

Rain brings relief to farmers

ERODE, April 15, 2014 - The sharp showers for a couple of days in the Dhimbam hill area have brought some relief to the farming community and the Forest Department. The rains have saved cabbage, potato, carrot, cauliflower crops on several hundreds of acres of fields in Talamalai, Hasanur and Talavadi areas from withering. The wetness on the fields caused by the rains in extreme dry condition has recharged aquifers to some extent, according to the local people. However, the Kadambur hills where tapioca is the main crop has not received any rainfall. Nevertheless, the Forest Department is partially relieved since some of the ponds and waterholes in the wild now contain water. In a scenario of water shortage for agricultural crops, the Forest Department had been facing a tough situation in filling water bodies in the forests in order to prevent elephants, deers and other animals in the wild from straying out into human habitations.

Water released for special wetting of crops

ERODE, April 15, 2014 - To meet drinking water needs of people in rural areas
Release of water from the Bhavani Sagar Dam into the Lower Bhavani Project canal for special wetting of crops for a fortnight has solved the drinking water need of the people in rural parts of the district for the time being.

Hundreds of ponds and wells by the sides of the irrigation canal that runs to a length of about 200 km in the district are getting recharged.

Though the main purpose of the contour canal that also feeds the Thadapalli and Arakankottai channels is to irrigate over 2 lakh hectares, the spin-off benefit during the summer months is the solution to drinking water problem it provides.

According to sources, 3 tmc water would have been released into the canal by April 17, when the special wetting would stop.

Alongside fulfilling drinking water needs, the water stored in ponds and wells could also be utilised for cultivation till this month-end.

But, the dry conditions may again surface during May.

Farmers have approached the Public Works Department requesting for release of water for another round of special wetting during May so that the standing crops could be saved, and the drinking water problem could be solved for another month.

In the city limits, however, there is no solution in sight to the drinking water problem.

“Supply of Cauvery water to households has not only become irregular, the quantity is also diminishing,” according to Kalaiselvi, a resident of K.K. Nagar.

The underground water level is getting depleted fast, and there is no water though borewells are being dug to depths beyond 700 metres. Sight of people in middle-class localities queuing up before water lorries have become commonplace.

According to official sources, there cannot be any quick-fix solution since the population in the city limits is steadily rising. A long-term solution was possible only through speedy implementation of the Rs. 391-crore Ooratchikottai Drinking Water Scheme.

In the city limits, there is no solution in sight to the drinking water problem

Water level

MADURAI, April 15, 2014 - The water level in Periyar dam stood at 110.00 feet (permissible level 136 feet) on Monday with an inflow of 100 cusecs and discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 26.71 feet (full level 71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 527 mcft. Kodaikanal recorded 2 mm of rainfall during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Monday, PWD officials said.

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 43.56 feet on Monday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 149 cusecs and the discharge 1,500 cusecs.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Monday stood at 40 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 34.84 cusecs and 204.75 cusecs of water was discharged. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 68.84 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 11 cusecs and 100 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 12.80 feet, 36.70 feet in Perunchani, 2.82 feet in Chittar I, 2.92 feet in Chittar II, 2.20 feet in Poigai and 41.50 feet in Mambazhathuraiyaru.

Fishing ban begins

PUDUCHERRY, April 15, 2014 - The 45 day fishing ban in the area will come into force from Tuesday, with all mechanized boats being kept off from the sea in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. During this ban, the National Fishworkers Forum has asked the Tamil Nadu and Puducherry governments to pay the relief fund allotted to the fishermen.

According to a statement from the NFF Chairperson N. Ilango, the Tamil Nadu government provides a relief fund of Rs. 2000 and Puducherry government gives the fishermen of Rs. 4000 as a compensation for their loss of livelihood during this period. Unfortunately, this money seldom reaches on time.

During the ban, the fishermen are dependent on the money provided by the governments. The ban will end on May 29.

Floriculturists face difficulties



Support us:Floriculturists giving away cut flowers in Udhagamandalam on Monday, to highlight the difficulties they faced in flower cultivation.- Photo: M. Sathyamoorthy

UDHAGAMANDALAM, April 15, 2014 - Tourists driving or walking past the Horticulture complex near Charing Cross here on Monday were greeted with cut flowers by some members of the Nilgiris

District Flower Cultivation Small Farmers Association.

It was to seek their support for drawing the attention of the government to the problems reportedly confronting the floriculturists.

Association President, N.Vishwanathan, who led the novel protest, said that they had resorted to it since they were not getting remunerative prices for their produce. It was to enhance awareness among not only the government officials but also members of the public about their plight. Due to a number of factors like poor quality inputs, rising cost of cultivation and lack of marketing facilities, many flower growers are in distress. They had taken up floriculture with the help of loans provided by various banks.

Tamil almanac released

VELLORE, April 15, 2014 - The 'Jaya Varuda Panchangam' (the almanac for the 'Jaya' Tamil New Year) was released by Sri Ganesa Sastrigal at a function got up on behalf of the Vellore Brahmin Association here on Saturday.

K.S. Balasubramaniam, president of the association received the first copy. Sri Ganesa Sastrigal explained the salient features of the almanac for the 'Jaya' year.

