

India sits pretty on rice production

The country is headed for an all-time high production of 106 million tonnes of rice for 2013-14, 1 million tonnes higher than the previous year's figure. Total food grain production for the country for 2013-14 is estimated to be 263 million tonnes, up from nearly 257 million tonnes in the year before.

“This will be an all-time high. Rice, closely followed by wheat, remains the number one food crop in our country,” said the Deputy Director-General (Crop Sciences), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Dr. Swapan K Datta.

He was participating in the 49th All-India Annual Rice Group Meetings, organised by the Directorate of Rice Research (DRR) in Hyderabad on Sunday.

“There is a great need for gradually phasing out old varieties of rice with new and improved ones. We are working overtime to encourage farmers in this regard,” he said.

Being able to sustain agricultural growth in the next decade would be a big challenge for Indian scientists and farmers, said E.A. Siddiq, honorary professor at ANGRAU.

“Going by the way our population is rising, in another decade, the country would need 20-25 million tonnes of rice over and above the existing production capacity. There is still a lot of scope for rice crop intensification,” he said.

The quest to increase production would also entail sustaining soil fertility and protecting water resources, the researchers said.

“Estimates suggest that by 2025, we would need 25 per cent more water to increase our rice production. Moreover, we also need to concentrate on sustaining the rate of soil fertility to be able to achieve our set targets,” Dr. Siddiq said.

There is a great need for gradually phasing out old varieties of rice with new and improved ones
Swapan K. Datta Deputy D-G (Crop Sciences) ICAR

By 2025, we would need 25 p.c. more water to increase rice production. We also need to sustain soil fertility
E.A. Siddiq honorary professor, ANGRAU

The quest to further increase production would entail sustaining soil fertility and

protecting water resources

Call to consume millets for healthy life

Health-conscious people open Swadeshi Millets Food Court in Ongole



Food for thought: A Swadeshi Food Court being inaugurated in Ongole on Sunday.—Photo: Kommuri Srinivas

Milletts have long been the staple food in the country.

But polished rice, processed sugar and other refined food products produced using chemical fertilizers have become part of our daily life now.

With no alternative, people have got accustomed to it and getting in the process, among other health disorders, diabetes, blood pressure and obesity.

In a bid to break this unhealthy trend, first in a series of Swadeshi Millets Food Courts was opened here on Sunday by like-minded health-conscious people to make available a variety of dishes made with organically-produced ragi or finger millet, foxtail millet, pearl millet, proso millet and Sorghum.

“As many 200 sumptuous dishes can be made from millets,” says Ms G.Vardhani of the Swadeshi Ahara Kuteeram while taking out a Ragi dosa from the frying pan.

Patanjali Yoga Samiti Prakasam district president G. Balasubramanium, who was the brain behind the idea, said “health benefits of yoga can be fully realised only when people brought back millets to the dining table traditionally grown in Prakasam district as they are rich in vitamins and minerals including calcium, iron, potassium, magnesium and zinc.”

Buy-back agreement

“We have entered into buy-back agreement with farmers to grow millets on a regular basis using organic fertilizers and seeds from our seeds bank,” he said.

Patanjali Yoga Samiti Prakasam district president G. Balasubramanium says health benefits of yoga can be fully realised only when people bring back millets to dining table

‘Establish wildlife research centre in Coimbatore’

Nature Conservation Society has sought a wildlife protection and research centre in the city. In a release, N.I. Jalaludeen of the society said that he had written to the District Forest Officer, Coimbatore, asking for the centre to protect wildlife in the area.

The immediate provocation for asking so was the injured peahen, which had been moving around in Nallampalayam with a stick that had pierced its body.

Veterinarian

There was only one forest veterinarian available for the entire State.

In his absence, the only place where the animals could be taken was the Coimbatore Corporation Zoo, whose director was a veterinarian.

But of late, the Zoo authorities were not ready to treat injured animals.

Using this opportunity, the Department of Forest should take efforts to establish such a centre in Coimbatore.

