused by fungus *pythium*, spreads through affected rhizomes and infested soil. Hence disease-free rhizomes have to be selected and planted in an area that has good drainage system.

Scientists have asked farmers to treat the seed rhizomes with copper oxy chloride (25 gram per litre) before sowing.

Another disease is the leaf spot that appears as brown spots on the upper surface of the young leaves, caused by fungus *Colletotrichum capsici*.

SALEM, September 8, 2012

Rain in Salem

Rain lashed many parts of the district in the past few days and the city recorded maximum rainfall of 37.70 mm as on Friday morning. Rainfall recorded at other places include: Omalur 20 mm, Valapadi 32 mm, Yercaud 2 mm and Thammampatti 1.20 mm. Water level at Mettur stood at 78.08 feet against its capacity of 120 feet. The inflow was 7,546 cusecs and the outflow was 2,002 cusecs as on Friday morning.

TIRUCHI, September 8, 2012

'Consider providing subsidy to private players engaged in producing seedling'

The Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association has suggested that the State government could consider the possibility of providing subsidy for private players engaged in producing seedlings to improve the samba area.

Mannargudi S.Ranganathan, general secretary of the association, told *The Hindu* that it could be another step in promoting samba in the region .

The State government had announced that it would provide seeds and funds for using tractors for ploughing to help in direct sowing. Besides, it has been planned to promote community nursery on a large scale to bring down the duration of cultivation. Any farmer who takes up community nursery would get subsidies to the tune of Rs.19, 000 per acre. Its focus has been on System Rice Intensification method.

“The State government could think of extending subsidy to the private sector that is quite adept in producing seedlings through nurseries and planting the same under SRI method at an expenditure comparable to that incurred under the conventional method,” he added.

Mr.Ranganathan admitted that there are quite a few imponderables with regard to samba cultivation . “If Tamil Nadu is able to get two thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) of water from Karnataka in the next few days as has been demanded and if the State were to be blessed with copious showers during northeast monsoon , the area of agricultural operation could go up by promoting more nurseries.”

He pointed out that the private sector was able to provide seedlings in just 18 days and was also able to plant the same using machines under SRI method.

Asked where the private sector had been active in providing seedlings and planting the same, Mr.Ranganathan said that several areas in the region, including Thiruthuraipoondi, where there is adequate groundwater, have been covered by the private sector. “I learn that more than 30,000 acres to 40,000 acres had already been benefited out of this private sector initiative,” he added.

TIRUPUR, September 8, 2012

'Cooperative societies should concentrate on value-addition'

Agricultural cooperatives (both societies and unions) across India need to strengthen product, pricing, promotion and distribution strategies if its sustainability has to be improved in the context of globalisation, according to R. Karunakaran, Associate Professor (Cooperation department), University of Hawassa, Ethiopia.

“The cooperative societies should concentrate on value-addition aspect while marketing their agri and allied products so that it could compete successfully against the retail products of multi-national companies,” he said.

Dr. Karunakaran was delivering keynote address at the international seminar on ‘economic recession and strategies of cooperatives’ organised by Tirupur Kumaran College for Women as part of the Cooperative Fest here on Friday.

On the pricing issues, he cautioned the societies against selling the products at wafer-thin margins fearing competition since such model of cost fixation could end them up starving for funds when it looking for capacity expansion. “The profit margins should be substantial enough to create a corpus for capacity building and product innovations”, he said.

The agricultural cooperative societies should strengthen market linkages between the societies and consumer cooperative stores so that a sustainable retail distribution system could be maintained.

Dr. Karunakaran pointed out that cooperative movement in Ethiopia, though only 50 years old, had been a tale of tremendous success only because that the shareholders there displayed a ‘sense of ownership’ in the path to prosperity. Papers on topics like ‘Challenges before cooperatives’ and ‘Relevance of cooperatives in market economy’, were presented by experts.