Flowers that shower gold for a day

Market for Kanikonna is a one-day affair that begins and ends on Vishu eve



Men selling Kanikonna at Kanakalaya Bank Junction in Kozhikode on the eve of Vishu. — Photo: S. Ramesh Kurup

The special connection of Kanikonna or golden shower (*Cassia fistula*) with the festival of Vishu is a one-day affair unlike the association of flowers with the

festival of Onam, which lasts at least 10 days. Its golden yellow blooms appear before the month of April and hang from the trunks in curly bunches as the summer peaks. These flowers hardly find a place on garlands, wreaths or other forms of floral decorations.

But Kanikonna's place in Malayali's heart is unique. Along with other selected items, the golden flowers find a place of pride on a large platter of auspicious things as a symbol of prosperity, to be seen as the first sight of the day (*Kani*) on the day of Vishu.

The days are gone when every household in Kerala had a Kanikonna in front it. Like for other things that make the Vishu platter, it is to the market that people head to get Kanikonna flowers. The market for the flower is a one-day phenomenon that begins and ends on the Vishu eve. The sellers too are of a different kind – 'merchants' born for a day and who disappear the next day. Some of them are young students like V. Arun from Chathamangalam, who with his friends is enjoying the vacation. This Vishu, they decided to try their hands "for the first time" in putting something up for sale.

"There were a few Kanikonna trees in full bloom on the wayside near our house, which we emptied and packed in a box before boarding a bus to the city early in the morning on Monday," said Arun, who is a Plus One student. Arun, accompanied by a friend, is all excited about his first time experience in sales. "The demand is huge, whatever we brought has already been sold out," he says.

Rafeeq from Thiruvalli at Manjeri in Malappuram district is a cab driver. He with couple of his friends made an exploratory plan to try vending Kanikonna blooms from his car, stopping at different points in the city, after collecting the flowers from various wayside trees on their way to Kozhikode from Manjeri on the eve of Vishu.

The flower is tied in small bunches and staked at the boot of the car, which is parked on the side of a busy street. Each bunch is sold for Rs.20. "It was thrilling, we made some quick bucks," said Rafeeq, who is planning to repeat it next year as well.

College-goers

Undergraduates Ragesh Raj and his friend Dileep came to the city from Balussery on their bike early in the morning on Monday. As the pillion rider, Dileep had a huge bundle of Kanikonna flowers separately tied in small ready-to-sell units, on his lap, which they collected from the premises of their house.

Ragesh has managed to park his bike in front of a flower stall at Tali, near the busy Palayam market, using his parents' friendship with the shop owner. "We will buy crackers with the money and will rush home before it's evening," says an excited Dileep.

hindustantimes

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Apr 15

Max 32° | Min 27°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 66

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:56

Sunset: 06:21

Barometer: 1012

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Apr 16

Max 36° | Min 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday
Apr 17



37° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Friday
Apr 18



32° | 26°

Cloudy

Saturday
Apr 19



32° | 27°

Overcast

Sunday
Apr 20



32° | 27°

Overcast

Monday
Apr 21

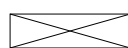


31° | 26°

Cloudy

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Workshop on farm trials and Frontline demonstration held at Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University

 LUDHIANA: One day Workshop on Farm Trials and Frontline Demonstrations for Subject Matter Specialists of Animal Science was organized at Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU) on Friday. Directorate of Extension Education, GADVASU under the aegis of Zonal Project Directorate Zone-I, ICAR, PAU Campus,

structured the event. The Workshop was inaugurated by V K Taneja, Vice-Chancellor, and GADVASU. While inaugurating the Workshop, Taneja stated that animal science is an important component in the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) especially keeping in view the diversification of agriculture in state of Punjab.

"Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University has developed technologies in livestock, poultry, fisheries and value addition of livestock products. These technologies need to be disseminated to the farmers for its effective utilization, thus increasing the productivity of animals and subsequently augmenting the income of the farmers", GADVASU VC said. Taneja also emphasized that the KVKs of PAU and GAVASU should work in unison for the betterment of the farming community.

S Prabhu Kumar, Zonal Project Director, Zone-1, PAU Campus, stated that it is first time that such workshops are separately being conducted for each discipline of KVK and he explained that the role of the animal scientists in KVKs is increasing day by day in the present set-up. S N S Randhawa, Director of Research, GADVASU, made a presentation highlighting the different technologies developed by GADVASU, for its use at field level for the benefit of the livestock farmers.

Students, staff of Karaikal agricultural college against sharing facilities with maritime university

KARAIKAL: Students and teaching and non-teaching staff members of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Agricultural College and Research Institute (Pajancoa), Karaikal, have registered their strong protest against sharing the infrastructural facilities of the college with the proposed Indian Maritime University.

The Indian Maritime University, which plans to commence its activities in academic year 2014-15, has sought classroom and hostel facilities in the agricultural college until the university moves into its own building. The protesters argued that the agricultural college has been sharing its premises with another government college, Perunthalaivar Kamarajar Institute of Engineering and Technology, for the past seven years.

The protesters charged that the government, without establishing basic minimum infrastructural facilities, commenced the academic operations of the engineering college in the agricultural college with a promise that the new college would be shifted shortly. However, even after seven years, the engineering college continues to function in agricultural college hampering the progress of both institutions.

The students of the two colleges have been put to great hardships as they share common facilities and granting permission to the proposed Indian Maritime University at this juncture will further lead to chaos and confusion, they pointed out.

