

Water for wetting brings relief to farmers

ERODE, April 10, 2014 - *Farmers had staged a massive demonstration last month*

Though late, farmers have heaved a sigh of relief over release of water into the LBP (Lower Bhavani Project) canal from the Bhavani Sagar Dam.

Water was released on April 2 for a fortnight for special wetting of LBP canal's ayacut area under even turn.

Official sources said the PWD could release water only now since the approval of the Election Commission had to be obtained.

For more than a month, farmers had been urging the PWD and the State Government to release water for cultivation of gingelly.

Release of water at this juncture does not suit cultivation of gingelly, but the standing crops could be saved from withering due to the dry conditions, K.V. Ponnaiyan, president, Tamil Nadu Swadeshi Farmers' Association said. In the current wetting spell, 3 tmc water is likely to be released.

Sugarcane, turmeric, and banana crops in vast stretches of agricultural fields would be saved. The water would also help in preventing coconut trees from drying up.

Another spell of wetting would be beneficial for storing water in the wells and recharging groundwater, farmers say. The PWD had recommended release of water after farmers staged a massive demonstration here last month. Farmers have been reasoning out that there was a dire need to safeguard agricultural activities during the dry season by diverting water into the Bhavani Sagar Dam from the hydel reservoirs in The Nilgiris district.

📌 ***Farmers had staged a demonstration last month***

📌 ***The release will continue for a fortnight***

Krishna farmers 'mint'ing money



Cool crop: Farmers are a happy lot as the mint crop is ready for harvest at Kothareddypalem village near Machilipatnam in Krishna district.- Photo: T. Appala Naidu.

MACHILIPATNAM, April 10, 2014 -

Farmers along the coastal belt of Krishna district appear to have taken a cue from the phrase 'Think innovatively', and they

are reaping dividends.

They have deviated from the tradition farming of cash crops and have zeroed down on mint leaves cultivation.

With the leaves promising good returns both to the farmer as well as the retailer or the middlemen, the acreage is on the rise and the best season of the year has just begun.

The farming is largely done by the women and it is spreading along the swathes of sandy soil regions between Machilipatnam and its neighbouring villages.

In these locations, the mint farming is preferred by the small and marginal farmers as their habitation is very close to the tail end area of the existing irrigation canal system.

In Kothareddypalem village, which is located about 10-km away from the Krishna district headquarters, more than 40 farmers have shifted from different crops to the mint farming in about 70 acres. Most of them are tenant or small farmers.

“The cultivation of mint on the sandy soil has proved lucrative. The profit on an acre in each harvest, done every twenty days, is above Rs. 15,000,” Subhareddy Munnam of Kothareddypalem village told *The Hindu* .

The average yield per acre is around 30,000 bundles, each weighing about 150 grams in each harvest.

According to the farmers, the income on the mint is almost double than other floriculture crops including jasmine.

Field day

In Krishna district, the middlemen are having a field day as they make four times the profit compared to the price paid to the farmers. “Being a farmer, we cannot manage the sale of the entire produce.

However, the mint cultivation is still lucrative even at that price.

Except in rainy season, the crop is largely risk free” said another farmer Peruboyana Subrahmanyam.

The cultivation of mint on the sandy soil has proved lucrative. The profit on an acre in each harvest is above Rs 15,000 - Subhareddy Munnam, Kothareddypalem.

Farmer’s notebook



Guiding light: The farmer in his citrus garden along with Mr. Madhu Balan (right), Assistant Director, Agriculture who helped him become financially successful.

—Photo: Special Arrangement
Remote control does not work in agriculture, physical presence is a must

Rice bowl turns into pricey real estate

Paddy cultivation is no longer lucrative in Kanyakumari district



New houses on the paddy field in front of Putheri tank in Nagercoil.— Photo: A.SHAIKMOHIDEEN

KANYAKUMARI, April 10, 2014 - The fertile rice bowl of erstwhile Travancore, now part of Tamil Nadu’s Kanyakumari district, is gripped by a serious economic and ecological crisis.

The emerald green paddy fields, banana and coconut groves in the backdrop of the Western Ghats, and irrigated by hundreds of water bodies may soon fade into a neglected prized painting, if urgent measures are not taken, warn environmentalists and agriculturists.

On the one hand, a slew of factors has rendered paddy cultivation no longer lucrative and on the other the nexus between real estate brokers and elected members of local bodies is fast converting these priceless lands into housing plots, they say.

“But this vital issue hardly finds a mention in the campaigns of major political parties,” alleges environmentalist Lal Mohan, who has been running a campaign against conversion of paddy fields into housing flats and has also secured a court order.

“I used to cultivate 25 acres. But it is no longer the case. First, the wage has increased manifold. Second, even if you pay, getting agricultural labourers is difficult,” says A.

Mathusoothanan Pillai, a farmer, from Parakkai. He explains that since the daily wages for other jobs is much higher, agricultural labourers no longer prefer their traditional vocation.

“Even if they agree to work, they demand wages on par with other jobs. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has also attracted most of them,” he says, explaining that farmers have started selling their land for conversion to real estate.

Taking advantage of the travails of farmers, the real estate agents on the prowl have started purchasing paddy fields.