UDHAGAMANDALAM, September 8, 2012

Tea sector hails expansion of activities under MGNREGA

The tea industry has welcomed the move to include tea gardens and farmlands in the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

With the government having announced that under the scheme farmlands would be improved, a meeting was held at the Collectorate here on Thursday with the Nilgiris Collector Archana Patnaik presiding over it.

A list of beneficiaries in various panchayats falling under categories like tribals, scheduled caste, small and tiny growers is now in the process of being prepared by officials of the department of horticulture and Village Administrative Officers.

The lists would be placed before the special gram sabha meetings scheduled to be held on September 9.

The government has also listed the kind of works that should be taken up.

Pointing out that the expansion of MGNREGA activities would be of considerable help to the tea industry, which has for the past few years been facing acute labour shortage, the president, Nilgiris District Small Tea Growers Association, H. Thiagarajan and the president, Nilgiris Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers Association, Ramesh Bhojarajan told *The Hindu* that the workers can be used for various tea garden operations like plucking, pruning and de-weeding.

Stating that many of the tea gardens have not been pruned for long, they said that if under the MGNREGA pruning is carried out systematically, the Nilgiris will be able to offer the best quality tea.

They added that the implementing agencies should involve the United Planters Association of Southern India-Krishi Vigyan Kendra (UPASI-KVK).

Some of the potato growers hoped that harvesting also would be included in the list of activities

VELLORE, September 8, 2012

All set to tackle monsoon

Coordination meeting urges departments to take all measures

The District Revenue Officer, Vellore, A. Sundaravalli, has asked all departments to take steps to tackle cyclone and flood emergencies during the forthcoming north-east monsoon.

Presiding over a coordination meeting of all departments here on Friday, the DRO asked Revenue officials in the Collectorate and tahsildars to immediately set up control rooms equipped with toll-free cyclone helpline 1077 in the Collectorate and all taluk offices to enable the public to communicate information about possible flood/cyclone damage.

The tahsildars were also asked to keep ready the phone numbers of the owners of earthmovers for use during emergencies. The DRO directed the officials of the Department of Fire and Rescue Services to conduct mock drills on rescue and relief operations during floods, to use very high frequency wireless sets to communicate with the Revenue and police officials during emergencies and to keep equipment such as rubber boats and rubber dinghies in good condition for rescue operations. Health Department officials were asked to keep sufficient stock of medicines, especially life-saving drugs ready, and to prepare details of private ambulances for use during emergencies. Civil supplies officials were asked to keep sufficient stock of foodgrains, kerosene and gunny bags ready. Officials of the Public Works Department were asked to inspect schools, community centres and marriage halls in the district and ensure that these buildings were in good condition to accommodate those who might be rendered homeless during floods.

The Regional Transport Officer was told to ensure that all government vehicles were in good condition.

MYSORE, September 8, 2012

Distribution of seeds for kitchen garden

National Institute of Engineering (NIE) and Shakunthala Rao Memorial Agricultural Rejuvenation Trust will distribute seedlings of ornamental plants and seeds for kitchen garden to encourage residents to beautify their gardens for Dasara. The seedlings will be distributed free of cost. The programme will be held at NIE Golden Jubilee Complex on Manandavadi Road from 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Distribution would be on a first-come-first-served basis, a press release

said. — Staff Correspondent

ALAPPUZHA, September 8, 2012

Duck farmers facing hard times

Ducks from Tamil Nadu are flooding the market



POOR RETURNS:A farmer tending his flock of ducks in Kuttanad.

Duck farmers in Kuttanad are a dispirited lot with 'Kuttandan ducks' from Tamil Nadu flooding the market and little support from the government for their occupation.

The dwindling area of paddy cultivation is another cause for concern as feed is hard to find. Earlier, they used to leave their ducks in the paddy fields after harvest and the ducks could eat the left-over food grains. The use of combine harvester machines leaves very little on the paddy fields after the harvest.

“We are now taking our ducks to fields in Thrissur district. Duck farmers in Kuttanad have been reduced to some 250 in number. The majority of the farmers have at least 10,000 ducks,” says Jojo Thundiyl, duck farmer and district joint secretary of Tharavu Karshaka Union (Duck Farmers Union).