Pajancoa Service Association for Anticorruption and Development president S Anandkumar, who has been leading the protest, wondered why the government has decided to establish the Indian Maritime University at the agricultural college which is more than seven km from the seashore.

"Maritime universities necessarily need to be located near the coast so as to extend practical training to the students on ship building and repair, dredging, harbour engineering and naval architecture among others. The college cannot function in agricultural fields

where agricultural students carry out their research activities," said Anandkumar.

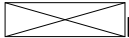
The association warned that it would mobilize support from teaching and non-teaching staff members, students and parents if the government concedes to the demand of the maritime university.

Anandkumar regretted that the ruling and opposition parties, in an effort to gain political mileage, initiate efforts to establish more colleges in the region without ensuring adequate facilities.

He pointed out that National Institute of Technology (NIT), one of the 10 NITs set up across the country in 2009, is functioning in a temporary building at Arignar Anna Government Arts and Science College without proper infrastructural facilities and permanent teaching faculty members. The college lacks adequate number of classrooms, laboratory facilities, standard library, training and placement cell.

"The proposal to start maritime university at agricultural college is another classical example of how politicians make false promises to start new colleges without proper funds, lands and buildings and later encroach into other institutes and as a result none of the institution is developed," he said.'

Punjab Agricultural University releases new high yielding and disease resistant superfine rice variety

 LUDHIANA: The Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) authorities have said that the University has produced large quantity of seed of the newly released high yielding and disease resistant variety PR 123 of superfine rice.

According to PAU authorities, the seed of this variety is available at Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana and its Seed Farms located at Naraingarh (Fatehgarh Sahib), Faridkot and Kapurthala.

Highlighting its salient features, S S Gosal, Director of Research, said that PR-123 is a semi dwarf variety with dark green erect leaves.

"It matures in about 143 days after seeding. It possesses extra-long slender (L/B ratio of 3.73), clear translucent grains with excellent cooking and eating quality characteristics", Director Research said. "The variety resists the attack of all the ten presently prevalent pathotypes of bacterial blight pathogen in the Punjab state".

G S Mangat, Senior Rice Breeder, PAU said that the average paddy yield of PR 123 variety is 1.5 to 2.0 quintal per acre higher than the previously released superfine varieties PR 114 and PR 111.

"This variety will prove very beneficial to the farmers on account of its higher paddy yield, shorter maturity period, disease resistance and to the traders due to its excellent quality characteristics", Senior Rice Breeder said.

Plans to train inmates of Nashik jail in honey, silk cultivation

NASHIK: The central prison authorities in the city are mulling sericulture, poultry and beekeeping on available land and as part of skill development programme. If the proposal is approved, the Nasik Road Central Prison will be the first in the state to start sericulture and poultry farm in its open jail.

Senior jailer Vilas Sable of the Nasik Road Central Prison said, "The new skill will enable the inmates to start their own business once they were out of the jail. Currently, inmates in the open prison cultivate some crops, but this skill may not help them if they do not have land of their own."

The teaching staff of the central prison will be sent for a training programme on sericulture, beekeeping and poultry farming. After which, they would train the inmates in the open jail. The plantation of mulberry will be taken up in the jail premises as silkworms feed on them. The products from these new ventures will also be sold in the open market and to government departments. The Nasik Road Central Prison is one of the eight prisons in Maharashtra having the open prison facility. Other open jails are at Paithan, Aurangabad, Pune, Morshi, Amravati, Kolhapur and Nagpur. The open prison at Paithan, which is one of the oldest open jails in the state, can accommodate 500 inmates, followed by the one at Yerwada in Pune, which has a capacity to house 250 inmates.

At present, there are about 50 prisoners lodged at the Nashik prison and the jail authorities have sent a proposal to increase the number of inmates considering the size of the prison and the plans to bring more land under cultivation.

The prison has 113 acres of agricultural land on its premises with five of the ten wells being used for the purpose. Over 50% of the agricultural land is not being utilized.

Currently, the inmates at the open jail grow wheat, onion, tomato among other produce on the agricultural land. There are also plans to cultivate banana, drumsticks, soya bean, for which more inmates are needed. Apart from the production of agricultural goods in the prison, there are also different manufacturing units where inmates are imparted training on weaving carpets, carpentry, preparing chemicals for soaps, bakery products, tailor works, etc.



45-day Ban on Fishing Comes Into Effect

The 45-day ban on fishing will come into effect from April 14 midnight. The ban is enforced for conservation of species and proliferation during the breeding season.

The fishing vessels, which are having inboard machines, will not be allowed to venture into the sea during this period. The fishermen will be provided with an allowance of ₹4,000 per family by the Fisheries Department during the ban period.

The ban period will come to an end on the midnight of May 29. Any violation of the ban will attract a penalty.

THE HINDU Business Line

Panama disease threatens banana crops



Rome, April 14: The United Nations warned on Monday of the potential “massive destruction” of the world’s \$5-billion (€3.6-billion) a year banana crop as a plant disease spreads from Asia to Africa and West Asia.

The Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said the TR4 strain of Panama disease, which has already hit tens of thousands of hectares in South-East Asia, had been reported in Jordan and Mozambique.

The disease is “posing a serious threat to production and export” of bananas, the fourth most important food crop for the world’s least developed countries and a

key revenue source for poor farmers, FAO said in a report.