World Forest Day observed

A guest lecture on “Conservation of medicinal plants” marked the World Forest Day celebrations organised at Periyar College of Pharmaceutical Science here recently.

R. Senthamarai, principal, said that forests and biodiversity were the key to all forms of life.

V. Sundararaju, president of Society for Conservation of Nature (SOFCON), who spoke on “Conservation of medicinal plants” highlighted that India was rich in forest wealth. “Forests constitute about one-fifth of our country’s land, mostly in the hilly areas or over the plateaus. But to keep up ecological balance, about one-third area of the land surface should be forests. We should avoid deforestation and grow more trees to keep up the balance,” he said.

E. Jegan Mohan, vice-president of SOFCON, spoke.

Move to end water crisis in forests

As the onset of summer has reflected in elephants and deers coming out of the Sathyamangalam forests to quench thirst, the Forest Department is into the process of filling water holes to prevent the animals from getting into human habitations in search of water.

Though dry conditions have caused water shortage, the farming community is cooperating well with the Forest Department by way of providing water that is taken in lorries to be filled into the water holes and large cement containers.

Camera traps have captured pictures of animals quenching thirst at the water holes, Forest department sources said.

The department is doing its best to prevent recurrence of the situation last year when seven to eight elephants died due to the drought conditions.

Wildlife watchers had recorded that the elephants had died of natural causes due to less than required consumption of water.

As for farmers on the hills and on the foot of the hills, providing water for filling waterholes in the forests helps their cause as their crops could be safeguarded from damage by wild animals, sources said.

The Department personnel, too, face an uphill task of chasing the elephants into the forests, when they enter into sugarcane fields. In a scenario of water shortage, the Forest department is relieved over being able to enlist the cooperation of the farming community.

Wells have dried up and water is being drawn from deep borewells. Water is being filled using tankers provided to all ranges in the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve with WWF (World Wildlife Fund) assistance, sources said.

‘Camera traps

have captured pictures of

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Water level

Madurai: The water level in Periyar dam stood at 110.20 feet (permissible level 136 feet) on Monday with an inflow of 100 cusecs and a discharge of 100 cusecs.

The level in Vaigai dam was 28.05 feet (full level 71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 577 mcft.

Vaigai dam recorded 3 mm rainfall during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Monday, PWD officials here said.

Mettur: The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 45.83 feet on Monday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 228 cusecs and the discharge 3,000 cusecs.

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Tuesday, Apr 8

Max Min

Sunny

33° | 26°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:04

Humidity: 66

Sunset: 06:20

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Wednesday, Apr 9

Max Min

Sunny

33° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Apr 10

Apr 11

Apr 12

Apr 13

Apr 14



34° | 26°

35° | 26°

36° | 26°

31° | 26°

31° | 26°

Sunny

Partly Cloudy

Partly Cloudy

Overcast

Cloudy

A slice of summer



Thirst quenchers Workers sort sweet limes, 'musambi', at the Azadpur mandi in New Delhi . Arrivals of 'musambi' have picked up in the national capital, mainly from Andhra Pradesh, a major producer of the fruit. Wholesale prices range from ₹17 to ₹20 a kg, while in retail they are sold in the ₹30-40 range. Kamal Narang

‘Farmers must take up new rice varieties’

Hyderabad, April 7:

Rice scientists are urging farmers to take up new and improved varieties of rice to meet the rising demand.

“There is a great need for gradually phasing out the old varieties of rice with the new and improved varieties. We are working overtime to encourage farmers in this regard,” said Swapan K Datta, Deputy Director General (Crop Sciences) Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

“Rice, followed by wheat, continues and will remain the number one food crop in our country,” he said.

Over 450 top scientists engaged in the field of rice research took part in the 49th All India Annual Rice Group Meetings organised by Directorate of Rice Research in Hyderabad on Sunday. EA Siddiq, Honorary Professor (Biotechnology), ANGRAU, said the ability to sustain the growth in the next decade is a big challenge as India will need to produce 20-25 million tonnes more than existing capacity.