The price of duck meat and egg has risen in the market, largely due to the low supply of ducks in the local market. The duck eggs are priced at Rs 6 per egg now, at a time when it should have gone down.

The import of duck eggs from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh is on the decline, which jacked up duck egg prices in the Alappuzha market.

Duck farmers are ruing the lack of government support for their occupation. Around 89 per cent of duck population in the district is concentrated in the Kuttanad area.

Mr. Jojo said the government should encourage women working in Kudumbashree ‘ayalkootams’ to take up duck farming. Similarly, ducklings should be given at subsidised rates to farmers. Government agencies like Meats Products of India should procure duck meat from farmers, he said..

PALAKKAD, September 8, 2012

'Crop loss due to supply of mixed seeds'

Paddy farmers in Perumatty panchayat seek compensation



Farmers in Perumatty grama panchayat have complained to the Agriculture Department officials saying they had lost their paddy crop owing to supply of mixed varieties of short duration and long duration paddy seeds by the Perumatty Krishi Bhavan.

In a complaint sent to Perumatty Krishi Officer A. Devendran, a paddy farmer hailing from Kannimari in Perumatty grama panchayat said he had bought 200 kg Kanchana variety paddy seed from the Krishi Bhavan for sowing on 4.5 acres of land. However, he noticed that some plants had not flowered. He said many farmers in the area faced a similar problem and had sustained heavy losses.

He attributed this to a mix of short duration and long duration seed varieties. While the short duration seeds were ready for harvest, the long duration seeds were only at the flowering stage.

Farmers could not harvest the matured one because the long duration seed would take another month to be ready for harvest.

If the farmers waited for the long duration one to ripen, they stood to lose the short duration crop, Mr. Devendran said.

GOLLAPROLU, September 8, 2012

Rain causes extensive damage to cotton crop

Chances of yield are bare minimal, say farmers



The submerged cotton field at Gollaprolu in East Godavari district.— Photo: Special Arrangement

The sudden downpour the region had experienced last week damaged standing cotton crop in over 1,000 acres, dampening the hopes of farmers. The half-grown crop was submerged in rainwater, indicating that the chances of yield were minimal for the season.

Sought-after seed

Farmers here had queued up in front of a seed shop and resorted to a skirmish to get the MRC-7201 (Neeraja) variety of cotton three months ago. They even staged dharna and organised road blockade, seeking a fair deal from the government. The record yield registered by a few farmers who had sown the variety in the past made them keen on purchasing that particular seed. As per the survey conducted by the Department of Agriculture, the total crop loss due to last week's downpour was in an extent of 1,112 hectares. Of it, cotton was planted in 428 hectares in Gollaprolu mandal. In comparison with paddy and chilli, the other two crops that were damaged due to heavy rain, the investment was high on cotton and the chances of any yield were bare minimal.

"I purchased seed in the black market by paying Rs. 2,000 per packet as against the actual price of Rs. 980. At a time when I thought that the investment on the standing crop was nearing

completion, rain damaged the cotton field very badly,” Ilavakayala Ramesh, a cotton farmer, told *The Hindu* . He lost his crop in an extent of three acres.

After estimating the crop loss, the agriculture officials have sent a report to their head office, seeking suggestions. However, there is no chance of sowing the seed again, as the season is over.

“Sowing black gram, green gram, and maize are the options available to the farmers. We will assist the farmers in a way suggested by our Commissionerate,” says D. Prameela, Joint Director of Agriculture.

High stakes

“Not just seed, but all the input costs have been doubled this year. We are unfortunate that we are not getting any returns from the crop. What to do is the question haunting us now,” says Mr. Ramesh.