“The two sluices supplying water from Putherikulam have been completely blocked by real estate mafia, which has purchased land on the other side of the lake. Though the government has clearly stated that it is illegal to convert paddy fields into housing plots, no proper action has been taken against elected representatives of local bodies,” Mr. Lal Mohan says.

P. Chenbagasekaran Pillai, a farmer from Thuvarekadu in the northern region of the district, says real estate agents normally buy the fields along the roadside and erect fences, blocking the mobility of other farmers. “Once the passage is closed, you cannot take your tractor or carry agricultural inputs to your field. So the farmers are forced to sell their properties also,” he says.

Lack of maintenance of water bodies and irrigation channels has also contributed to the decline in agriculture. Release of water from dams days after the schedule takes a toll on the harvest. “Even after harvest, getting a good price is not possible. In Kanyakumari, there used to be 66 rice mills. Today, only six have been modernised and others are closed,” Mr. Pillai says.

The youth are after white-collar jobs and look down upon agriculture. “I have some acres of land and toil every day. Still my life style is far below that of a peon in a government office. No parent will give the daughter in marriage to a farmer,” he adds.

Root rot in chilli

Among the fungal diseases, root rot complex of chilli is a serious infestation. In standing plants yellowing and wilting are usually preceded by light to dark brown lesions on the stem adjacent to the ground followed by drooping and wilting of infected leaves and gradual wilting of the whole plant.

Mature plants dry suddenly. Seedlings affected by this infestation die soon after germination.

Management

Grow resistant varieties viz., CO-4 and DLC-352, moderately resistant varieties, viz., Ajeet-3 DLC-524, F-112-5-83, KCS-2013, Hot pepper Nun-2060. Do not grow susceptible variety Sel 11.

Seed treatment with bioagents like *T. harzianum* and *T. viride* (@ 8-10 g/kg seed) can be effective against the disease.

Seed treatments with *T. harzianum* (at 20 g / kg soil), *Chaetomium globosum* (at 20 g / kg soil), garlic bulb extract (at 5 per cent), vitavax (at 1 gm/ kg seed) mixed together or *T. harzianum*, vitavax, garlic bulb extract mixed together or *C. globosum*, vitavax and garlic bulb extract can effectively manage the disease. Bioagent *Trichoderma* spp and soil application of neem cake, trichoderma, mustard cake or trichoderma together with karanj cake is most effective with maximum seed germination and least total mortality.

Soil drenching of the fungicides viz., tebuconazole (0.1 per cent), carboxin (0.25 per cent) and chlorothalonil (0.20 per cent) at 7 days after transplanting can effectively control the disease (*S. rolfsii*).

Soil application (two weeks before transplanting) of organic amendments viz., neem seed powder (at 0.05 g/kg), neem cake (at 0.15 g/kg) and mint manure (at 0.75 g/kg) can control the disease.

Root dip

Seedling root dip with carbendazim+ mancozeb (at 0.1 per cent), addition of vermicompost (100g/kg soil), drenching of fungicide carbendazim+diathane M-45 (at 0.1 per cent) and soil application of *T.viride* (10 gm/pot) were also effective.

(Utpal Dey is Ph.D. scholar, Department of Plant Pathology, Vasant Rao Naik Marathwada Krishi Vidyapeeth, Parbhani, Maharashtra, email: utpaldey86@gmail.com and Dr. A. P. Suryawanshi is Head, Department of Plant Pathology, Vasant Rao Naik Marathwada Krishi Vidyapeeth, Parbhani, Maharashtra.)

Rice mill soot leaves residents in tears



Residents mulling over poll boycott to highlight their plight

Telltale signs: Effluents from the TNCSC's modern rice mill at Adavathur near Tiruchi stagnating behind the unit. — Photo: M. Moorthy

TIRUCHI, April 10, 2014 - Faced with air and water pollution caused by the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation's Modern Rice Mill at Adavathur in the outskirts of the city, residents in and around the mill are mulling over the option of boycotting the Lok Sabha election unless remedial measures are initiated. With rice husk being used as fuel for boiling paddy at the rice mill, the soot from the chimney settle down on households in the vicinity of the mill. Residents in Muthu Plots, a developing residential colony, are the worst hit though residents in nearby Balaji Nagar and Sakthi Nagar also face the problem. "The black soot from the chimney spreads by the air and settles down on our households. We cannot keep our windows open and even riding a two-wheeler or walking around the open is difficult as the soot and the burnt husk gets into our eyes causing irritation," says B.Ravikumar, president, Muthu Plots Residents Welfare Association.

A layer of soot could be seen accumulated on the roof tops of many houses. "We cannot keep our food open even for a short time. Even the clothes dried in the open get a layer of soot over them within a couple of hours," says Vallikannu, a resident. Govindarajan, another resident, says that residents were facing breathing difficulties due to the problem. "We cannot rest outside the house or sleep in our terraces," he says.

The effluent discharge from the mill also stagnates behind the mill and the adjacent godown. Residents alleged that the effluent often overflows into the colony during the monsoon and the quality of groundwater in the locality has been affected.

"We have represented the matter to the TNCSC several times. Every time, the officials promise to set right the problem within a few months. But no permanent solution has been found so far," says Mr.Ravikumar. The association, he says, is contemplating boycotting the election and a decision will be taken after a meeting soon.

