THE HINDU

Fish farmers switch species to net good returns

Sea bass cultured in cages being harvested; and right, a cobia fish.— File photos

Traditional carp varieties and shrimp have not been profitable

KOCHI, April 3, 2014 - Fish farmers in the State are moving away from their dependence on traditional carp varieties to more commercially important species with a view to cashing in on the depletion in wild catch.

Aqua culture in the State, forced by frequent outbreak of diseases, switched from traditional shrimp farming in pokkali fields to farming carp varieties like katla, rohu, mrigal and grass carp. However, these varieties have not been giving enough returns.

However, a fish farmer V.M. Shibu in Kottappuram says that he has now been farming new species and the results have been impressive. A kg of sea bass fetched Rs. 450 a kg during the last harvest and Mr. Shibu is going to harvest cobia for the first time in April and is looking forward to a price band of Rs. 300 to Rs 350 a kg.

Farmers are also quickly taking to farming scampi, mangrove crab (mud crab) and Nile tilapia, popular in African countries.

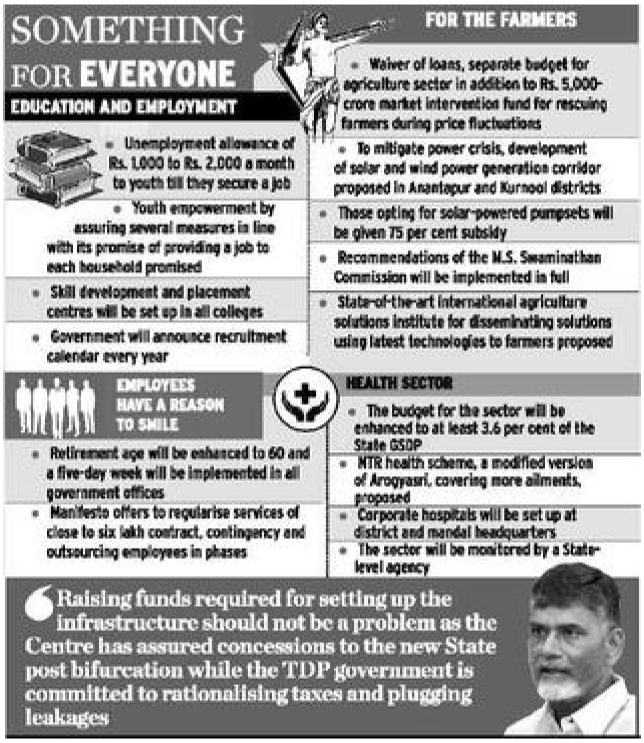
What has made these switchovers a reality for the farmers is the availability of high quality crab seeds and fingerlings through the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture, a society under the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA).

Several projects have been launched in the State. One of these is at Muthalamada in Palakkad district to farm scampi. The project farms all-male population of scampi so that the commercial results are good. Traditional scampi farmers have been weighed down by differential growth of the male and female giant fresh water prawns.

But the breakthrough by the RGCA in brood stock development has ensured that production of all-male progeny is now possible. An MPEDA official said that the project in Palakkad is for farming male scampi as they grow faster and gain weight easily. The MPEDA estimates that if scampi culture is done in the 2,000 hectares of water bodies identified as suitable for the purpose, Kerala would be able to generate about Rs. 200 crore yearly in aquaculture income. Statistics from the MPEDA also show that open water cage aquaculture of species like sea bass can yield up to 1.5 tonnes of fish from a 40 cubic-metre cage a year.

Farm sector gets the pride of place in TDP manifesto

Not far behind is employees' welfare and focus on health, education and employment sectors



HYDERABAD, April 3, 2014 - The Telugu Desam Party has announced a series of measures to effectively manage core sectors like agriculture, welfare, health and youth empowerment if it is voted to power in the successor State of Andhra Pradesh.

The party showered a spree of sops to agriculture sector, the primary one being waiver of loans given to farmers, and setting up market intervention fund to rescue farmers in the event of price fluctuations in the market, a not so infrequent phenomenon. The party has also focussed attention on youth empowerment by assuring several measures in line with its promise of providing a job to each household. The TDP, in its manifesto, has announced a separate budget for agriculture sector in addition to Rs. 5,000-crore market intervention fund for rescuing farmers during price fluctuations. Farm sector will be effectively linked with the employment guarantee scheme so that farm labour is given their due. Measures had been suggested to mitigate the frequent power crisis, including development of solar and wind power generation corridor in Anantapur and Kurnool districts.

Farmers opting for solar powered pumpsets will be given 75 per cent subsidy while the recommendations of the M.S. Swaminathan Commission would be implemented in full. The TDP will set up a state-of-art International Agriculture Solutions Institute for disseminating solutions using latest technologies to farmers.

On the education and employment front, the manifesto assures setting up of skill development and placement centres in all colleges while the Government would announce a recruitment calendar every year. The TDP assured an unemployment allowance of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,000 a month to youth till they secure a job.