Good liquoring teas fetch more at Kochi sale

Kochi, April 7:

Good demand lifted prices of some varieties of tea at the Kochi tea auction. In sale number 14, the quantity on offer in CTC dust category was 9,81,500 kg.

The market for good liquoring teas was steady to firm and sometimes dearer by Rs. 2-3 or more, especially those which came under the selection of major blenders.

Others were irregular and tended to ease. Medium and plainer varieties were irregular and lower especially browner teas, according to auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis.

The market for primary grades in orthodox varieties was steady following demand. Others were irregular and lower and witnessed some withdrawals. The quantity on offer in the auction was 7,500 kg. A small quantity on offer was absorbed by exporters.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted Rs. 100/118, RD grades ruled at Rs. 108/130, SRD stood at Rs. 120/151 and SFD quoted Rs. 130/161.

The leaf sale witnessed a mixed trend and the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 71,500 kg. With a fair demand, the market for select best Nilgiri whole leaf and brokens barely remained steady and sometimes dearer.

Fannings from the same origin was firm to dearer. Medium clean black well-made bolder brokens, tippy grades and whole leaf were steady to dearer.

Though the quantity on offer in CTC grades was 84,000 kg, the demand was less and only 46 per cent was sold in the auction.

The market for good liquoring teas remained barely steady and tended to ease. Others were lower by Rs. 3-5 and sometimes more. In the dust category, Injipara (Prm) SRD fetched the best prices of Rs. 164 followed by Manjolai SFD and Injipara (Prm) SFD at Rs. 161 each. In leaf varieties, Chamraj Green FOP (S) quoted the best prices of Rs. 351, followed by Chamraj FOP at Rs. 291.

Dhanuka Agritech to ramp up pesticide capacity

Plans manufacturing unit in Rajasthan, investing Rs. 50 crore

Mumbai, April 7:

Dhanuka Agritech plans to set up a manufacturing unit in Keshwana village of Rajasthan with an investment of Rs. 50 crore. The debt-free company plans to fund its entire capital investment for the new unit through internal accruals.

The new unit will have a capacity to produce liquid pesticide of 6,000-kilo litre a year and 5,000 tonnes in powder form. The Gurgaon-based company's overall pesticide production capacity in liquid and powder form will go up to 10,000 kilo litre and 10,000 tonnes, respectively.

The first phase of the project will be completed next January with second phase going on stream in July 2015. The new plant will produce pesticide for paddy, soyabean, cotton, pulses and horticulture crops.

Dhanuka currently has three manufacturing facilities in Haryana, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir to produce over 80 plant protection chemicals and has tie-ups with four Japanese and three US companies.

MK Dhanuka, Managing Director, Dhanuka Agritech, told *Business Line* that the company has received a good response for its innovative pesticide product Lustre, which is capable of not only killing the pest but also improving yield and enhancing the quality of output.

Sold on Lustre

Initially, Dhanuka said, farmers were sceptical and felt that Lustre was overpriced, but when tested on paddy crop, Lustre not only improved the yield by 15 per cent but also the realisation by 10 per cent due to better quality.

“We are now recommending the use of Lustre in chilli and tomato crops,” he said. In two months, Dhanuka plans to launch a new product, Mortar, which can be used on paddy and vegetables.

Dhanuka says that at 500 gm a hectare, India’s pesticide usage is the lowest in the world. In comparison, Japan uses 11 kg for each hectare, while it is 8-10 times more in developed countries.