A senior officer of the TNCSC, when contacted, said an effluent treatment plant is planned to be set up soon at the mill and tenders for the same would be called after the election. However, the effluent did not contain any chemicals and was essentially water used for boiling paddy. A portion of the effluent is also pumped back to water the trees in the mill. Measures, including regular cleaning of chimney, have been taken to check the emission of fine dust. "The problem has been curtailed to a large extent in recent days. We are also

planning to raise trees around the mill by getting saplings from the Forest Department to check air pollution," he said.

Fair weather forecast

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, April 10, 2014 - Thursday, the polling day, is forecast to be a day of fair weather in Kerala with a spell or two of summer showers in isolated places.

The daytime temperatures across the State have dropped to tolerable levels over the last couple of days following summer showers.

Palakkad experienced the highest maximum temperature of 37 degrees Celsius on Tuesday. The minimum night-time temperature was below normal by two to four degrees Celsius. — Special Correspondent

Water level

The water level in the Papanasam dam on Wednesday stood at 42.05 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 45.39 cusecs and 205.25 cusecs of water was discharged. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 69.68 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of eight cusecs and 100 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari

The level in Pechipparai dam stood at 11.80 feet, 36.50 feet in Perunchani, 2.59 feet in Chittar I, 2.98 feet in Chittar II, 2.20 feet in Poigai and 41.67 feet in Mambazhathuraiyaru.

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 44.95 feet on Wednesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 176 cusecs and the discharge, 3,000 cusecs.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Apr 10

Max 33° | Min 27°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 52

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:59

Sunset: 06:21

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Apr 11

Max 35° | Min 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Apr 12



35° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

Apr 13



31° | 26°

Overcast

Monday

Apr 14



30° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday

Apr 15



30° | 26°

Cloudy

Wednesday

Apr 16



30° | 26°

Cloudy

National Environment and Engineering Research Institute wants better sewage treatment

KOLHAPUR: The National Environment and Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) has recommended decentralized water treatment systems for the Kolhapur and Ichalkaranji to prevent sewage discharge causing pollution the Panchganga river with disastrous effects.

The NEERI has suggested the local civic bodies to reuse the treated waste water so that only excess treated water will reach the river through nullahs. The agency submitted its recommendations to Bombay high court on Tuesday.

Following a petition, the Bombay HC had last year asked NEERI to prepare a comprehensive report on all issues relating to pollution of the Panchganga river, identify the causes for the same, suggest remedial measures and say whether the projects being undertaken by the authorities at present have the sufficient capacity and technical capability to meet the civic bodies' requirements and those of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB).

The environment agency has recommended that all the nullahs in Kolhapur city should be redesigned in such a way that no floating matter can enter the river. It has also specifically suggested that the Ichalkaranji town should decentralize the industrial waste treatment plants so that water entering into the nullahs will be clean.

It took NEERI four months to prepare the report and officials of the institute visited Kolhapur couple of times to collect water samples, secondary data and met civic body's officials and environmentalists. The report was presented before High Court bench of Justice A S Oka and Justice A A Sayed.

"We will study the report and present our argument before court on the next date of hearing scheduled on April 25," said Dhairyashil Sutar, counsel for the litigants.

TOI accessed the report in which Shivani Dhage, water expert and former deputy director of NEERI, has said that only 30% of the Kolhapur city area has underground sewerage system. "Sewerage from the other areas enters the river through nullahs. Thus, the sewage discharge from the nullahs contributes to the river flow resulting in deterioration of river quality," Dhage has said in the report.

NEERI experts have made a remark that existing practice of solid waste management in the Kolhapur is extremely dangerous as it is being dumped in an open space adjacent to the Kasba Bavda STP. The leakage from the same would impact the river and soil. Therefore, major improvement is expected through bio-composting system for biodegradable and briquettes for dry waste, stated the report.

The expert team has rubbished the claims by the sugar industry that it treats waste water and said that the industry must ensure zero discharge. The application of waste water on land was observed by the team, which recommended industry to avoid the practice completely.

The high court in order dated December 6, 2013 appointed NEERI and asked Kolhapur Municipal Corporation and Ichalkaranji Municipal Council to pay the fees of the institute, following which the institute initially prepared a note on report. The then bench comprising justice S J Vazifdar and G S Patel asked NEERI to prepare a comprehensive report.

Ichalkaranji-based Datta Mane, Sada Malabade and eight others had filed a PIL in the HC last year demanding action to clean up the river. The PIL also demanded awarding compensation to those who were diagnosed with jaundice caused due to pollution in the river in Ichalkaranji in 2012. The KMC and IMC were made respondents in the case, following which both civic bodies have started projects to curb the river pollution.



Greens Angry over Axing of Centuries-old Trees

The Green people, an environmental forum in Muvattupuzha, is all set to move legally against the decision to cut down the trees lining the Muvattupuzha-Changanassery road stretch for widening the road. According to Asees Kunnappally, state co-coordinator of the forum, the decision to axe the trees was taken without conducting a scientific study on the environmental impact. Over 2,000 trees including centuries-old forest trees, lining the road stretch are being axed as part of the proposed road widening project.

Most of the trees that have been marked for axing could be saved, if a study was conducted, he added.