There is no cure for TR4, which particularly affects the Cavendish variety that accounts for 47 per cent of world banana production – by far the biggest. The disease affects the trees but not the bananas themselves and the only solution is to cut down the trees, dig trenches between trees to prevent its spread and impose strict quarantine measures.

Top producers in Latin America, including the world’s main producer Ecuador, have so far not been affected but FAO warned there was a “potential” risk.

Gert Kema, director of the banana research programme at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, said the availability of bananas in Europe and the US had not been affected by the disease because their main suppliers were in Latin America and the economic impact has been focused mainly in Asia.

But he said the key problem was a “reluctance” in the industry to realise the scale of the problem and its excessive reliance on the Cavendish variety. The disease is soil-borne and the fungus can remain viable for decades and prevention includes foot baths and measures to avoid movement of infected soil and planting materials into and out of farms.

Sugar export sops will continue, India tells WTO

New Delhi, April 14: India will continue its export subsidies for sugar announced earlier this year, despite calls of a roll-back from countries such as Australia at the World Trade Organisation.

India has said that there was no evidence to suggest that the country's sugar subsidies drive down prices even as countries opposing the decision have claimed that such subsidies distort the global market.

"We have decided not to go back on the Government's decision to subsidise small quantities of sugar exports over the next two years. The decision was largely taken to support the domestic industry and in no way does it affect the global market," a Commerce Ministry official told *Business Line*.

In a submission made to the WTO, India has pointed out that last year when the country exported sugar, global prices actually increased. "Our sugar export is too little to make a difference in world prices. In fact, last year when we exported sugar, global prices went up instead of declining," the official said. In a submission to the WTO, India has clearly established that sugar export subsidies announced recently will not distort trade.

WTO meeting

Last month at a meeting of the WTO's Committee on Agriculture, Australia, Brazil and the US had expressed concerns that the Rs. 3,333-a-tonne subsidy on raw sugar exports announced in February would 'seriously distort trade'.

India, on its part, assured the WTO that export subsidies would not exceed \$80 million which would roughly translate into 1.4 million tonnes of subsidised sugar.

It said that the idea behind subsidising export of raw sugar was mainly to lower production of white sugar, of which there was a big surplus in the world market.

India's white sugar stock has been on the rise. At the beginning of the current sugar year (October-September 2013-14) stocks were at 8.8 million tonnes. Sugar output in the on-going year is expected to be 23.8 million tonnes, according to industry estimates, against a domestic demand of 22 million tonnes.

Kerala-based firm holding trials to make turmeric a food supplement



PJ Kunjachan, CMD, Arjuna Natural Extracts Ltd

Kochi, April 14: Arjuna Natural Extracts Ltd is pinning its hopes on clinical trials of the value-added properties of turmeric for its usage as a food supplement.

The Kerala-based company is carrying out human clinical trials on this spice with the support of Spices Board to promote its value-addition.

PJ Kunjachan, Chairman and Managing Director, said that he is confident of positive results and this would give a major boost to turmeric in developed countries in the food supplement category, which is growing at 15 per cent every year.

He said that turmeric was used usually as a natural colour pigment for food applications and there was no value addition even in the traditional ayurveda due to lack of awareness among people.

However, the good response received by the company for its turmeric extract – BCM 95 – from developed countries has prompted to go for clinical trials, he said. BCM 95 is a patented formulation of curcumin, the bio active concept of turmeric with anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties, he said. Turmeric can be converted as an ideal health food supplement with some value addition. Even the clinical trials conducted on BCM 95 in association with American and Australian universities have got good response for its usage in pharma and nutraceuticals, he said. Apart from turmeric extracts, the company also developed *amla*, green tea, pomegranate, ginger, Omega 3 fatty acid from fish oils, red spinach and mustard. Arjuna is the only company in India to develop Omega 3 fatty acid catering to the requirements of pharmaceutical companies both in India and overseas, he said. The company has invested Rs. 10 crore at its Keezhmadu R&D centre for the extraction of medicinal values for various botanicals included keezharnelli (*Phyllanthus Niruri*), insulin plant (*Costus Pictus*), *Bosewellia Serrata*. Arjuna was established in 1992 for spice-related products. Eventually it moved into studying medicinal value of spices and other botanicals. Today, it has 18 patented products out of which 11 have been commercialised globally. He said 95 per cent of the extracts have been exported to around 40 countries. On future plans, he said that the vision is to convert promising botanical extracts into drugs in association with big pharma companies.

Wheat procurement set to pick up in Punjab, Haryana

New Delhi, April 14: Procurement of wheat for the central pool stocks will gain pace this week on expected increase in market arrivals in Punjab and Haryana.

The harvest of wheat has been delayed by prolonged winter and unseasonal rains this year resulting in arrivals being limited so far in these States.

According to Food Corporation of India (FCI) officials, stocks so far in the Central pool stocks have been estimated at 14.7 lakh tonnes, mainly from Madhya Pradesh.

The wheat bought by the Government agencies, is about a tenth of the cereal procured last year.

Smaller quantities have been procured from Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh also, sources said. In Punjab and Haryana, officials said FCI is geared up to procure wheat from next week and is waiting for market arrivals.

Waiting for stock

Typically, wheat procurement season starts from April 1 in Punjab and Haryana.