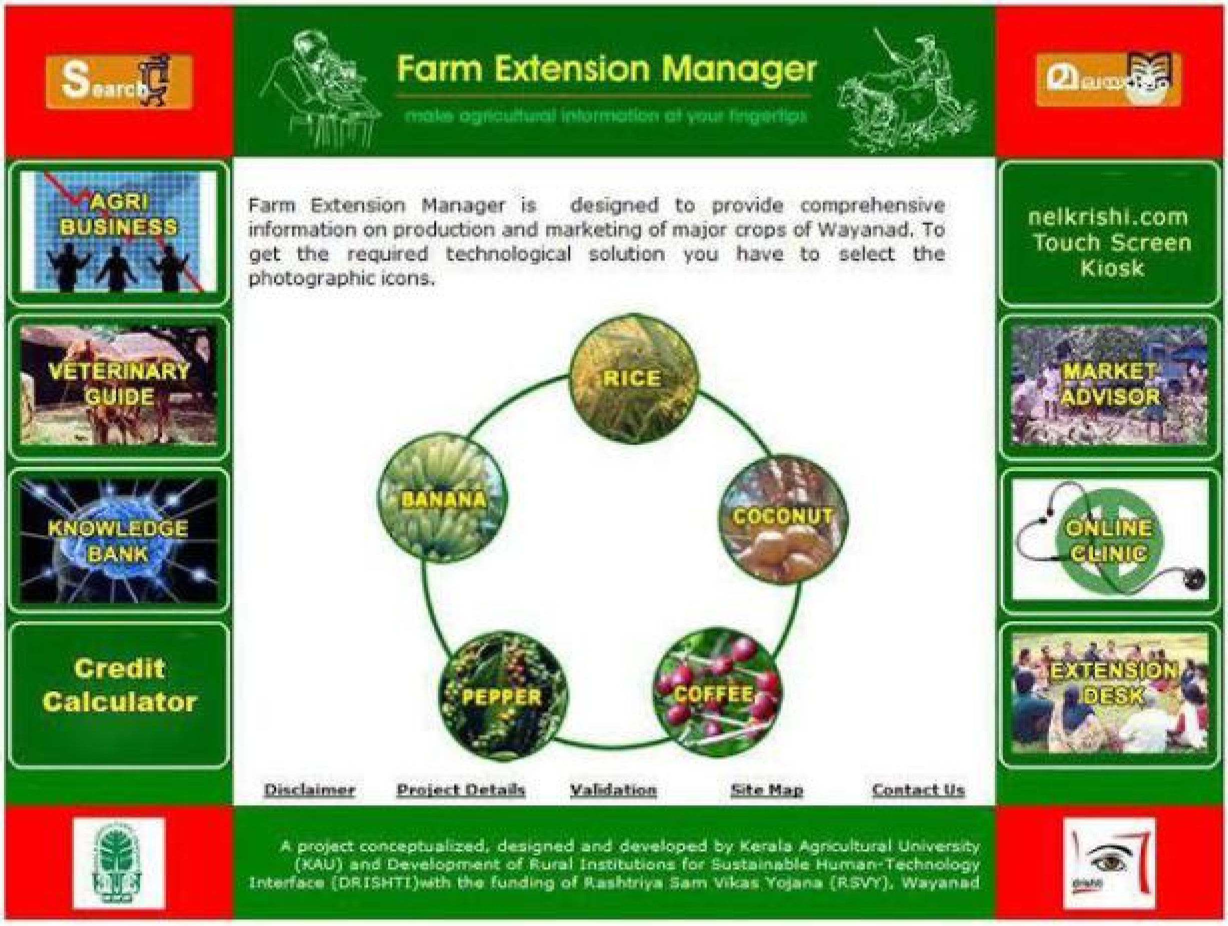
Several incentives will be given to employees, a section that reportedly distanced itself from the TDP during its nine-year regime. Accordingly, the retirement age will be enhanced to 60 and a five-day week will be implemented in all Government offices. There is an offer for regularisation of services of close to six lakh contract, contingency and outsourcing employees in phases. On the healthcare front, the budget for the sector would be enhanced to at least 3.6 per cent of the State GSDP. Poor and lower income group families will be given healthcards under the NTR health scheme, a modified version of Arogyasri covering more ailments. While corporate hospitals would be set up at district and mandal headquarters, a State level agency will be set up to monitor the sector as a whole.

Measures are assured for middle class families like Rs. 1,000 crore corpus that would be utilised for stabilisation of prices and 12 cylinders a year to families with Rs. 100 subsidy on

each cylinder without insistence on Aadhar cards. “The new State is expected to face a revenue deficit of over Rs. 10,000 crore and the people are hurt at the manner in which the division has been done,” TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu says.
People are looking at a strong leadership that can ensure accelerated development and the TDP has proven track record in this direction. According to Mr. Naidu, raising funds required for setting up the infrastructure should not be a problem as the Centre had assured concessions to the new State post bifurcation while the TDP Government was committed to rationalise taxes and plug leakages. The government would consult business bodies like Ficci, Assocham and others for reforming tax system and effectively monitoring tax collection system.

Farmer’s notebook

A new online software disburses farm loan details



Special ArrangementThe new online farm calculator.
Getting a crop loan from a bank and after repaying the entire amount getting back the land or house papers submitted as collateral security for availing the loan are not easy tasks.
“Farmers know well how hard it is to get a bank loan today. In several cases they are often in the dark about their eligibility for applying or interest calculated on their loan amount disbursed.
“As an answer for this our specialist team has developed a new farm loan calculator called www.farmextensionmanager.com,” says Dr. P.V. Habeeburrahman, Professor and Head, KVK (Krishi Vigyan Kendra) Malappuram.

Scale of finance

The new online calculator, based on scale of finance concept, can help farmers know their loan eligibility and help banks to easily estimate crop loan limit.
Agricultural credit falls under two major categories, one, crop loan and the other, investment loan.