Over 600 trees which include forest trees and rare medicinal ones on the stretch were already axed without completing the required official formalities. It is doubted that there are illegal dealings behind the move. Considering the environmental impact of the decision, the authority should suspend the decision for cutting the trees, he added.

“The Forum is planning to request the government to revise the decision. And we will demand the authority to conduct scientific study for identifying trees to cut down. If our demand would not consider, the Forum will move legally against the government’s decision, he said.

As part of our initiative, a mass agitation will also be launched for protecting the trees. The general public and environmentalists will also take out a protest march. A meeting of the green activists was held in Muvattupuzha on Tuesday in this regard.

Tea volume inches up at Coonoor sale



Coonoor, April 9: A volume of 13.14 lakh kg, some 2,000 kg more than last week, is being offered at Sale number 15 of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association to be held on Thursday and Friday.

Of this, a volume of 8.91 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.23 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades.

As much as 12.31 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.83 lakh kg, orthodox variety. In the leaf counter, only 0.38 lakh kg belong to orthodox, while 8.53 lakh kg, CTC.

Among the dusts, only 0.45 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 3.78 lakh kg, CTC.

A volume of 2.47 lakh kg of teas unsold in previous weeks is being re-offered this week.

Last week, 29 per cent remained unsold despite slashing prices by Rs. one a kg. Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped CTC market when Om Enterprises bought it for Rs. 194 a kg.

In the Leaf auction, Hindustan Unilever Ltd bought medium varieties.

In the Dust auction, HUL was selective.

There was only fair demand for brighter liquoring teas from upcountry buyers.

Overall, internal buyers were less active. Exporters chose mostly plainer grades.

Consequently, prices crashed to an average of Rs. 73.07 a kg – the least so far this year.

Cotton planting in North India will be affected by delay in wheat harvest

New Delhi, April 9: The delay in harvesting wheat in Punjab and Haryana is set to push back cotton planting in forthcoming kharif season. In Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, cotton planting starts in early May and this year it could be delayed by about a fortnight.

Cotton area up

However, cotton acreages are unlikely to be affected and on the contrary, they may see a marginal increase.

Poor returns from guarseed last year may prompt farmers to shift back to cotton in the coming season mainly in Haryana and Rajasthan and to some extent in Punjab. Industry sources said that cotton was planted on about 3.5 million hectares in the northern region last year.

“We expect there will be a 2-3 per cent increase in cotton acreage in North India as farmers are seen shifting back to the fibre crop from guar,” said Sovan Chakraborty, Business Head, Shriram Farm Solutions, a unit of DCM Shriram Ltd.

Shriram is a leader in the Bt cottonseed market in North India and commands a 35 per cent share in the market, estimated at 55 lakh packets of 450 gm each. Sales of Bt cotton seeds are yet to start, Chakraborty said, adding that the company has been receiving a few enquiries.

M Ramasami, Managing Director, Rasi Seeds, said that gains in cotton acreage may not be significant as farmers may not be enthusiastic to plant the fibre crop as yields were barely normal last year.

However, he believes that cotton may gain acreage from guar, mainly in Haryana.

Guar loses the race

Further, Ramasami said cotton needs to be planted before May 20 for better results. “It is a critical situation for farmers as wheat harvest has been delayed,” he said.

Cotton farmers in the north-west had planted more guar last year as prices of guarseed ruled at around Rs. 9,000 a quintal during May. However, with the lack of demand from key consumers in the US and Canada, prices of guarseed fell subsequently. Currently, guarseed prices are ruling hovering around Rs. 4,500 a quintal, almost half the price that prevailed in corresponding period a year ago.

Weather woes

“Wheat harvest has been delayed due to the prolonged winter and unseasonal rains. The grain is still turning yellow and it may take a couple of weeks to dry. We expect the harvest to commence by end-April and may push back cotton planting by 8-10 days,” said Vikas Rai, a large farmer in Abohar.

Besides, the lack of availability of water in canals at this point in time will also delay the cotton plantings, Rai said.

Syngenta to train 8 lakh farmers

Mumbai, April 9: Syngenta India, subsidiary of Swiss-based agriculture input major Syngenta AG, plans to roll out an ambitious plan in India to inculcate best farming practices.

India focus

The company has identified 44 reference farms focusing on rice, wheat, cotton, corn, tomato, potato and soyabean in 15 States including Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana and Punjab.

As part of, what it calls, Good Growth Plan, the company will train 8,00,000 small farmers with less than two hectares on farming techniques and safe use of chemicals on the fields this year.

It is estimated that 80 per cent of the farmers own less than two hectares in the country.

Project Tegra

In 2009, Syngenta piloted Tegra, an integrated rice growing project that resulted in 30 per cent increase in yield, seven per cent improvement in grain quality and 28 per cent savings in labour.

Tegra enables growers to outsource seedling production, addresses key challenge of labour scarcity and increase productivity.

Davor Pisk, Chief Operating Officer, Syngenta AG, told *Business Line* said the cost for rolling out the project in India has been built with sales.

“Though the entire programme revolves around the mission to grow more with less input, our business is expected to improve due to the enhanced reach,” he said.

Traditionally, Pisk said the farm holding in India is very small and reaching out to so many individual farmers and make them understand the benefits of best practices in their own tongue is going to be a key challenge.