The Centre intends to procure about 31 million tonnes (mt) of wheat this year, up from 25 mt procured last year.

Bulk of this would be from Punjab and Haryana.

“The harvest has begun in some areas and we expect arrivals to pick up next week,” said Raj Sood, a trader in Khanna market.

Sood expects the market arrivals this year to be 10-15 per cent higher than last year as an extended winter has boosted yields this year.

In Punjab, the procurement target is pegged at 11.5 mt, up from last year’s 10.95 mt.

Similarly in Haryana, the Government agencies expect about 6.5 mt this year, higher than last year’s 5.88 mt.

Meanwhile, in central Uttar Pradesh, arrivals have picked up and the private trade, led by exporters and domestic millers, is active.

Prices firm

This buying is seen holding the price firm and wheat is currently trading higher than the minimum support price levels in various markets.

The Centre had set a MSP of Rs. 1,400 a quintal for the current season.

The Government agencies have received good response for the wheat tenders opened on Friday with bids from foreign buyers topping the \$280 levels, much higher than the floor price of \$260/tonne.

23% of tea unsold at Coonoor sale

Coonoor, April 14: Due to inadequate demand, about 23 per cent of 13.14 lakh kg offered in Sale number 15 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction remained unsold despite holding on close to last week's price. This week's price of Rs. 73.44 a kg was the second lowest so far this calendar, next only to last week's Rs. 73.07. Even at this low price, the value of tea unsold totalled Rs. 2.44 crore.

Vigneshwar Speciality topped CTC market at Rs. 211 a kg. Homedale Estate and Hittakkal Speciality got Rs. 180 each, Deepika Supreme Rs. 178, Crosshill Estate Rs. 173 and Shanthi Supreme Rs. 172. Among orthodox teas, Chamraj topped at Rs. 235 a kg followed by Kairbetta Rs. 222, Kodanad Rs. 216, Havukal Rs. 203 and Prammas Rs. 200. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 51-54 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 110-140 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 62-66 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-175 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Export purchase was scanty and limited to plainer less-priced teas which also lost Rs. 3 a kg. High-priced teas lost Rs. 5-8 a kg as the demand for brighter-liquoring grades from upcountry buyers was less pronounced. Better mediums eased up to Rs. 4.

Spot rubber stays flat amidst holiday mood

Kottayam, April 14: Spot rubber continued to rule unchanged on Monday.

The market was totally in a holiday mood prior to Vishu. Sheet rubber finished steady at Rs. 145 a kg, according to traders. The grade was quoted unchanged at Rs. 142 by dealers. RSS 3 weakened at its April futures closed at ¥223.4 (Rs. 132.72) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 145 (145); RSS-5: 141 (141); Ungraded: 135 (135); ISNR 20: 137 (137) and Latex 60%: 119 (119).

Tobacco Board fixes Karnataka's crop size at 104 million kg

Bangalore, April 14: The Tobacco Board has fixed Karnataka's crop size at 104 million kg (mkg) for the crop year 2014-15.

The crop size for the State was fixed at the Board's 137th meeting held in Bangalore.

"We arrived at the figure keeping in mind the quantity marketed last crop year (2013-14). Due to the good quality of the crop, nearly 80 per cent of the 102 mkg marketed was exported," said a Tobacco Board official based in Mysore. Tobacco Board, for the past two years, has been maintaining the State's production at around 100 mkg.

The Board, while determining the crop size, took stock of the unauthorised crop as well. The meeting also decided to continue taking stringent measures to curb unauthorised cultivation.

Good rains

The entire tobacco growing regions in the State - Mysore, Hassan and HD Kote - have received good rains. Growers have already commenced nursery preparation, said T Vikram Urs, Secretary, Federation of Karnataka Tobacco Growers' Association.

Due to good rains, the area under tobacco is likely to increase this year. Last year, about 75,000 hectares came under tobacco. "This year, if we continue to get good rains at regularly interval, we may see total area touching 85,000 hectares," he said.

Auctions

Tobacco Board marketed 102.01 mkg against the authorised quantity of 99.38 mkg fixed for the crop year 2013-14. At the end of the 155 days of auction, about 102.01 mkg (10.33 lakh bales) of FCV tobacco variety were marketed in the State, with an average price of Rs. 129.24 a kg (Rs. 15 higher than last year). Of the total quantity marketed, bright grades comprised 25.17 mkg with an average price of Rs. 163.

Medium grades comprised 42.31 mkg at an average price of Rs. 145.38. Low grades comprised 34.52 mkg and were traded at an average price of Rs. 84.69/kg.

NCDEX to launch chilli contract with direct delivery facility



Mumbai, April 14: NCDEX will launch new chilli (teja) contract on Tuesday with an option to take delivery directly from the sellers' godown.

This will significantly save transportation cost.

Buyers can now be rest assured on quality of goods delivered meeting contract specifications since it entails compulsory quality check by exchange-approved assayer at the time of settlement, said NCDEX in a press release on Monday.

The hybrid chilli teja contract is launched with Khammam (Telangana) as the

delivery centre and Guntur (Andhra Pradesh) as the additional delivery centre.

The direct delivery mechanism is similar to the practice followed in the physical market. It essentially requires the buyer to arrange for assaying by the exchange-approved assayer at the seller's warehouse and lift the goods directly from the warehouse.