Crop loan is to meet the expenses for cultivation, maintenance and repair of pumps, agriculture machineries etc and investment loan is sanctioned for developing a new enterprise like fertilizer or seed shop that may not give immediate return.
Usually during the sowing season, farmers approach their local bank for crop loan disbursement. The bank officials after necessary verification work out the amount for disbursal using scale of finance as base. Scale of finance in simple terms is the expenditure incurred for growing the particular crop. The cost of labour, chemicals, irrigation, marketing etc. falls under this category.
There is a district level technical committee in every district which decides the loan amount to be disbursed. The committee meets every year and decides the loan limit for the different crops grown in that area.
Not fixed
"The scale of finance is not fixed. It is variable and differs in different districts even for the same crop grown and keeps changing annually. To cite an example, paddy cultivation per hectare in Kasargod is Rs 63,000 while in the nearby Kozhikode district is Rs 35,000.
"Similarly, all crops included in a district may not find a place in another district. Betel vine is a commercial crop in Malappuram, while it is not in Thiruvananthapuram," explains Dr. Habeeb. All the required information has been collected from 14 districts from NABARD for the year 2013-14, the data validated and fed into the calculator.
Request
As soon as a farmer selects a district, the list of crops cultivated in that district will pop on the screen.
And once the cultivated crop is selected, the scale of finance for that crop is displayed. This is followed by a request for entering the farmer's particulars and choice of crop he wishes to cultivate.
Once this is done the minimum and maximum eligible finance will be shown on the screen at the click of the mouse.
Since a number of intercrops are being cultivated in Kerala, the calculator has been designed to accommodate a maximum of five crops to arrive at the eligible loan amount.
In some cases a farmer may not be interested in availing the whole loan amount immediately.
Calculation
He would prefer to utilise a portion first and after some months take the remaining loan, and in such a case the online programme calculates only the interest rate for the loan amount he wishes to utilise. Once he takes the entire loan then principal is also calculated. Similarly the interest charged for the loans may also differ among banks. The software effectively takes care of all these problems and gives the interest and principal part to be repaid at the end of the crop season. Thus, by using the tool, farmers can have an estimation of the eligible loan amount without going to the bank.
For more details interested farmers can contact Dr. P.V. Habeeburrahman, Professor and Head, KVK Malappuram, email: kvkmalappuram@kau.in, mobile: 9446058252.

Bolting in onion

Onion crop performance varies in different seasons or in different areas for the same seed and many times due to farmers' unawareness. In many cases the defects are considered to be only due to seed, which is not always true.
Based on literature available on onion cultivation and as experienced by us in this region while working on this crop, the types of defects which are commonly seen are premature bolting, doubling or splitting of bulb at initial stages of crop growth as well as after bulb development. All these defects lead to economical losses to the growers.
Premature bolting
Early transplanting i.e. for rabi crop if done before middle of December there is more likelihood of premature bolting. Use of growth hormones for flower initiation may lead to premature bolting.

Farmers should take care to avoid above factors and also remove the premature bolters as soon as they are seen in the field to avoid contamination in adjoining fields as onion is a highly cross pollinated crop

Splitting of bulbs

Wider spacing, excessive use of fertilizers or delayed application of fertilizers i.e. after initiation of bulbing process, irrigation after prolonged dry spell, heavy irrigation at the time of maturity, injury to bulbs during weeding or insect attack, and delayed harvesting are some of the reasons attributed for this.

Planting schedule

Farmers should adopt the planting recommendation and fertilizers application practices properly.

Many times the splitting of bulbs after harvesting or in storage is noticed which is due to forcing of bulbs for more size by applying heavy fertilizers or growth promoting chemicals. Proper spacing and fertilizer application is to be managed. As bulbing initiation is the effect of sunlight, when adequate sunlight is not available bulb initiation is hampered. It may lead to other defects such as pest or disease attacks.

Farmers should take care to see they do not use spurious fertilizers or heavy doses of growth enhancers during initial stage of crop growth.

(Dr. R. K. Singh, Assistant Director, email: singhrknbpgr@yahoo.com, mob: 09881303443 and Dr. R. P. Gupta, Director, National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation, Chitegaon, Nashik, Maharashtra, email: nhrdf_nsk@sancharnet.in, mob: 9850880668.)

Water level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 47.81 feet on Wednesday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 766 cusecs and the discharge 3,104 cusecs.

Water level in Papanasam dam on Wednesday stood at 45.35 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 6.02 cusecs and 204.75 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 70.88 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 10 cusecs and 100 cusecs of water is discharged.

Kanyakumari - The level in Pechipparai dam stood at 10.85 feet, while it was 36.85 feet in Perunchani, 2.95 feet in Chittar 1, 3.05 feet in Chittar 11, 2.40 feet in Poigai and 41.85 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru.

Marketing glitch takes sheen off organic vegetables sale

MANGALORE, April 3, 2014 - An initiative to introduce organic vegetables to consumers in Mangalore has hit an obstacle. Though there is no disruption in the supply, “lack of a suitable retail space” is cited as reason for slowdown in the sales.

Rita Noronha, Convenor, Organic Promoters Collective (OPC), which organised a fair of organic produce brought from Karnataka and neighbouring states in the city six months ago, said if an individual or shop in the city could give space to selling the organic produce, it would be a significant step forward.

Ms. Noronha, who is still scouting for a suitable place to sell the vegetables, said taking a place on rent will increase the cost of the vegetables and their aim was to keep them priced reasonably so that the masses can buy them. While sales of organic vegetables have not stopped, they are being sold along with other vegetables. She said, “However, their exclusiveness is lost.”