BLo8_comm_turmeric

Erode, April 7:

HYBRID TURMERIC PLUNGES

With the market opening after 12 days holiday and electioneering on, turmeric prices crashed on Monday. “ Traders quoted lower price . Due to lower demand from North India, traders are reluctant to buy more quantity at a higher price,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. He said during the closure of the four turmeric markets at Erode, some traders sold limited quantities to upcountry traders. But in other turmeric centres such as Nizamabad, Warrenagal and Sangli, the sale was high. In Nizamabad, over two lakh bags were sold in 10 days. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, finger variety sold at Rs. 4,899 to Rs. 6,785 a quintal, root variety Rs. 4,649 to Rs. 6,455 a quintal. Our Correspondent

Spot rubber prices rule unchanged

Kottayam, April 7:

Spot rubber continued to rule almost unchanged on Monday.

Sentiments were neutral as most traders were hesitant to enlarge their commitments following another weak closing in domestic futures on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

Sheet rubber closed steady at Rs. 148 a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board. The grade was quoted flat at Rs. 145 by dealers. April contracts weakened to Rs. 144.20 (145.36), May to Rs. 148.24 (149.14) and June to Rs. 150.70 (151.11) while the July contracts firmed up marginally to Rs. 152.45 (152.00) a kg on the NMCE. RSS 3 improved at its April futures from ¥ 248.8 a kg to ¥ 250 (Rs. 146) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Physical rubber rates (Rs. / kg) were - RSS-4: 148 (148); RSS-5: 144 (144.00); Ungraded: 140 (140); ISNR 20: 140 (140.50); and Latex 60%: 118 (117).

Cheaper Guatemala cardamom stalls exporters' buying



Kochi, April 7:

Cardamom prices ruled steady with the individual auction average staying at above Rs. 800 a kg, despite a slow down in export buying as demand matched supply at the auctions. However, graded varieties increased marginally. According to the exporters, there were no overseas buyers at current price levels. Guatemala, which had held back its produce when the Indian prices were ruling low, has started offering now at competitive rates about \$2/kg below the Indian parity, market sources told *Business Line* .

They said Guatemala was offering at \$12–12.5 a kg against the Indian offering of \$14-\$14.5 a kg. Upcountry buyers are not active due to lack of liquidity, traders said. Due to stoppage of cash and carry business, some kind of sluggishness has crept in the market.

Only 'B' grade dealers are actively covering. Exporters had been hitherto cornering nearly 35 per cent of the arrivals and the balance was picked up by the upcountry dealers. But since prices have shot up they are staying away from the market.

Slowdown

The trade attributed this to slow down due the upswing in prices. The individual auction average last week at the main auctions vacillated between Rs. 801 and Rs. 845 a kg. On April 1, the auction average was Rs. 840.33 a kg whereas it was at Rs. 601.33 a kg on the same day a year ago.

At the Sunday auction held by the KCPMC, arrivals increased to 85 tonnes from 74 tonnes a week ago and the entire quantity was sold. The maximum price was Rs. 1,151 a kg and the minimum Rs. 411 a kg. The auction average was Rs. 802 a

kg against Rs. 803.09 a kg a week ago, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC said.

Supply of cardamom from the estates/farms has come to an end and the material arriving currently is from the stocks held by the primary market dealers, who had bought earlier when the prices were low .

Export buying

Prices of exportable variety have gone up above Rs. 800 a kg and that in turn has led to slow down in export buying. Capsules of 8mm bold are being traded between Rs. 1,100 and Rs. 1,500 a kg. During the current crop season ending in July, 17,941 tonnes have arrived against 10,430 tonnes during the same period a year ago. Sales were 17,454 tonnes against 9,925 tonnes, respectively.

The weighted average price as on Sunday was Rs. 618.18 a kg against Rs. 749.41 a kg a year ago. Prices of all graded varieties were marginally up and their prices (in Rs. per kg) at the weekend were: AGEB 980-990 ; AGB 820 - 830; AGS 790 - 800 ; and AGS -1: 770 - 780. Bulk prices ranged between Rs. 450– Rs. 1,500 a kg.

Weather conditions were reportedly unfavourable as the region has been experiencing severe drought conditions for over a month now.