If the goods tendered for delivery fail to meet the contract specifications, it would constitute a seller's default and penalty is levied as per the rule book, it said.

Samir Shah, Managing Director, NCDEX, said the chilli teja variety constitutes about 35 per cent of the total chilli production in India and is very popular among the processors, exporters and consuming industries.

"With the NCDEX prices being a benchmark for the trade, the modified chilli contract which includes direct delivery would be beneficial to the trade and ensure consistent quality supply," he said.

Chilli is an important cash crop in India and about one million farmers are engaged in the production of this crop in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

This commodity constitutes 40 per cent of the total spice exports from the country volume wise and 20 per cent value wise.

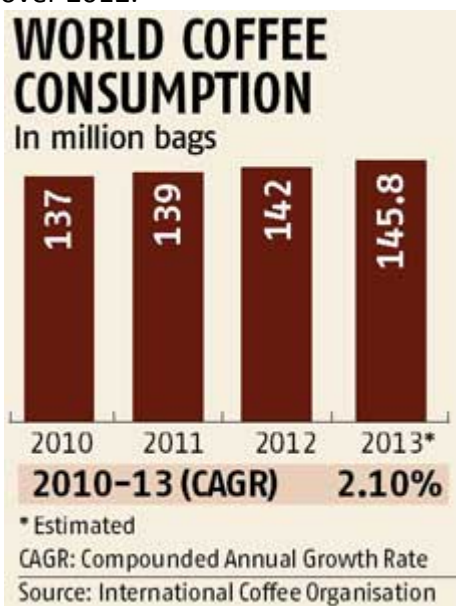
Business Standard

Supply problem ahead for coffee market

The global [coffee](#) market is heading for a supply deficit. Consumption is provisionally pegged at 145.8 million bags (60 kg each), while the production in crop year 2013-14 is estimated at 145.7 million bags.

The most important variable is the size of the 2014-15 [Brazilian crop](#) (the season started this month). The country is the world's top grower and exporter. Damage from the recent drought is yet to be officially quantified, said the [International Coffee Organisation](#) (ICO), in its latest report on the commodity.

The total consumption in calendar 2013 suggests a significant 2.7 per cent increase to 145.8 million bags, up from 142 million in 2012. This makes for annual growth of 2.1 per cent over the past four years. Much of the 2013 growth has come from traditional markets, particularly America, which has provisionally recorded a strong increase in consumption over 2012.



“Consumption in exporting countries continues to increase significantly, up to 44.7 million bags, or 30.6 per cent of the world total,” said ICO.

“Supply constraints in the coming year are likely to impact prices for both the grower and retail consumer. Indian growers have already seen a big jump in prices. Once inventories dry up and if Brazil reaps a lower crop, prices will further shoot up or stay steady,” said Ramesh Rajah, president, Coffee Exporters’ Association of India.

[Arabica](#) coffee futures prices on the [Intercontinental Exchange](#) (ICE), the leading network of regulated exchanges and clearing houses for financial and commodity markets, rallied to four-week highs of

above \$2 a pound on April 10, on uncertainty over output from Brazil. ICE Arabica coffee futures for May delivery recently moved up 3.4 per cent at \$2.0610 a pound, the highest level since March 13.

Consumption in emerging markets (EMs) is estimated at 26.8 million bags, slightly lower than 2012. However, most EMs are not ICO members and complete data for 2013 might not be available.

The overall trend in the coffee market is for traditional markets to account for a declining share of total consumption, mostly due to increased consumption in exporting countries, said ICO.

Ongoing uncertainty over the Brazilian crop caused significant fluctuations in prices during March, with monthly volatility of the ICO composite indicator price exceeding 10 per cent in both March and February. The daily price of the ICO composite ranged from a high of 177.29 cents a pound to a low of 153.33 in less than 10 days.

“It is difficult to estimate the extent of the damage from the drought and high heat until the crop is being harvested, although a recent study has referred to it as the largest climate anomaly since the ‘Black Frost’ of 1975, warning that damage to the 2015-16 crop could be even worse,” ICO said in its latest report.

The monthly average of 165.03 cents a pound was nearly 20 per cent higher than February and the highest monthly level in two years. International prices remain unsteady and sensitive to weather events in Brazil, said ICO.

Total exports in February reached nine million bags, up 4.3 per cent on February 2013. This brings the total volume of exports for the first five months of coffee year 2013-14 to 42.7 million bags, about 6.6 per cent lower than the same period in 2012-13.

Certified stocks on the London futures exchange continued to decline, from 404,000 bags in February to 317,000 in March. Certified Arabica stocks on the New York market also fell slightly, to 2.9 million bags.

Coconut oil market heats up, prices touch Rs 15,000/quintal

The wholesale price of [coconut](#) oil on Monday touched Rs 15,000 a quintal, thanks to acute shortage of the coconut and [copra](#). This triggered panic in the [coconut oil](#) market. Market sources expect further rise in prices of coconut, copra and coconut oil. In local markets, the average price of coconut increased to Rs 20 a piece. Extreme summer heat has also pushed demand for the tender coconut and this in turn has affected copra production in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The tender coconut is now being sold at Rs 30 a piece. In the retail market, coconut oil rose to Rs 165 a kg on Monday.