Seasonal dependence

This apart, he said, farming in India is dependent on seasonal rainfall which is becoming more and more unpredictable.

Irregular rainfall has enhanced the risk profile of farmers as failure or less than expected rainfall results in huge loss, as farmers have to spend a substantial sum in preparing the farm before monsoon sets in.

Water management

“Poor water management in many countries has resulted in land degradation in irrigated areas through salinisation and water logging. This can cause 10 to 25 per cent drop in yield in many crops and may prevent cropping altogether when it is severe,” he said.

The company has created MaxVeg, a tried and tested solution for farmers growing vegetables.

It is working with farmers on cauliflower, hot pepper, tomato and watermelon in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

The company has identified 44 reference farms focusing on rice, wheat, cotton, corn, tomato, potato and soyabean in 15 States

Under selling pressure, producers offer sugar at discount

Mumbai, April 9: Sugar prices declined by Rs. 50-60 a quintal on the Vashi wholesale market due to increased selling pressure by producers, who offered huge discounts. *Naka* prices were lower by Rs. 30-50.

A Vashi-based wholesaler said that on the spot, the volume remained under pressure due retail demand eased.

At the upper level, in absence of sufficient buying support from stockists due to ample inventories available with them and increased selling pressure from producers, prices fell sharply. Stockists are under pressure to fulfil commitments. Vashi market carries about 115-120 truckloads of stocks. Freight rates were unchanged.

Arrivals at Vashi market were around 59-60 truckloads (of 100 bags each) and the local dispatches were 57-58 loads. On Tuesday evening, 13 – 14 mills offered tenders and sold about 20,000 – 25,000 bags at Rs. 3,060-3,100 (Rs. 3,100-3,200) for S-grade and Rs. 3,160-3,250 (Rs. 3,250-3,300) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association’s spot rates were: S-grade Rs. 3,172-3,380 (Rs. 3,212-3,402) and M-grade was Rs. 3,326-3,502 (Rs. 3,340-3,552).

Naka delivery rates were: S-grade Rs. 3,070-3,170 (Rs. 3,120-3,200) and M-grade Rs. 3,230-3,350 (Rs. 3,200-3,370).

Higher inflow crushes castor

Rajkot, April 9: With arrival of castor seed in spot market topping over one lakh bags, the price of the oilseed plummeted in spot and futures markets.

According to traders, demand was very limited and price may go down further.

Export demand was also weak in castor oil. RCX spot castor decreased by Rs. 85 to Rs. 3,825.

Castor oil was down by Rs. 15 to Rs. 800/10 kg.

About 98,000-1 lakh bags of castor seed arrived in Gujarat for Rs. 750-760.

Similarly, around 7,800-8,000 bags arrived in Saurashtra at Rs. 750-760 for a *maund* of 20 kg.

Coconut oil zooms to record Rs. 2,300/15 kg on 'manipulation'

Erode, April 9: Coconut oil prices zoomed to a new high of Rs. 2,300 for 15-kg loose pack. "This high price is due to manipulation and it serves no purpose to traders, agriculturists and also crushers. This hike will not last for long and prices will come down sharply soon," said RM Palanisamy, a trader. He further said that palm oil and palm kernel are selling at Rs. 62 and Rs. 70/kg respectively, and are being patronised by many biscuit firms and other dealers.

Meanwhile, copra farmers have raised their price to Rs. 11,000 a quintal. Many farmers made further order for coconuts from Kerala and Karnataka, as they are not having stock of copra with them.

New crop arrivals pound tur



Indore, April 9: Rise in arrivals of the new crop has arrested the uptrend in tur. Maharashtra tur was quoted at Rs. 4,500 a quintal, while Madhya Pradesh variety ruled at Rs. 3,900-4,000. Tur dal (full) was being quoted at Rs. 6,300-6,400, tur dal (sawa no.) at Rs. 5,900-6,000, while tur marka ruled at Rs. 6,600-6,900. Moong (best) on Wednesday ruled at Rs. 7,200-7,400, while moong (medium) was quoted at Rs. 6,500-6,800. . Urad and its dal also ruled stable on subdued demand with urad (bold) at Rs. 5,050-5,100 ,

while urad (medium) ruled at Rs. 4,500-4,800. Urad dal (medium) was at Rs. 5,500-5,600, urad dal (bold) at Rs. 6,000-6,100 and urad mongar at Rs. 8,000-8,500. Our Correspondent

Wheat may drop further

Karnal, April 9: Prices of dara wheat and flour dropped further on easy availability of stocks coupled with reduced offtake on Wednesday. Satish Kumar, a wheat trader, told *Business Line* that prices may drop further in the coming days. About 10,000 bags of dara wheat arrived at the Karnal Grain Market Terminal on Wednesday and stocks found no takers due to high moisture. In the physical market, dara wheat dropped further by Rs. 10 to Rs. 1,535-40 a quintal. Around 800 bags of wheat arrived and stocks were directly offloaded at the mills. Mill delivery was at Rs. 1,535, while delivery at the chakki was at Rs. 1,540. Flour too dropped by Rs. 15 and sold at Rs. 1,735. Chokar eased by Rs. 20 and sold at Rs. 1,210 a quintal. Our Correspondent

Lack of buyers saps rubber

Kottayam, April 9: Spot rubber declined on Wednesday.