March oilmeal exports down 8%

Mumbai, April 7:

Oilmeal exports dropped eight per cent in March to 3,97,786 tonnes against 4,30,407 tonnes during the same period a year ago. Exports slipped due to lower shipments to Japan, Vietnam and Indonesia following tough competition from China and Argentina, according to data from the Solvent Extractors' Association.

In the financial year ended March, exports were down 11 per cent at 43,31,450 tonnes (48,46,013 tonnes). In value term, earnings were down three per cent at Rs. 11,450 crore against Rs. 11,800 crore in 2012-13. Exporters found it difficult to push their produce in the international markets despite the rupee depreciating 12 per cent against the dollar.

Exports to Japan were down 61 per cent at 2,45,991 tonnes (6,38,201 tonnes) and consisted of 7,525 tonnes of rapemeal, 1,062 tonnes of castor meal and 2,37,404 tonnes of soyameal. Shipments to Indonesia were down 32 per cent at 1,36,573 tonnes (2,01,999 tonnes). Europe has imported 6,32,601 tonnes compared with 4,93,966 tonnes of last year.

Slack demand subdues soya oil



Indore, April 7:

Soya oil traded lower on weak global cues and slack physical demand. Soya refined on Monday was quoted at Rs. 675-80, while soya solvent declined to Rs. 640-45 for 10 kg. However, compared with last week, soya refined is ruling Rs. 10 higher and soya solvent is up Rs. 15. In futures also, soya oil was trading lower with April and May contracts on the NCDEX being quoted at Rs. 711 (down Rs. 4.10) and Rs. 699.30 (down Rs. 5).

According to traders, the sluggish trend is likely to continue in soya oil, given the rise in the arrival of mustard seeds and weak demand for soya oil in local mandis. Soyabean prices in local mandis, on the other hand, have gained amid a decline in arrivals. On Monday, soyabean in Indore mandis was being quoted at Rs. 4,350-4,400 a quintal. Plant deliveries of soyabean ruled at Rs. 4,300-4,355 a quintal (Rs. 4,220-4,320 last week)Our Correspondent

Most parts of the country were rain-surplus in March



Early showers will build up well to the South-Wwest monsoon.

Thiruvananthapuram, April 7:

March returned a rainfall surplus of nine per cent for the country as a whole despite running bone-dry in the last week.

Some of the highest rain surpluses have been recorded over peninsular India, with the normally dry Marathwada in west Maharashtra receiving as much as

1,059 per cent above normal. Contiguous Madhya Maharashtra (+604 per cent); North Interior Karnataka (+390) Telangana (+375); and South Interior Karnataka (+103 per cent) did not disappoint either.

Rayalaseema (+93) and Vidarbha (+94) were the other notable gainers in the region as seasonally hot and variously humid air rising over land promised more thunderstorm/thundershower activity.

This is considered a good build-up to the South-West monsoon, which is just a couple of months away. But a leading Asian forecaster has said the monsoon could be normal here only in the early phase. Summer showers have been good also in North-West India; most weather models for the region indicate it might experience an indifferent monsoon this year.

Hailstorm threat

Haryana and Delhi were the top gainers with 103 per cent each. West Uttar Pradesh (+99) was the next big one, followed by others. The sole exception was west Rajasthan (-7 per cent). But the showers have been punctuated with hailstorms bringing considerable damage to standing rabi crops. Central and peninsular India too witnessed the fury of hailstorms.

Latest forecasts suggest that large parts of North-West India and parts of central and adjoining peninsular India may need to contend with further hailstorm threat.

The Met Department has said that severe thunder squalls with isolated hailstorm may stalk Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh on Monday. It will be isolated over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, north Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh.