According to experts, the price of coconut oil has more than doubled in one year, as the price during April last year was Rs 6,300 a quintal. The price of copra on Monday was Rs 10,300 a quintal. Last year, the price of copra was Rs 4,425 a quintal.

Thalath Muhamed, former president, Cochin Oil Merchants Association, said shortage of copra and coconut in Kerala and Tamil Nadu had caused steep rise in their prices in the last three-four months. He said while Kerala saw a 50 per cent fall in [coconut production](#), there was a 40 per cent drop in Tamil Nadu. The Kochi market quoted a record price of Rs 12,200 a quintal of coconut in February. Prices of coconut oil rose Rs 1,100 for a quintal, while copra’s price has gone up by Rs 900 a quintal in just one week. However, there will be easing in prices of coconut and oil by next month, once the production season begins in Tamil Nadu, the largest coconut oil producer in the country.

According to Thalath, supply crunch is serious in all major producing centers of Kerala since coconut production is too low and shortage for climbers is a big issue. Besides, a major chunk of the produce is getting damaged in plantations.

The production during winter season was very low this time, hence the present supply crunch, said C D Joseph, a farmer. During December–January, the coconut production was down 50 per cent in major centers in Malabar, he added. He said the production in the northern Malabar region would pick up by next month, but the market is likely to soften

when Tamil Nadu suppliers become active. He said there was good demand in the market, especially from the industrial users and from overseas markets like West Asia.

Meanwhile, demand for [palm oil](#) has increased during the last one month, as the price is comparatively low, now. In wholesale trade, palm oil now quotes Rs 6,700-6,800 a quintal. So demand has picked up heavily during the last one month.

T D Reejan, a trader, told Business Standard there was an obvious shift in demand in favour of palm oil in the market, especially from household consumers and local banana chips producers. He said palm oil price would also move up in tandem with the coconut oil price.

"Fusarium wilt" threat to India's banana farming



Global food monitoring body the Food and [Agriculture](#) Organization of the United Nations ([FAO](#)) has warned India about a destructive [banana disease](#) - [Fusarium wilt](#) - which recently spread from Asia to Africa and the Middle East. The disease has the potential to affect Latin American countries as well.

Although there is no fear of transmitting its virus into humans, disease may destroy banana output in India which has already hit a five year low in 2012-13. Banana is a common fruit, rich in nutrients and easily accessible to almost every individual of India.

Popularly known as tropical race 4 (TR4) or Panama disease, the disease is posing a serious threat to production and export of the popular fruit, with serious repercussions for the banana value chain and livelihoods, FAO said.

In plants affected by the disease, the leaves grow pale resulting into [crop damage](#) which also affects crop germination.

Banana is the eighth most important food crop in the world and the fourth most important food crop among the world's least-developed countries.

"Any disease or constraint that affects bananas is striking at an important source of food, livelihoods, employment and government revenues in many tropical countries," said Gianluca Gondolini, Secretary of the World Banana Forum.

Turning pale: India's banana production	
Financial year	Output (mn tonnes)
2012-13	23.26
2011-12	26.46
2010-11	27.91
2009-10	24.73
2008-09	25.07

Source: National Horticulture Board

The Forum, whose Secretariat is based at FAO headquarters, promotes sustainable banana

production and trade. Fusarium wilt is caused by the fungus *Fusariumoxysporum* f.sp. cubense (Foc).

The disease is soil-borne and the fungus can remain viable for decades. Once the disease is present in a field, it cannot be fully controlled by currently available practices and fungicides. The best way to fight the disease is to prevent its spread, which includes avoiding movement of diseased plant materials and infected soil particles.

"The spread of Fusarium wilt banana disease could have a significant impact on growers, traders and families who depend on the banana industry," Fazil Dusunceli, a plant pathologist at FAO, said. "Countries need to act now if we are to avoid the worst-case scenario, which is massive destruction of much of the world's banana crop," said Dusunceli.

The disease was first reported in Panama, Central America, from there it moved to other regions through different races. Tropical Race 4, the most devastating, is present in Asia and recently has been reported in Mozambique and Jordan. There is a potential threat that Fusarium TR4 will also affect other countries in all producing / exporting regions including India, FAO's Gianluca Gondolini said.

"We need to raise awareness of this threat, coordinate efforts among countries and institutions for effective implementation of appropriate quarantine measures, and also work with banana producers, traders, plantation employees and small holder farmers to help to minimize the spread of the disease," Dusunceli said. He also highlighted the importance of research in better understanding the disease and developing alternative varieties that are disease resistant.

FAO's information note stresses the importance of using disease-free seedlings and avoiding movement of infected soil and planting materials into, and out of, farms, through transportation, visitors or other means.

"A concerted effort is required from stakeholders including the industry, research institutions, governments and international organizations to prevent spread of the disease," the note reads.

The banana crop is vulnerable to a number of diseases in various parts of the world, including the Black Sigatoka disease, *Xanthomonas* Wilt (BXW), Bunchy Top Disease (BBTD) and Fusarium Wilt, but Fusarium's soil-borne nature makes it especially challenging.

Among the solutions include implementation of phytosanitary measures to prevent the spread of the disease through agricultural practices, irrigation and drainage systems, transportation, vehicles, containers, tools or visitors. Preventive measures, including quarantines, the use of disease-free planting materials, prevention of movement of infected soil and planting materials into and out of farms, and disinfection of vehicles, capacity building in National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPO) in planning, extension and research, including the use of rapid and accurate diagnostic tools.