The market fell further following the moderate losses in the domestic and international futures while most counters were hit by the absence of buyers during late trading hours. According to reports, major manufacturers have enough and more imports and they are unlikely to buy from the local markets in the near future.

Sheet rubber weakened to Rs. 147 (Rs. 148) a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board.

The grade dropped Rs. 144 (Rs. 145) as quoted by the dealers. The trend was partially mixed.

The April futures declined to Rs. 142.70 (Rs. 144.24), May to Rs. 146.15 (Rs. 148.15), June to Rs. 149.41 (Rs. 150.56) and July to Rs. 150 (Rs. 151.63) while the Rubber Mini May futures weakened to Rs. 146.95 (Rs. 148.55) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) slid to Rs. 136.42 (Rs. 136.80) at Bangkok. April futures closed at ¥238 (Rs. 140.20) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates Rs. /kg: RSS-4: 147 (148); RSS-5: 143 (143.50); Ungraded: 137 (139); ISNR 20: 138 (139) and Latex 60%: 119 (119).

Delicious Dussehri



Bounty harvest A mango tree in full bloom in the Malihabad region near Lucknow, famous for its Dussehri variety. UP growers say Dussehri production should be good this season, as it is an 'on-year' for the crop. The Malihabad region accounts for about one-third of mangoes produced in UP. Vishwnath Kulkarni

Soyameal exports down 17%

New Delhi, April 9: Soyameal exports in the just-concluded fiscal dropped 17 per cent to 2.84 million tonnes (mt) against 3.43 mt the previous fiscal.

Poor availability and crushing on account of a lower-than-expected crop affected exports, the Soyabean Processors Association of India said in a statement.

However, in terms of value, soyameal exports were lower by just 2 per cent at Rs. 9,976 crore. Soyameal shipments constitute a bulk of the country's oilmeal exports.

Iran remained the largest buyer of Indian soyameal, importing about 1.15 mt and accounting for over 40 per cent of the country's total shipments. Japan was the second largest buyer at 2.78 lakh tonnes (lt), followed by France with 2.77 lt and Belgium at 1.70 lt. Korean imports were at 1.6 lt.

Business Standard

Evening trade faces opposition

[Edible oil](#) processors and importers have urged the commodity derivatives markets regulator, the Forward Markets Commission ([FMC](#)), to withdraw the extension in trading time recently given for some agricultural commodities.

FMC had on March 14 announced an extension of trading hours on exchanges under its ambit for 10 agricultural commodities beyond the 5 pm deadline, to 11.30 pm effective from April 1. These included [soya oil](#), [crude palm oil](#), RBD palmolein, cotton, cotton seed, oil cake, seed, sugar and maize, at the six national bourses in this segment.

Business chambers had welcomed the move. For instance, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry had called it a "step in the right direction", one to help farmers and traders by enabling better price discovery and enhancing liquidity, besides restricting the illegal trade. However, the Solvent Extractors' Association ([SEA](#)), which represents about 850 edible oil processors, importers and retailers, argues the extension in trading does not match with the banking systems in India. Also, global exchanges offer trading over four to five hours, and with breaks, as against 13-14 hours without a break in India now, with the extension. "The FMC decision to extend the trading time in futures contracts of various agricultural commodities to facilitate hedging have not gone well with (our) stakeholders," SEA has told FMC.

The FMC ad said there was a need to align domestic futures prices with the international price movement.

However, SEA argues the rationale is partially applicable for only commodities dealt at the Chicago Board of Trade, the world's oldest futures and options exchange. For Asian exchanges, the difference of trading time with those at domestic exchanges is not considerable.

More, the idea was to make the hedge effective for trade participants; the practical application of the extended timings are an issue, says SEA.

Record rise in seafood export, 1-mt mark crossed

The provisional estimates of the Marine Products [Export](#) Development Authority (MPEDA) shows India's [seafood](#) export has crossed one million tonne mark for the first time, earning over \$4.5 billion in 2013-14.

According to the provisional estimates, the increase of \$1 billion in revenue in 12 months is a great achievement. Export revenue grew 30 per cent in dollar terms. During 2011-12 and 2012-13, earnings were \$3.5 billion. In rupee terms, the estimates indicated an earning of Rs 20,000 crore.

In 2012-13, India exported 928,215 tonnes valued at Rs 18,856 crore. In 2011-12, the country had exported 862,021 tonnes valued at Rs 16,597 crore. MPEDA now targets an earning of \$ 10 billion by 2020. This performance was due to two major factors: Serious fall in the production and export of [shrimp](#) from Southeast Asian countries and the lowering of countervailing duty on Indian shrimp exports in the US.

Production in Southeast Asian countries had been affected badly due to the spread of a disease called Early Mortality Syndrome. Supply from Thailand, the world's second largest shrimp producer, dropped around 50 per cent from the normal 500,000 tonnes a year. Other leading producers Vietnam and Malaysia had also been hit. India could cash on this global situation and enhanced its exports to these countries too.

Processing plants in East Asian countries had to depend on imports from India in order to meet their commitments with European and US importers. Countries such as Vietnam, China and Thailand imported more shipments from India last year, mainly for re-export.