Meanwhile, summer showers have been below par in the peripheral regions of the West, South and North-East India. Among the areas hit are Saurashtra, Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

BL08_comm_edible oil

Mumbai, April 7:

WEAK DEMAND DRAGS EDIBLE OILS

Edible oil prices dropped on Monday in the absence of positive cues from overseas and weak physical demand. Palmolein, cotton and soyabean refined oil ruled unchanged. The volume was thin and isolated in palmolein as stockists kept away. In physical market hardly 80-100 tonnes of palmolein were traded in resale at 610 ex-JNPT. At Rajkot, groundnut oil *Telia* decline by Rs. 10 to Rs. 1,150 (Rs. 1,160) and loose (10 kg) dropped by Rs. 5 to Rs. 735 (Rs. 740). On The Bombay Commodity Exchange, spot rates (Rs. /10 kg) were: groundnut oil 750 (770), soya refined oil 660 (660), sunflower exp. ref. 615 (610), sunflower ref. 680 (690), rapeseed ref. oil 685 (688), rapeseed expeller ref. 655 (658) cottonseed ref. oil 665 (665) and palmolein 615 (615). Our Correspondent

BL08_comm_rice

Karnal, April 7:

RICE IMPROVES ON FRESH BUYING

Rice market witnessed an uptrend with the prices of aromatic and non basmati varieties moving up by Rs. 50- Rs. 300 a quintal on Monday. In the physical market non basmati section, Sharbati (Steam) improved by Rs. 100 to Rs. 4,950 while Sharbati (Sela) quoted at Rs. 4,350, up Rs. 50 up. Pusa-1121 (steam) moved up by Rs. 300 to Rs. 9,600-9,700 a quintal, while Pusa-1121 (sela) improved by

Rs. 200 to Rs. 8,500 a quintal. Pure Basmati (Raw) quoted at Rs. 12,500 Rs. , up Rs. 200 up.



Duplicate basmati (steam) improved by Rs. 300 to Rs. 7,600. Pusa-1121 brokens improved by Rs. 50-100. Pusa-1121 ruled at Rs. 7,350, Tibar at Rs. 6,400, while Dubar at Rs. 5,400. Our Correspondent

Why speed trades irk the market



SANGOIRI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Chennai, April 7:

Last week was an eventful one for the markets, especially for those who aren't into algorithm or high-frequency trading. First, Michael Lewis, a financial journalist and author, turned the market furious with his book *Flash Boys* .

Then, the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) said it was investigating whether high frequency traders have breached the regulator's rules.

Lewis, who influenced a generation of traders with his book *Liar's Poker* in 1989, alleged that practitioners of high-speed, computerised trading are rigging the financial markets at the expense of everyone else. He has charged the speed traders with rigging the market.

Algo trades

High-frequency trading is the use of sophisticated computer programmes, also called algorithm, by many banks and hedge funds to send large batches of orders into equity and futures markets in fractions of a second.

Supporters of such trading say that it makes it easier for other buyers and sellers to meet one other in the market. But critics counter it, saying it can cause sudden market crashes and easily mask market manipulation or other illegal activity.

On *blog maverick* , Mark Cuban, a US businessman and investor, says that high-frequency traders, who pay for such a right, get the privilege of not only faster information from exchanges but also the facility to jump the queue of slow traders to place orders.

With these changes, traders who are fast are able to make money simply because they take advantage of the slow system of other traders.

According to Cuban, this helps traders, using the faster system, know that by getting to the front of the line they will be able to see or anticipate the number of the trades that are about to happen. They are then guaranteed to make a profit

In casino terms, he says, the trader who owns the front of the line is the house and it always wins.

Lewis, in his *Flash Boys*, has alleged that some high-frequency traders indulge in spoofing, a practice of rapidly sending out large numbers of orders, and then quickly withdrawing to give the illusion of a hot market to attract others.

Futures market

The book had the acting CFTC Chairman Mark Wetjen face a barrage of questions over the weekend. Wetjen said that the commission is responding to concerns over certain practices, including spoofing, to find out if they were running afoul of the rules. It will also look into whether such activities meet the definition of manipulative activity under US regulations.

Officials from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation are also probing whether firms using such a high-frequency system traded ahead of other players in the market. They are also looking into whether such trades amounted to insider trading or other frauds.