David D'Souza, vegetables merchant at Central Market, said farmers were not resisting growing organic vegetables as production costs of organic vegetables was cheaper by 20 per cent since it did not include expenditure on fertilisers and it was good for the health of the soil in the long term.

Customers are willing to pay a premium for it as they buy them in malls. But a separate market for organic vegetables has not emerged. Besides, customers want them sold next door. Mr. D'Souza said, "The main challenge is there is no marketing facility."

Selma, lecturer, St. Agnes College, said she buys organic vegetables even though they are more expensive than other vegetables because they are healthier and taste better.

Ms. Noronha said the matter was not merely about buying organic vegetables. It was linked to a bigger issue of agricultural practices, landholdings and food security in Dakshina Kannada. The region gets most of its vegetables from outside. A region that used to grow a variety of rice some time ago, it now got even rice from outside.

- ***'If an individual gives space to sell organic produce, it will be a significant step forward'***
- ***Taking a place on rent will increase the cost: Noronha of Organic Promoters Collective***

The organic way

Organic Kerala Charitable Trust, in association with Rajagiri Outreach and Sacred Heart College, Thevara, is conducting an exhibition of organic produce. The exhibition, at **Rajendra Maidan** , which concludes on April 6, will be inaugurated this evening. Apart from the exhibition, seminars on the organic way too will be held. **The exhibition timings are from 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.**

Tender coconut business picks up pace

CHITTOOR, April 3, 2014 - With mercury soaring each day, tender coconut business picks up pace in Kuppam division. The coconut here has much demand in other markets the indication of which is the transportation of numerous loads of it to Kadapa, Kurnool and Prakasam districts. It is also being transported to markets in Bangalore, Mumbai and Chennai.

Over five thousand families are estimated to be dependent on tender coconut trade in Kuppam and Palamaner areas. This time, farmers are directly dealing with the agents without letting the middlemen fleece them. Besides, several labourers, who are out job temporarily, are getting paid for removing coconuts from trees.

Fishing for taste

Explore beyond the regular fish fry and fish curry with these experimental fish recipes

1. FISH BUTTER MASALA	2. HILSA FISH SPECIAL	3. FISH HEAD WITH SPINACH CURRY
Ingredients: Fish – 350 gm Onion – 1, sliced Oil – as required A. Ginger paste - 1/2 tsp Garlic - 1 1/2 tsp Onion – 1, grind into paste Cumin powder – 1 tsp Coriander powder – 1 tsp Garam masala powder - 1/4 tsp Mustard – 1 tsp Poppy seeds – 1 tsp Tumeric powder - 1/2 tsp Tomato sauce - 2 tbsp Chilli powder – 1 tsp Salt – to taste B. Curd - 1 tbsp Butter - 2 tbsp Fresh cream - 1 tbsp Milk - 1/2 cup Butter - 1 tsp Green chillies – 3, chopped C. Onion – 1-2, sliced horizontally and separated into rings Capsicum – 1-2, sliced horizontally Salt - to taste Oil - as required **Method:** Mix all the ingredients in list A. Heat oil till it smokes. Fry sliced onion until light golden and add the spices in list A. Fry well, remove from fire, and combine with the	**Ingredients:** Hilsa fish – 350 gms Mustard - 3 tbsp Green chillies - 6, chopped Curd – 2 tbsp Turmeric powder - 1 tsp Salt - to taste Oil - as required **Method:** Grind mustard into a smooth paste with three green chillies and salt (to reduce the bitterness). Mix the mustard paste with curd, turmeric, a cup of water and enough oil. Don't heat the oil. Mix it well with the pieces of raw fish and the remaining three green chillies. Transfer to a baking dish and bake in a pre heated oven for 20 minutes. Before serving, sprinkle one table spoon of oil over the hot fish. Serve with rice.	**Ingredients:** Fish head - 4 Spinach - 250 gms, chopped Masoor dal - 1 1/2 cup Tomato - 2, chopped Salt - to taste Turmeric powder - 1/2 tsp Oil – as required Panch phoran (a mixture of cumin, onion seed, thymol (ajwain), aniseed and fenugreek) - 1 tsp Green chillies – 2 chopped Red chilli -1 broken into bits Onions - 2 chopped Ginger paste and garlic paste - 1 1/2 tsp each Pepper powder - 1/2 tsp **Method:** Rub pieces of fish head with salt and turmeric. Heat oil and deep fry the fish heads and remove from oil. Pressure cook the fried fish heads with dal, tomatoes, salt, water and turmeric and remove from the oil. Heat oil. Put in panch phoran, chillies and add onions, ginger-garlic pastes and pepper powder. Fry till onions are golden. Pour in dal, cover and boil on high heat for 10 minutes. Serve with rice.