Rise in local demand in Korea also caused warming up in global prices, said Anwar Hashim, a leading exporter and former

president of Seafood Exporters Association of India. However, USA was the largest market for Indian shrimps, as the country imported 51.24 per cent of the total Indian shrimp exports. This was followed by South East Asian countries (16 per cent), EU (15.82 per cent) and Japan (4.94 per cent).

Shortage of shrimp due to spread of EMS also caused rise in prices and, this, in turn, helped the steep rise in dollar earnings, he added. Increase in the production of Vannamei shrimp, rise in the productivity of Black Tiger variety and increase in export of chilled items also helped achieve higher exports, MPEDA said.

EXPORT STATISTICS			
Year	Volume	Value	
	(tonnes)	(₹ cr)	(\$ bn)
2011-12	862,021	16,597	3.5
2012-13	928,215	18,856	3.7
2013-14*	1,000,000	20,000	4.5
*Estimates		Source: MPEDA	

West Bengal's costly shrimp farming boom

In the southern fringes of the agriculturally-dense district of Bengal's Purba Medinipur, more ponds are being dug than farms nurtured. Over the next six months, most of the landscape would be dotted with saline water bodies. However, by October, a panoramic view of swaying paddy fields would reappear.

That's the brief cycle of events driving the region's economy to new heights. The district boasts the second highest per capita income (Rs 38,354, 2009-10 and constant prices) among the 19 in the state. As large tracts here steadily get converted into saline ponds for [shrimp farming](#), an economic boom is benefiting farmers, traders and the government.

Interestingly, of the nearly 25,000 shrimp farms in the district, only 500 have legal grounding. Every year, [West Bengal](#) earns close to Rs 1,500 crore foreign exchange through shrimp export. With the largest pool of brackish water in the country, nearly 30 per cent of the total resources, West Bengal is the second highest yearly producer of shrimps, at 33,685 tonnes, according to the last available data, published in 2009-10. This accounted for nearly 35 per cent of the country's total [shrimp production](#) (95,919 tonnes).

The boom

Aditya Ganthai, known for his wealth, clout and brazenness, is a familiar name in Moyna, a block 115 km from the sea coast. Entangled in multiple legal battles, Ganthai started shrimp farming by illegally channeling the salty waters of the Haldi river to his village. A landless labourer 10 years ago, he is now one of the richest in the area.

Those who leased out land to Ganthai made money, too; those who did not are left with almost barren tracts. What followed was a legal battle between Ganthai and a group of farmers unwilling to lease out land to him. Dilip Samanta, who owns land in the middle of Ganthai's shrimp farms, could earn as much as Rs 50,000 a year by selling betel leaves a couple of years earlier. Today, he earns not more than Rs 20,000 on the same land, as salinity is seeping into his fertile land. Tapas Mondal, another farmer, is left with nearly-barren paddy fields, surrounded by shrimp farms.

In 2012, a group of aggrieved farmers moved court against shrimp farming in Moyna. The court gave a verdict that it was necessary to convert farmland into brackish land through approvals from relevant authorities before any shrimp farming.

"Political support sustained the shrimp farming, even with court orders. Also, those farmers who had filed cases against shrimp farming were the ones who failed to get adequate compensation," says a local who tracks the shrimp boom here.

Certainly, the prosperity brought about by shrimp farming in Moyna is hard to ignore. In the best of years, the profits from paddy farming hardly exceeded Rs 5,000 a bigha (a third of an acre). Now, farmers by leasing land to shrimp farmers can earn as much as Rs 40,000 for a bigha. In addition, with each farm employing five to 10 workers, jobs came with the shrimp boom. For traders, profit margins in shrimp export had been between 50 and 100 per cent, or even more.

Legalising the trade

Having become a livelihood and political issue, a recently-formed government panel is now finding ways to legalise this flourishing trade, even as salinity is spreading thick and fast in these hinterlands. Recently, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ordered a two-member committee to look into the matter.

According to government officials, the state would refer to a 2006 amendment in the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act, 2005, which stated that the "area of land within a distance of two kilometres from the high tide line of seas, rivers, creeks and backwaters" would be classified as a coastal area. Thus, the Bengal government plans to amend its own land reforms law, to reclassify the existing land within two km of coastline as 'coastal land', from 'agriculture land'. "At present, in our own land records, areas near the coastal region are marked as agriculture land. The amendment would classify the regions as coastal land, which would legalise a large number of shrimp farms," said a government official.

Uncertainties

Yet, though shrimp farming looks like a money minting mechanism, the inherent risks can hardly be ignored.

Dependent on global demand, shrimp farming in West Bengal has come up as an unorganised sector, requiring astute cultivation skills. In 2012, Japan, a key importer of tiger shrimp from Purba Medinipur, rejected almost all exports on account of high anti-oxidant content. Purba Medinipur is known for exporting tiger shrimp, which has select buyers as it is costlier than the commonly exported variety of L Vannamei, cultivated mainly in Andhra Pradesh.

“In 2012, there were cases of farmers' suicide, as there were no buyers of shrimp,” said an official. The wheel of fortune turned for farmers in 2013, when a large amount of L Vannamei shrimp was infected with a virus. In general, of the total shrimp export from India, 80 per cent is of the L Vannamei variety. Last year, with the outbreak of disease in the latter, tiger shrimp export surged 150 per cent and profit margins exceeded 100 per cent for farmers in Medinipur.