The futures market is primarily hunting ground for speed traders.

Wetjen said the CFTC had no indication now if those markets were rigged.

More importantly, the CFTC official said that the commission was also looking at whether exchanges gave discounts on fees to some speed traders. Cuban says that exchanges give discounts if the speed traders assure higher trade volume. Though

algorithm trading is permitted in India stock and commodities markets, there are some stringent norms in place.

Indian scenario

In stocks, the Securities and Exchange Board of India has made it mandatory for users to have their systems audited every six months. In commodities, exchanges can process only 20 orders a second from a user, irrespective of the order size.

In case, the order-to-trade ratio of a member reaches 500 during the day, the member will not be allowed to place any order for the first 15 minutes the next trading day. The exchanges will have to submit a monthly report on algorithmic trading, including its percentage in total trade and the number of members using algorithmic trading.

Business Standard

Sustaining farm sector growth amid fall in water availability



April 7

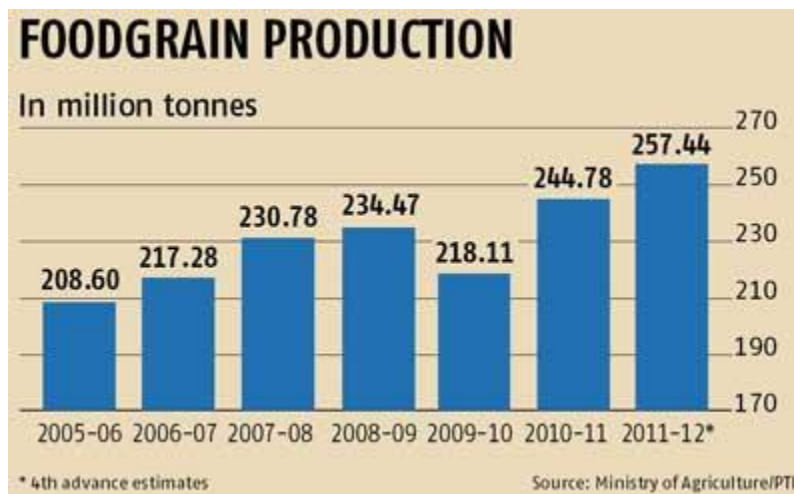
Had late winter rains not damaged some standing crops in northern states, India would have had record foodgrain production of 263 million tonnes (mt) in 2013-14. Whatever the loss of rabi crops, the good southwest monsoon allowed India to record the targeted growth of four per cent in production. However, a good season should not distract us from the reality of the farm sector's vulnerability to major shocks when the monsoon plays truant. Spells of drought kept agricultural growth at 3.6 per cent annually during the 11th Plan (2006-12).

But four per cent growth is no holy grail for septuagenarian farm sector evangelist Bhavarlal Jain. Slowly but surely, Jain is seeing converts among politicians, bureaucrats and bankers, who are starting to think as "weather is to become increasingly unpredictable due to global warming, the challenge for Indian farmers will be to produce more with less and less water and energy". Jain says India has the potential to grow its farm sector at a "much higher rate than the official four per cent, provided our farmers, especially those owning small parcels of land, are adequately empowered with technology, including innovative ways of irrigating crops with measured quantities of water, which is impossible under the conventional flood irrigation system and capital".

Jain's prescription is to be seen in the context of the country's population, set to grow from the current 1.2 billion to 1.5 billion by 2040. This will require the country to step up food production enormously from farmland that shrank two per cent in the past two decades. During this period, annual food production growth was only two per cent. In his last two Budgets, Finance Minister P Chidambaram spoke about the need for a second green revolution, particularly in eastern states, and the development of new, high-yielding varieties of wheat and

rice. Also that India had to be ready to accommodate the changing dietary habits of large sections of the urban population in favour of poultry products, meat and fruit.