ingredients in list B. Rub the fish well with this spice mixture and leave it aside for one hour. Bake till the fish is cooked and the liquid dries up. The spice paste should coat the pieces of fish and the oil should float on top. Heat a little oil/butter and fry the capsicum rings with a little salt. When the capsicum is cooked, add onions and stir fry for a few seconds till the onion is crunchy. Sprinkle the fried capsicum and onion rings on top of the fish just before serving.		
4. GREEN FISH CURRY		
Ingredients: Fish - 350 gms Thick paste of curry leaf - 1/2 cup Paanch phoran and turmeric powder - 1 tsp each Onions -2, chopped Oil to fry Ginger and garlic pastes - 2 tsp each Bay leaves - 4 Potato -2, boiled and mashed **Method:** Rub the fish pieces with salt and 3/4 tsp turmeric. Heat oil till it smokes. Fry the fish pieces until light golden brown on both sides. Remove from oil. Splutter paanch phoran, stir in onion, ginger-garlic pastes and bay leaves. Fry till the onions are golden. Put in curry leaves paste, boiled and finally mashed potato, salt and fry for a while. Pour in hot water and the remaining 1/4 tsp of turmeric powder. INDU NARAYAN		

hindustantimes

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Sunny

Thursday, Apr 3
Max Min
33° | 26°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 66
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:04
Sunset: 06:20
Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast

Partly Cloudy

Friday, Apr 4
Max Min
33° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday **Apr 5**	Sunday **Apr 6**	Monday **Apr 7**	Tuesday **Apr 8**	Wednesday **Apr 9**
36° | 25°	36° | 25°	30° | 24°	29° | 24°	28° | 25°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast

DECCAN Chronicle

Telengana farmers losing interest in rice

HYderabad: While earlier two crops were grown along with a third crop of green vegetables at times, the first two essentially being rice and maize — the interest in rice is dwindling fast in districts where farmers are dependent on bore-wells, mostly in Telangana districts.

However, even as some rice cultivation areas might be lost to other crops, scientists say that it will not affect the overall rice production.

“Wherever there is less water supply, we suggest farmers to go for dry crops; but paddy has lesser risks and is easy to cultivate and hence in case of adequate water supply, farmers still prefer paddy.

In the last two years, there was more production of cotton due to reduced water supply. The overall production of paddy was not affected and is not likely to be affected much as we have developed very high yielding varieties of rice, and currently 70 per cent of the rice cultivation is under the high yielding varieties," said principal scientist (Rice), ANGRAU (Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University), Dr Suryanarayana.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

City Yet to See an Influx of Mangoes

Summer is here, but where are the mangoes? is the general feeling among mango lovers. If you were hoping to be feasting on delicious mangoes already, fret not, because your wait is almost over.

Mangoes have begun to make an appearance and are slowly trickling into the city's shops. The arrival of everybody's favourite summer fruit was delayed by over two weeks this year due to the late monsoon, but traders promise the season will be in full swing in about a week's time.

According to merchants at the Koyambedu market, Senthuram and Banganapalli varieties of mangoes have already arrived. However, the pre-season stock is costly with the two varieties costing `50 and `80 respectively.

After the season sets in, the price is expected to fall to less than 50 per cent of what it currently is.

"A limited quantity lands here every day. We receive supplies from Palakkad in Kerala, Salem and Andhra Pradesh," says Manivannan, a fruit trader in Koyambedu. At present, about 20 tonnes of mango arrive every day from Andhra Pradesh, which is the primary source of the fruit, and according to Manivannan, this figure is set to 400 tonnes after a week.

The mango's late arrival has been a boon for the watermelon market. With the temperature on the rise, melons have provided a fruity respite from the heat.

But with the mango season around the corner, mango-flavoured sweets and delicacies are set to dominate menus at restaurants and eateries for the next three months.

THE HINDU Business Line

Paddy, maize are rabi season gainers in Andhra Pradesh

Hyderabad, April 2: The rabi season in Andhra Pradesh ended with only paddy and maize topping the average cropped area.
Other major crops fared poorly and could result in lower production.
Paddy coverage crossed the average acreage of 14.31 lakh hectares (lh) at 16.20 lh. Rains in the first week of this month damaged crops in Rayalaseema and Telangana.

Corn is the champ

Maize (corn) is the real gainer with the area rising to 4.50 lh against the normal 3.36 lh.
It has emerged as an alternative to sugarcane in the coastal areas.
With an assured market in the form of poultry industry, maize turns out to be a bankable option for farmers. Bengal gram coverage was around the usual 6.14 lh.
Gains made in paddy and maize resulted in a marginal rise in the total cropped area of foodgrains.
How this will translate into production remains to be seen as the State witnessed dry spells in some places, while unseasonal rain towards the end of the season also played spoilsport.

Telangana gains

Region-wise, the nine Telangana districts (excluding Hyderabad district) fared better with a 20 per cent jump in the total acreage, while the residual Andhra Pradesh witnessed a drop.
Against the average area of 12.83 lh, farmers in the region cultivated on 15.35 lh.
Nizamabad topped the list with the net sown area rising 50 per cent at 2.54 lh against the average 1.70 lh.
Farmers in residual Andhra Pradesh cultivated on 23.45 lh against the average 26.36 lh.

Nizamabad topped the list with the net sown area rising 50 per cent at 2.54 lh against the average 1.70 lh.

To minimise loss, traders buy old coffee at a discount

Rs. 20- Rs. 25 a kg off based on quality of the crop

Bangalore, April 2: The volatility in coffee prices has led to domestic roasters and traders buying coffee grown in 2012-13 crop year that ended in September.
Old season coffee, depending on the quality, are available at a discount of Rs. 20-25 a kg compared with the new season offerings.

Need-based buying

Domestic traders have resorted to this measure as new season green coffee prices are trading high between Rs. 290 and Rs. 300 a kg since February 1.

Also to minimise their investment exposure, traders have begun to do need-based buying against building two-three months stocks they traditionally hold. As for the new season coffee, buyers are mainly the packet roasters, who sell branded coffee in retail trade.