Punjab sugar output may touch 46 mn quintals

[Sugar output](#) in [Punjab](#) in the current crushing season is likely to touch 4.6 million quintals, compared to 4.3 million quintals in the corresponding period of last year.

According to data, the increase in areage and good recovery of sugar has resulted would result in the increase in production.

The total estimated area under [sugarcane](#) cultivation in Punjab stands at 96,000 hectares this year; last year it was 83,000 hectares. According to data, in the current crushing season, sugarcane output in the state was likely to touch 69.0 million quintals, as compared to 56.30 million quintals during the corresponding period last year.

Last year, the crop was good as 16 sugar mills in the state crushed 46.9 million quintal of sugarcane at a recovery rate of 8.80 per cent. The increase in output was mainly because of increase in area coupled with expectations of better recovery (of sugar) as compared to last year. This year, it is expected that 16 sugar mills in the state would crush 49.0 million quintals of cane.

The state has 9 mills in cooperative sector with installed capacity of 15,766 TCD and 7 mills in private sector having installed capacity of 31,000 TCD(tonnes crushed per day).

It is worth mentioning that in 2009-10, sugar output in Punjab touched a historic low of 1.8 million quintals owing to shortage in cane crop and lower crushing. But over the years, the state has laid emphasis on diversification which yielded results which led to increase in area.

Soyameal exports dips 8% to Rs 7,000 cr in Oct-Mar 2013-14

[Soyameal exports](#) fell by 8% to nearly Rs 7,000 crore in the first half of the current oil marketing year that started October last year due to lower [shipments](#), according to [trade data](#).

It stood at Rs 6,987 crore during October 2013-March 2014, against Rs 7,602 crore in the year-ago period.

Oil year runs from October-September.

In volume terms, exports fell by 24% to 19.65 lakh tonnes in the first six months of 2013-14 oil marketing year from 25.97 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period of previous year, according to Soyameal Processors Association of India.

At 5.87 lakh tonnes, Iran was the major importer of Indian soyameal in the first half of oil year.

India exported 1.25 lakh tonnes of soyameal to Belgium, 2.23 lakh tonnes to France, 1.13 lakh tonnes to Indonesia, 2.22 lakh tonnes to Japan, 1.6 lakh tonnes to Korea, 1.46 lakh tonnes to Thailand and 1.02 lakh tonnes to Vietnam.

During 2012-13 oil marketing year, India exported 3.4 million tonnes of soyameal, valued at Rs 10,591 crore.

India's soyameal exports, which constitute the bulk of oil meal exports, decreased by 27.50% to 2.32 lakh tonnes in March 2014 from 3.20 lakh tonnes a year earlier.

Soyameal exports fell by 10% in October-December quarter at 11.84 lakh tonnes.

However, shipments dropped sharply by nearly 50% to 7.8 lakh tonnes during January-

March quarter, against 15.17 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period due to lower availability of soyabean, which led to lower crushing.

Madhya Pradesh is the largest producing state of soyabean, which is grown in Kharif season.

Acute shortage of soybean seed this season

While the [Ministry of Agriculture](#) claims to have all contingency plans in place to beat the affect of possible lower [rainfalls](#) due to [El Nino](#) threat this monsoon season, India's largest oilseed crop faces even bigger threat of its productivity on [seed](#) supply shortage. India faces over 20% shortage of [soybean](#) seed supply this [kharif](#) season despite record high production in the last few years.

Data compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture showed that India requires 342,906 tonnes of quality hybrid soybean seeds for the 2014 kharif sowing season of which its availability stands at 273,289 tonnes resulting into shortage of 69,617 tonnes. The shortage, however, may affect India's soybean output. India's largest oilseed - soybean - is 100% kharif crop sown with the onset of monsoon season for harvesting in September - October.

A senior Agriculture Ministry official said, "There is no shortage of seed for cereals. However, availability of soybean seeds is lower by about 69,617 tonnes as compared to their requirement." In order to augment availability of soyabean seed in the country, he suggested states to take initiatives for awareness campaign, identification of arm saved seeds, use of seed planters and dibblers etc.

The official also advised states to ensure best use of available seeds of soybean and minimize their wastage. India's soybean output achieved lifetime high record in 2012-13 at 14.66 million tonnes as compared to 12.21 million tonnes in the previous year. With the government raising minimum support price (MSP) consistently to attract more farmlands towards soybean cultivation, shortage of seed may play a spoilsport. With the El Nino threat is feared to lower rainfalls, the seed shortage may become more severe in case replanting is required. El Nino causes uneven distributions or even decline in rainfalls.

J.S. Sandhu, Agriculture Commissioner in the Agriculture Ministry suggested state governments to tackle the problem of shortage of soybean seeds through minimizing wastage and expanding its efficient use in the field. In fact, the Ministry of Agriculture estimated lower soybean output this year at 12.45 million tonnes in the second advance estimates presented in February.

The output may fall further, in case seed shortage becomes more severe due to possibility of crop damage in uneven distribution of rainfalls this season. Guar is another crop which faces seed shortage this year. As per Agriculture Ministry estimates, India faces 674 tonnes of guar seed shortage this sowing season to meet its requirement at 7445 tonnes as against its current availability of 6771 tonnes. ends