The government's commitment to provide perennial food security is commendable. However, what baffles food experts and agronomists is the intent is not backed by a strategy that takes into account the continuously declining per capita [availability of water](#), now below 1,000 cubic metres, the rapidly falling groundwater because of overextraction by farmers committed to flood irrigation and the need for total retooling of the farm extension programme. Through field demonstrations, farmers have to be convinced the use of appropriate technologies will improve productivity.



The ground reality is a matter of concern. "We account for 17 per cent of the world's population but have only four per cent of global water resources. Still, we remain the world's largest user of freshwater.

Groundwater alone meets 65 per cent of the country's total water demand," says Atul B Jain, joint managing director of Jain Irrigation.

Unbridled exploitation of groundwater is because it is an open-access resource. Over-reliance on the water-wasting and soil-damaging flood irrigation led to India extracting 251 billion cubic metres (bcm) of groundwater in 2010, compared with 112 bcm by the US. In 1980, India used 90 bcm of groundwater.

This shows the rapid depletion of this resource has not, in any way, put a restraint on its exploitation. The volume of water used in flood irrigation for growing any crop is a lot higher than that under the micro irrigation system (MIS), be it drip or sprinkler. For instance, growing sugarcane with flood irrigation requires 25,400 cubic metres of water per hectare, against 12,019 cubic metres for MIS. In case of the rabi rice crop, MIS will reduce water application by as much as two-thirds compared to flood irrigation.

Pumping of water for irrigating land requires the use of energy, electricity or diesel. The farm sector, which accounts for 83 per cent of India's fresh water use, records about 30 per cent share of India's electricity consumption. Extraction of groundwater contributes about five per cent to the country's total carbon emission. Under the widely practiced conventional irrigation system, growing fields are flooded periodically, leaving the soil and plant roots in a deep pool of water.

A Harvard Business School paper says flood irrigation is a highly wasteful practice, as much of the water leaches beyond the crop root zone and allows growth of weeds, affecting plant health. Moreover, standing pool of water causes salinisation of soil, eventually to toxic levels for plants. "A principal reason for low farm productivity in our country is because flood irrigation leaves crops in perennial shock in alternating periods of excess water and dryness in fields," says Jain. Under flood irrigation, efficiency of water use is about 40 per cent, against 90 per cent for drip irrigation and 75 per cent for sprinkler irrigation.

For promoting MIS, the government is providing subsidy of up to 80 per cent of the cost of adopting MIS. An official study says savings on subsidy on fertilisers,

electricity and diesel resulting from the use of MIS are substantially more than any subvention for adopting MIS. Moreover, progressive transition from flood irrigation to drip and sprinkler irrigation will release large amounts of water and energy for domestic and industrial use.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Export of oil meals from India down by 11 per cent in FY14

KOLKATA: The overall export of oil meals from India in the FY14 has been to the tune of 4,331,450 tonne as compared to 4,846,013 tonnes in FY13 - a drop of 11 per cent. In March 2014 India's exports of oil meals has declined by 8 per cent to 397,786 tonnes over the corresponding period of the previous year. In value terms, there has been a marginal decline of 3 per cent in FY14 to Rs 11,450 crore as compared to Rs 11,800 crore in FY13.



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Oilmeal import by South Korea from India in FY14 is reported at 1,165,107 tonnes compared to 907,082 tonnes last year consisting of 516,230 tonnes of rapeseed meal, 496,138 tonnes of castor meal and 152,739 tonnes of soybean meal. Iran imported 1,243,114 tonnes compared to 886,776 tonnes consisting 1,234,452 tonnes of soybean meal and 8,663 tonnes of rapeseed meal.

Thailand imported 313,271 tonnes of oil meal compared to 450,360 tonnes of oil meal imported in FY13. Vietnam imported 205,724 tonnes of oilmeal compared to 699,791 tonne tonnes in FY13 consisting of 29,796 tonnes of rapeseed meal, 797 tonnes of castor meal, 1,344 tonnes of groundnut meal, 82,777 tonnes of soybean meal and 91,010 tonnes of rice bran extraction.