Exports subdued

"Currently, coffee exports are subdued due to volatile global prices and also because domestic prices not matching international market," MP Devaiah of Allanasons Ltd told *Business Line* .

"During December–January of this crop year 2013-14 exports were low. In February–March, exports have been good.

This is mainly due to better production in robusta," he added.

According to Coffee Board statistics, exports are up 11.34 per cent this crop year at 1.57 lakh tonnes compared with last year's exports of 1.41 lakh tonnes.

Export in rupee terms is up 12.12 per cent at Rs. 2,424.46 crore against Rs. 2,162.34 crore. In dollar terms, it is down 2.74 per cent at $392.92 million against $404 million. However, in terms of unit value realisation coffee fetched Rs. 1,54,267 a tonne against Rs. 1,52,504 last year.

As for the export permits issued upto March 27 this year, they are up 1.71 per cent at Rs. 97,929 tonnes against Rs. 96,279 tonnes.

Coonoor tea offerings drop

Coonoor, April 2: A volume of 13.12 lakh kg, some 1,000 kg less than last week, is being offered at this week's sale (number 14) at the Coonoor Tea Trade Association on Thursday and Friday.

Of this, a volume of 8.98 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.14 lakh kg to the dust grades. Some 12.23 lakh kg makes up the CTC offerings and 0.89 lakh kgorthodox.

In the leaf counter, only 0.44 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 8.54 lakh kg CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.45 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 3.69 lakh kg CTC.

A volume of 3.14 lakh kg of tea unsold in the previous weeks is being re-offered this week.

Last week, 22 per cent was unsold despite prices ruling lower by Rs. 3 a kg.

Last week, 51 marks got Rs. 125 and more. Some 46 marks got Rs. 125 in the orthodox section.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging from Rs. 50-54 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 110-150 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 65-67 for plain dusts and Rs. 130-185 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Export purchase was scanty and limited to plainer less-priced tea.

There was no purchase worth recording for Pakistan as exporters said that adequate stocks prevailed with their importers.

There was some purchase for the CIS at Rs. 50-69 a kg.

Edible oils rise as stockists enter with fresh orders

Mumbai, April 2: Refined soya oil and cotton refined oil prices rose by Rs. 10 and Rs. 4 for 10 kg each, while palmolein and groundnut oil ruled steady on Wednesday. Sunflower and rapeseed oil dropped by Rs. 5 and Rs. 13 each. A sharp rise in overseas and domestic futures markets encouraged stockists to go in for fresh bets resulting in higher volume on Wednesday.

In physical market, over 2,000 tonnes of palmolein and soyabean refined oil were sold by local refineries and resellers. Sources said that Bunge sold about 800 tonnes of palmolein at Rs. 616 ex JNPT for April 15. Liberty sold 250-300 tonnes at Rs. 625 and Ruchi sold 200-250 tonnes palmolein at Rs. 622. Resellers offloaded 200-250 tonnes of palmolein at Rs. 614-615. Ruchi, Liberty and Allana together sold about 1,100-1,200 tonnes of soyabean refined oil at Rs. 662 then raised rates by Rs. 3. Vikram Global Commodities (P) Ltd quoted Rs. 640/10 kg for Malaysia super palmolein April delivery.

Growing regions await backing showers

Bangalore, April 2: Coffee-growing regions in Karnataka, which experienced rains in mid-March that could aid blossoming in coffee, are now waiting for backing showers to save the next year’s crop.

The unusual weather pattern currently being witnessed in the regions is likely to impact next year’s crop as many areas have begun to experience high temperatures.

“Three Sundays ago, Somwarpet and Suntikoppa region in Kodagu got patchy to insufficient rains. In South Kodagu, Napokalu range got good rains. But Gonikoppa and Virajpet areas got scattered rains, now we are all waiting for backing showers,” Bose Mandana, former Vice-Chairman, Coffee Board and a grower at Suntikoppa in Kodagu, told *Business Line* .

“At many places patchy and insufficient rains has caused reproductive buds to wither and buds have begun to drop due to insufficient moisture,” he said.

Early on Wednesday morning, Kodagu received mild drizzle.

“We are experiencing a long dry period this year. It is not healthy for full flowering potential of the Arabica plants,” said Sahadev Balakrishna, partner, Nethraconda Estates-Chikmagalur.

Coffee areas in Hassan district got good showers in mid-March, but are now waiting for backing showers.

“Last night Belur and Sakleshpur areas got good showers and we are expecting more later this week. Otherwise, the scene is bleak with dryness in other parts of the district,” Marvin Rodrigues, Managing Director, J Rodrigues Coffee and a coffee grower.

t 21.5 mt, sugar output down 7% till March-end

New Delhi, April 2: Sugar production in the first six months of the current season ending September dropped seven per cent to 21.5 million tonnes (mt) against 23.1 mt in the same period a year ago.

Though crushing has entered the last phase, about 330 mills are still functionalagainst 231 last year.

The Indian Sugar Mills Association expects that about two million tonnes of sugar would be produced in the remaining part of the current crushing season.

Total cane arrears are estimated at Rs. 15,000 crore, with mills in Uttar Pradesh having to clear about Rs. 10,500 crore and Karnataka mills Rs. 3,300 crore to growers.

Output break-up

Barring Karnataka, where production has increased, key States such as Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have witnessed a lower output than last year.

Production in Maharashtra is currently 9 per cent lower at 7.01 mt even as 85 mills are still crushing caneagainst 42 last year.
In Uttar Pradesh, the output is 13 per cent lower at 5.8 mt despite higher recovery of 9.21 per cent.