Despite uncertainties, India's \$1,800-million shrimp export, to the US, Europe, Japan and China are adding to the nouveau riche in West Bengal and elsewhere, like never before. Defying the risks, farmers believe they've found a treasure trove, even as farmlands in rural Bengal are slowly fading.

Edible oil processors urge FMC to withdraw time extension in agri commodities

[Edible oil](#) processors and importers have urged the commodity derivatives markets regulator the Forward Markets Commission ([FMC](#)) to withdraw extension in trading time given in internationally referenceable agri [commodities](#).

In a representation to the FMC, the Solvent Extractors' Association ([SEA](#)), the representative body of over 850 edible oil processors, importers and retailers, argued that extension in trading does not match with the banking systems in India.

Also, global exchanges do not offer trading over 4-5 hours that also with breaks as against 13-14 hours without break in India.

"FMC decision to extend the trading time in future contracts of various agricultural commodities, including soyabean, [soya meal](#), crude palm oil, RBD Palmolein etc. to facilitate hedging have not gone well with the stake holders. We, therefore, request the regulator take a pragmatic view of doing away with the extended trading time," said a SEA note sent to the FMC.

Effective April 1, the trading time in internationally referenceable agri commodities was extended by 6.30 hours to upto 11.30 PM from 5 PM earlier. The FMC has asked exchanges to submit compliance report in this regard. While extending trading time, the FMC said that there is a need to align the domestic futures prices with the international price movement.

However, SEA argued that the rationale is partially applicable for commodities dealt at CBOT only; as for other Asian exchanges, the difference of trading time with that at domestic exchanges is not considerable. Moreover, the bonafide spirit of time extension was to make

the hedge effective for trade participants, is disguised in practical application of the modality.

In absence of banking infrastructure during the extended trading hours on domestic exchanges, the impact of absence of hedging mechanism for the underlying foreign exchange will be detrimental to the stakeholders since, the forex rates fluctuation is also to be invariably hedged, the potential loss on that account may be very huge to the stakeholders, the note said. Understandably, another objective of the extension in trading time may be increased volumes at the domestic exchanges.

However, until the banking hours are extended to match/honour the trades, the element of hedge by the trade participants would decrease and the element of speculation may go on incremental trend, which may not be in the bonafide interest of the stakeholders in general. Also, the business in the physical market like [APMC](#)'s takes place upto 5.00 PM and no physical trade take place after business closing hours.

Therefore, futures trading beyond 5.00 pm would deform the market. Most importantly, the extended trading hours will also add to their operating cost as they have to engage additional staff to monitor the movement. Apart from the above, many members expressed their serious concern for long working hours which will create health problem, sleepless night and untimely food habits may have serious impact of their health and will deprive them of their family life, it added.

Palm oil up 0.2% as demand picks up

[Crude palm oil](#) prices rose by 0.26% to Rs 558.20 per 10 kg in futures trade today as speculators indulged in creating fresh positions supported by pick up in demand in the spot market.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), crude palm oil for delivery in May rose by Rs 1.50, or 0.26%, to Rs 558.20 per 10 kg in business turnover of 367 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in April up by Rs 1.10, or 0.19%, to Rs 564.50 per 10 kg in 344 lots.

Analysts said speculators creating fresh positions driven by pick up in demand in the spot market mainly led to rise in crude palm oil prices at futures trade.

Sugar extends gains on strong demand, lower production

Continuing its rising streak, [sugar](#) prices went up by another 0.50 per cent to Rs 3,205 per quintal in futures market today as speculators indulged in creating positions, supported by summer season demand from bulk consumers amid fall in production.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in May gathered Rs 16, or 0.50 per cent, to Rs 3,205 per quintal with an open interest of 51,500 lots.

Analysts said apart from rising demand in the spot markets from bulk consumers, fall in sugar production supported the persistent rise in sweetener prices at futures trade.

The country's sugar production has dropped by 7 per cent to 21.5 million tonnes in the first six months of the current marketing year due to lower output in key producing states.

Potato up 1.2% as demand picks up

[Potato](#) prices rose by 1.24% to Rs 1,375.70 per quintal in futures trade today, as traders created fresh positions on the back of rising demand in the spot market.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), potato for May contract rose by Rs 16.90, or 1.24%, to Rs 1,375.70 per quintal, with a trading volume of 159 lots.

The delivery for the April contract also traded higher by Rs 13.60, or 1.06%, to Rs 1,291 per quintal with a business volume of 105 lots.

Marketmen said the rise in potato prices at futures trade was attributed to the rising spot demand amid restricted arrivals from producing belts in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and West Bengal.

Cardamom up 2.5% on spot demand

[Cardamom](#) prices rose by 2.55% to Rs 945 per kg in futures trade today as speculators indulged in enlarging positions amid restricted arrivals.

Further, firm export demand in the spot market also supported the upside.

On the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#) cardamom for April delivery surged Rs 23.50, or 2.55%, to Rs 945 per kg in a business volume of 124 lots.

The spice for delivery in May gained Rs 1.20, or 0.13%, to Rs 911 per kg in a business volume of 473 lots.

Traders said that besides restricted supplies from producing belts, strong export and domestic demand also influenced cardamom prices at futures trade.