ONGOLE, September 8, 2012

On a mission to popularise agriculture among youth

Two youths from Tamil Nadu are on a ‘Bharat Parikrama’ expedition



Two youths, who are on a nation-wide cycle expedition, being received by Prakasam District Rachayutulu Sangam president B.Hanuma Reddy in Ongole on Friday.—Photo: Kommuri Srinivas

Two youths from Tamil Nadu are on a nation-wide cycle expedition to attract youngsters back to agriculture to earn a living for themselves and provide the much-needed food security for the nation.

Making a brief halt here on Friday, the two youths, one Master of Business Administration and another B.Tech graduate, said their 'Bharat Parikrama' on bicycles is to promote farming as a profession for the country's youth".

The duo, Vasant Velusamy and Vidya Sekhar, who had so far travelled 1800 km covering Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry starting from Udumalpet on August 15, stressed that the country's farm sector needed quality human resources to practise scientific agriculture as also better-managed farms with optimum size to improve productivity.

Displaying a placard "we love farming", Vasanth, who produces hybrid coconut saplings with best features from both dwarf and tall varieties, said "agriculture is the essence of India".

"We are documenting the best practices as we move from one place to another. Our aim is to develop a comprehensive databank of all the crops cultivated in the country as also indigenous farm practices as we move on up to Kashmir touching Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Jarkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and return back covering Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka", said Mr. Sekhar.

Good response

"We got a very good response from people in the States covered, including Andhra Pradesh", said the youngsters who were received by Prakasam District Rachayutula Sangam district president B. Hanuma Reddy and secretary Ponnuri Venkata Srinivasulu.

They moved on to Martur, ancestral village of Vasanth whose forefathers had migrated to Tamil Nadu. On an average they travel 100 km a day and meet on their way farmers, farm labourers, and address students in schools and colleges. Since independence farming had witnessed far better irrigation sources, quality farm inputs, including hybrid seeds and fertilizers and adoption of biotechnologies, they said.

NAGPUR, September 8, 2012

Heavy rain damages crop in Vidarbha

Around four million hectares of crop was damaged due to heavy rain in the Vidarbha region in the last five days.

According to the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a social group working among farmers there, the incessant showers have caused widespread damage to the standing crop of cotton, soya and paddy.

“Vidarbha is in the grip of an agrarian crisis and farmers are committing suicide due to distress. The present crop failure will add to their gloom and debt, resulting in more farmer suicides. We urge the administration to provide relief,” said the VJAS in a statement.

According to the VJAS, two farmers from Dharana and Both Badan villages in Yavatmal district committed suicide in the last 24 hours due to crop failure.

ITANAGAR, September 8, 2012

AGRICULTURE



CENTRE APPROVES AGRICULTURE COLLEGE IN ARUNACHAL

Centre has approved a proposal for establishment of an agriculture college in Arunachal Pradesh.

The college, first of its kind in the state, would be set up at Pasighat, the headquarters of East Siang district, official sources said here on Friday. This was communicated by Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar to Chief Minister Nabam Tuki when the latter called on him at New Delhi on Thursday.PTI

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Rainy

Saturday, Sep 8

Max **Min**

35.8° | 26.2°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:57

Sunset: 06:14

Barometer: 1009

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Sunday, Sep 9

Max **Min**

33° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday Sep 10	Tuesday Sep 11	Wednesday Sep 12	Thursday Sep 13	Friday Sep 14
31° 27° Rainy	29° 26° Rainy	31° 26° Rainy	31° 26° Rainy	31° 26° Rainy

Milk prices go up by 4% in Delhi, NCR

Mother Dairy, a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board, has increased prices of branded milk by 4%, the first hike in a year. The hike will come into effect from Saturday. Mother Dairy officials attributed the price hike to a rise in power tariff, poly film cost, diesel cost and rising milk procurement prices.

"The last price increase was in September 2011. We are compelled to raise prices marginally in order to balance the need of the dairy farmers and the consumers," said a Mother Dairy spokesperson.

The company's full cream milk brand will cost R39 a litre, up from R37, while toned (fat trimmed) milk variety will cost R30, up R1.