Alternate industry

Poor cane yields and higher diversion to the alternate sweetener manufacturing industry has impacted output this year.
Karnataka has so far produced 12 per cent more sugar at 3.75 mt, against 3.36 mt last year. However, in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, production has been lower at 9.40 lakh tonnes and 9.50 lakh tonnes, respectively.

Business Standard

Ice cream makers turn to fresh milk as powder prices pinch

Ice cream makers are increasing the procurement of freshmilk. That isn't likely to impact the availability of milk during the summer, when production traditionally falls as fodder is scarce

Prices of skimmed milk powder (SMP), a key ingredient of ice creams, have soared, hitting ice cream manufacturers hard. Now, many of these companies are now increasing the procurement of fresh milk to cut costs without compromising taste.

While Vadilal has already increased the procurement of fresh milk by about 20 per cent, Havmor, another Gujarat-based ice cream company, expects to raise its fresh milk procurement by a similar quantum. Premium ice cream maker Baskin Robbins said if SMP prices continued to rise, it might have to consider other options.

Though overall input costs have increased 20-25 per cent, these companies have been able to pass on only a part of this rise to customers, and this is taking a toll on their margins. Rajesh Gandhi, managing director of Vadilal Industries, said, "We raised prices seven-nine per cent in January this year. Input costs, however, have increased 20-25 per cent. Of this, a large proportion is due to; on a year-on-year basis, SMP prices have risen 80-90 per cent."

Earlier, Vadilal required about 100,000 litres of fresh milk a day; now, this has risen about 20 per cent. Compared to the rise in SMP prices, prices of fresh milk have increased 12-13 per cent on a year-on-year basis.

R S Sodhi, managing director, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, which markets milk and milk products such as ice cream under the Amul brand, said, "We raised prices 10-13 per cent in January, and prices of fresh milk and cream have also increased by that much. In comparison, SMP prices have almost doubled — from about Rs 150 a kg a year ago to Rs 280-290 a kg now."

SMP is critical for making ice creams, says Pradeep Chona, chairman, Havmor Ice Cream. "One has to put in a certain amount of SMP to get the right flavour and texture. Currently, our SMP consumption is about four tonnes a day. In contrast, we use 46,000-50,000 litres of milk a day." Havmor manufactures 150,000-200,000 litres of ice cream a day. This year, it expects its volumes to rise 20 per cent. Recently, the company had raised prices seven-eight per cent.

Some companies had bought substantial stocks of SMP, especially during the winter months.

Premium ice cream maker Baskin Robbins continues to use SMP. “We have to follow international standards and specifications and, therefore, cannot alter our ingredients at wish. However, SMP prices have shot through the roof and if prices increase any further, we might have to look at other options,” said Sanjay Coutinho, chief executive officer, Graviss Foods Pvt Ltd (master licensee of Baskin Robbins Ice creams).

While ice cream makers are increasing the procurement of fresh milk, this isn’t likely to impact the availability of milk during the summer, when production traditionally falls, as fodder is scarce. Kuldeep Saluja, managing director, Sterling Agro Industries, a Delhi-based dairy, said, “Production of SMP is already down 30 per cent, while liquid milk production is down 20 per cent. However, all ice cream together do not account for more than five per cent of milk and SMP consumption. Therefore, a slight increase in their demand will not have any substantial impact.”

RG Chandramogan, chairman and managing director of Hatsun Agro, agreed. He said all dairies that manufactured ice cream already used fresh milk for their products. “It is only non-dairy players who use SMP, and a slight increase in demand for liquid milk from them will not impact the overall dynamics,” he said.

Milk accounts for about 20 per cent of the input cost for ice cream. While sugar accounts for two-three per cent and fat 18 per cent, the rest is accounted for by cocoa, fruits, nuts, vanilla, etc.

Agri volumes up on bourses in evening session

Volumes of agricultural commodities jumped on commodityexchanges in evening trade on Tuesday, the first day of such evening trade. This followed the Forward Markets Commission (FMC) allowing derivatives trade in 10 agricultural commodities till 11:30 pm so that it could coincide with the trade in international markets.

For most agricultural commodities, far-month contracts have seen a rise in volumes compared to near-month contracts. Contracts set to expire in June have garnered more volumes than April and May contracts.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), total volumes for agricultural commodities in the evening session stood at Rs 552 crore, against Rs 3,960 during the day session.

On the Multi-Commodity Exchange, the volume for agricultural commodities during the day session was Rs 554 crore; in the evening session, it was Rs 122 crore.

On NCDEX, May contracts of refined soya oil saw the highest rise (72 per cent) after 5 pm. Other agricultural commodities that saw significant rises in volumes were June contracts of cotton, crude palm oil, sugar and maize and July contracts of cotton oil seed cake.

On MCX, June contracts of crude palm oil and cotton saw a rise in volumes in the evening session.

After a commodity transaction tax was imposed on non-agricultural and processed agricultural commodities, the commodity market saw volumes decline.

Commodity market traders say evening trade will help them take better trading decisions, the trade will coincide with commodity trade in international markets. “The move has been well received by the market and we have seen volumes move positively last night. Traders can use risk management to respond to volatility in intentional markets. We expect participation to improve in the coming months,” said Vijay Kumar, chief business officer, NCDEX.

Naveen Mathur, associate director at city-based Angel Broking, said, “This is a positive move by the FMC, as it will help boost the otherwise dull sentiment in Indian commodity markets.”

As refined soybean oil, crude palm oil, sugar and maize are the major commodities traded globally, these are likely to see a huge rise in volumes.

Sugar production dips 7% in six months

The country's sugar production has dropped 7 per cent to 21.5 million tonnes (mt) in the first six months of the current marketing year due to lower output in key producing states, according to the Indian Sugar Mills Association (Isma).

The production stood at 23.1 million tonnes in the corresponding period last year.

In an official release, Isma said that barring Karnataka, sugar output declined in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu till March of the 2013-14 marketing year (October-September).

About 330 mills were crushing sugarcane till March this year, against 231 mills in the year-ago period, it said.

As per Isma's latest data, sugar output in Maharashtra — the country's leading producer — remained down nine per cent at 7.01 mt till March, as compared with 7.73 mt in the year-ago period. The sugar recovery was 11.3 per cent in Maharashtra. As many as 85 mills are still crushing sugarcane in the state, as against 42 mills a year ago.

Similarly, sugar production in Uttar Pradesh —the country's second biggest producer — was down by 13 per cent at 5.8 mt so far in 2013-14 from 6.7 mt in the same period last year due to poor yields and higher diversion to alternate sweeteners manufacturing industry.

The sugar recovery was 9.21 per cent. About 86 mills are still crushing in the state.

Production in Tamil Nadu declined by 28 per cent at 9,50,000 tonnes till March this year, while the output in Andhra Pradesh fell to 9,40,000 tonnes from 9,66,000 tonnes in the year-ago period.

In Andhra Pradesh, 12 mills are still crushing sugarcane and expected to close in the next 15 days.

However, sugar production in Karnataka has increased 12 per cent to 3.75 mt till March, as compared with 3.36 mt in the same period last year on account of better yields and good recovery. About 43 mills are still crushing sugarcane in the state, the release added.

Isma also mentioned that farmers in major sugar producing states are yet to be paid about Rs 15,000 crore for the total cane purchased till now in the current sugar season.

Of which Rs 10,500 crore has to be paid to farmers in Uttar Pradesh and Rs 3,300 crore in Karnataka, it added.

Refined soya oil up 0.6% on pick-up in demand

Refined soya oil prices rose by 0.67% to Rs 702.45 per 10 kg in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions on pick-up in spot market demand amid restricted arrivals.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, refined soya oil for delivery in May went up by Rs 4.70, or 0.67%, to Rs 702.45 per 10 kg with an open interest of 1,17,420 lots.

In a similar fashion, the oil for delivery in April traded higher by Rs 3.60, or 0.51%, to Rs 715 per 10 kg in 63,770 lots.

Analysts said speculators created fresh positions due to pick-up in spot market demand amid restricted arrivals from producing regions that led to rise in refined soya oil prices at futures trade.

Sugar up 0.2% on rising demand

Sugar prices moved up by 0.25% to Rs 3,245 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged positions, supported by rising summer season demand.

Lower output estimates further fuelled the uptrend.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in May gained Rs 8, or 0.25%, to Rs 3,245 per quintal with an open interest of 47,150 lots.

Likewise, the sweetener for delivery in April traded higher by Rs 5, or 0.16%, to Rs 3,223 per quintal in 29,780 lots.

Chana down 0.7% on increased supply

Chana prices moved down by 0.73% to Rs 3,256 per quintal in futures trading today after speculators trimmed positions, triggered by increased supplies from producing regions.

Expectations of higher output also put pressure on chana prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in April declined by Rs 24, or 0.73%, to Rs 3,256 per quintal with an open interest of 47,310 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in May traded lower by Rs 23, or 0.69%, to Rs 3,314 per quintal in 63,890 lots.

Analysts attributed the fall in chana prices at futures trade to increased supplies from producing belts.

Palm oil up 0.5% on rising demand

Crude palm oil extended gains for the third-straight day by adding 0.52% to Rs 576.50 per 10 kg in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their positions on the back of rising demand in the spot market.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil for delivery in April gained Rs 3, or 0.52%, to Rs 576.50 per 10 kg in a business turnover of 545 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in May traded higher by Rs 1.60, or 0.28%, to Rs 569.30 per 10 kg in 176 lots.

Analysts attributed the rise in crude palm oil futures to rising demand in the spot market.

Potato up 1% on rising demand

Potato prices gained for the third straight day by adding 1.05% to Rs 1,323 per quintal in futures market today as traders engaged in enlarging positions, driven by ongoing Navratras festival demand.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato for delivery in May advanced by Rs 13.80, or 1.05%, to Rs 1,323 per quintal in a business turnover of 160 lots.

Similarly, potato for delivery in April gained Rs 11.90, or 0.95%, to Rs 1,261.90 per quintal in 64 lots.

Analysts said persistent rise in potato futures was mostly due to an upsurge in demand in the spot markets in view of ongoing "Navratras" festival.

Cardamom up 0.7% on strong demand

Cardamom prices rose for the third straight day by adding 0.72% to Rs 917.20 per kg in futures trade today as speculators enlarged positions, supported by strong demand in the spot market.
At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in May added Rs 6.60, or 0.72%, to Rs 917.20 per kg in a business turnover of 234 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in April gained Rs 3.80, or 0.44%, to Rs 871.40 per kg in 153 lots.
Analysts said speculators enlarged positions on strong demand in the spot market against tight supplies from producing regions that mainly led to an upward trend in cardamom prices at futures trade.