The company, which sells more than 300,000 litres per day at Delhi, is a market leader. Currently, Mother Dairy milk is priced lower than its nearest competition and even after latest round of price increase, Mother Dairy milk will continue to be lower by R1 a litre than its nearest competition in the full cream milk variant.

"Prices of essential commodities are rising every day. How are we supposed to meet our daily needs within our limited budget," said Savitri Devi, a housewife from south Delhi's Kailash Colony.



A floral carpet over Blue Mountain

COIMBATORE: From a distance it looks as if the hill has wrapped itself in a dark blue shawl. As you walk up the ridge, you realize that thousands of shrubs of neelakurinji (*strobilanthes kunthiana*) have blossomed en masse.

On Ebbanad and Bikku Pathi Mund villages, close to Ooty in the Nilgiris, a rare spectacle that normally happens once in 12 years is on view. Tourists have been crowding the two villages, nearly 15 km away from the Ooty district collectorate, to watch the blooms ever since news spread that the kurinjis have flowered. With the monsoon arriving late and the [Supreme Court](#) interim order banning tourism in tiger reserves affecting tourism inflow into the Nilgiris, the neelakurinjis have given something for the tourism industry to cheer.

Normally, neelakurinjis blossom across vast tracts of the southern Western Ghats. This time, however, only two hills in the Nilgiris have been fortunate to witness the blooms. "The entire shola grasslands of both the villages are covered by the flowers and they can be best viewed from the premises of [Ebbanad High School](#)," says local environmental activist [Prabhu Poornan](#).

According to him, the plants bloom normally in the Nilgiris, the Palani hills and the Munnar ranges in Kerala. "Though small in quantity, they have started attracting botanists and tourists from across the region and has become a relief for people, who have been denied access to the Mudumalai tiger reserve," he said.

According to Prabhu, the sighting of the flower, which has no fragrance, was recorded for the first time in the hills way back in 1838. The Nilgiri hills, which literally means the blue mountains, got their name from the purplish blue flowers of neelakurinji that blossoms gregariously only once in 12 years, says S [Jayachandran](#) of [Tamil Nadu Green Movement](#). As the plant species is an endangered one and endemic to the southern Western Ghats, a proposal for listing the plant in Schedule 6 of the Wildlife Act is under the consideration of the government, said a forest official.

"Neelakurinji grows only at an altitude of 1,500 metre and is considered the flagship species of the shola grassland ecosystem. The plant will not survive in any other climate and altitude," says Prabhu. Though seeds will be formed in the plant immediately after the flowering, it takes another 10 months for these to become ready for germination. The conservation of the seed and the plant for the next 10 months is a major challenge for forest officials and wildlife enthusiasts.

Chemical, metal waste choking aquatic life: Study

MUMBAI: The city's mangroves and aquatic life are falling prey to chemicals and heavy [metal waste](#), which have found their way into the [ecosystem](#).

A study conducted on Bhavan's College Lake in Mumbai showed that mercury and arsenic, the two most toxic metals, were present dominantly and above the permissible limits among fish and mangroves. Traces of other heavy metals like nickel, zinc, copper, etc were also discovered among the samples. The study, experts said, is a microcosm of the massive accumulation of metals in the flora and fauna of water bodies across the country, which will affect the entire ecosystem.

The study, conducted by three chemistry professors from Bhavan's College in Andheri and a professor from Jhunjunu University in Rajasthan, analyses a lake spread around 603.4 km. Sewage and chemical waste from the college laboratories usually find its way into the lake. A sample of fishes and mangroves was studied over 12 months (June 2011-May 2012) to ascertain the presence of the metals. Mercury levels were found to be way above permissible levels set by the [Central Pollution Control Board](#).

"An excess of these metals can contaminate the food chain," said PU Shingare, a professor involved in the research. "All water bodies and the flora surrounding it need urgent attention, so that the toxin levels stay in check," said Altaf Patel, physician, Jaslok hospital and retired professor, Grant Medical College.



UP: Farmers who repaid 10% of loan will benefit from waiver

Farmers who have taken loans up to Rs 50,000 with land mortgage, and have paid back at least 10 per cent of the amount, will benefit from the Akhilesh Yadav government's loan waiver which is likely to be formally announced next week.

The UP Sahkari Gram Vikas Bank, commonly known as the land development bank, will implement the loan waiver scheme which is estimated to benefit 3.5 lakh farmers and cost the exchequer Rs 1,500 crore, up from Rs 500 crore provided for in the budget, it is learnt.

In its election manifesto, the Samajwadi Party had promised to waive off farmers' loans up to Rs 50,000. The Chief Minister gave his nod to the scheme last week.

Ram Jatan Yadav, Managing Director of LDB, said the condition of 10 per cent repayment had been inserted to ensure that only those farmers benefit "who are not wilful defaulters, they wanted to repay, but could not due to adverse conditions".

He said that the bank had received instructions from the state government not to take any action which could cause harassment of farmers for recovery of loan. Therefore, the bank has stopped making recoveries and issuing notices to farmers.

The bank had recovered Rs 774 crore and disbursed loans totalling Rs 728 crore last year, but this year, till June 30, the recovery has been stagnant at nearly 350 crore. "As we are not issuing notices, no farmer is coming forward for repayment," Yadav explained.

Initially, the government wanted to include farmers loans from all banks, including the UP Co-operative Bank, district co-operative banks, land development bank and commercial banks. But these loans added up to a staggering Rs 14,000 crore.

Mother Dairy milk costlier by Rs 2 a litre

Mother Dairy today announced an increase of up to Rs 2 a litre in milk prices in the Delhi-NCR region with effect from tomorrow.

Full cream milk will be dearer by Rs 2 per litre, while other variants will be costlier by Re 1 a litre.

One litre of full cream milk (poly pack) will now cost Rs 39, toned milk (poly pack) Rs 30, token milk Rs 28, double toned Rs 26 and skimmed milk Rs 22.

Mother Dairy, the largest supplier of milk in the Delhi-NCR, sells more than 30 lakh litres per day (both loose and poly-pack) in the region.

"We have raised milk prices by 4 per cent. For the last one year, we have been holding prices. But now we are forced to increase it because procurement prices have gone up and also the cost of other inputs such as power, diesel and packaging material have increased," Mother Dairy Managing Director S Nagarajan said.

In April this year, Amul and Kwality Dairy had increased prices, but Mother Dairy decided against any hike.

The company in statement said it "passes on 75-76 per cent of the consumer price to rural farmers. This may probably be one of the best and most efficient means of ensuring inclusive growth".



Wine growers unfazed by rain woes



Bangalore:

Though many areas of the country are struggling due to water shortage, wine growers based predominantly out of Maharashtra and Karnataka are not worried because this could help them get a better harvest.

“Vineyards don't need much water. If you have less water, you get a higher yield and thicker wine,” said Venkatraman Reddy, Managing Director, Heritage Wines.

But this doesn't mean that very low rainfall is good for vines either.

“If you have more rain, you get more grapes, but quality is low. If you get low rain, both quality and quantity goes down,” said V.S. Patil, a wine consultant.

He said that if you get medium rain, you get reduced quantity of grapes, but the quality is better.

Neeraj Agarwal, Senior Vice-President – Vineyard Operations, Sula Vineyards, said that this means contending with the vagaries of nature and unpredictable rainfall.

“We have had erratic rainfall in the last three to four years. From 2004 to 2006, we had twice the usual rainfall, but for the last three years, we have only got around 60 to 70 per cent rains,” he said.

In order to cope with the rains, Agarwal said that Sula uses rainwater harvesting to tide over the years when rainfall is low.

When rainfall is high and there is water logging, he said that the plants grow aerial roots and traditional roots suffocate because of too much water.

But this happens only if there is water logging for two weeks or more.

The major problem with excessive rains happens only if it is during April and May, said Patil.

“This is the maturity period. If rains are high during this time, the berry size goes up. It becomes more watery and the aroma will come down,” he said.