

Onion farmers for change, grape growers whining for status quo

This constituency in Nashik district does not occupy a particularly significant spot on the election map, but it presents a neat battle of “status quo vs. change” between its elite wine-grape farmers and onion growers.

While onion farmers are rooting for change, grape growers are largely status-quoist, favouring the Congress for fear that a Bharatiya Janata Party–led government will not encourage the nascent wine industry in the country.

Dindori, which lends its name to Sula’s red wine, the Dindori Shiraz, has more than 30 of the 75 wineries in the State and over 1,000 acres of vineyard.

While the industry was given a boost in 2004, post-recession, only the big wineries have survived. Small farmers stripped their vineyards of grapes after the downturn. The wine industry in the country is valued at Rs. 2,000 crore and Maharashtra dominates with 80 per cent of the share, according to All India Wine Producers’ Association member Rajeev Jadhav.

Across Dindori, vineyards are now dominated by rich farmers, who have more than 10 acres of land and the capacity to bear huge risks. “If the weather is right, the grapes will be perfect and you can get almost a Rs.1-lakh profit per acre,” Manik Patil, director of ND Wines and grape grower himself, told this reporter.

Talking of Thursday’s polls, Mr Patil says he is aware of the anti-incumbency feeling among people, but for his industry, a BJP- led government will offer little respite.

“Mr. Sharad Pawar [Agriculture Minister in the UPA government] understands farming and the requirements of the industry. We have worked together with him for over a decade,” he said.

“There is very little political support for the industry. A change in government will halt whatever was being done till now,” said Raju Sonawane, who owns 20 acres of vineyard.

In stark contrast, onion farmers in the district seek change, maintaining that the incumbent regime has been unable to control prices. In the middle of auctions on Monday at the Lasalgaon Agricultural Produce Market Committee, the largest onion market in the country, farmers complained about the unpredictability of prices.

“Journalists report on the issue only when prices are as high as Rs.5,000 a quintal, once a year. But nobody comes to our help when we have to sell onions for Rs.500,” said Waman Wadje.

Asked about their richer, wine grape growing counterparts, the onion farmers' anger is palpable. "Wine and wine grapes are for rich people. We find it difficult to break even most of the time," another farmer Anil Mate told *The Hindu*.

As the conversation turned, inevitably, to the elections, Sandeep Aire, a young farmer, says: "I feel a change is necessary. When there was a drought, nobody came to our help. It's time to give somebody else a chance."

However, onion and grape farmers alike maintain that the sitting MP and BJP candidate Harishchandra Chavan's contribution to their livelihood has been nil.

"We have not seen the MP in the constituency at all. How can he help us when he doesn't know what our problems are? But we are putting our trust in a Narendra Modi government. Will fuel prices, at least, come down?" asked onion farmer Dilip Shirsath.

The contest in Dindori is among Mr. Chavan, Bharti Pawar of the Nationalist Congress Party, Dinkar Patil of the Bahujan Samaj Party and Dnyaneshwar Mali of the Aam Aadmi Party.

Humble jackfruit offers hope amid climate worries

Researchers say the fruit grown could be a replacement for staple crops under threat from climate change

It's big and bumpy with a gooey interior and a powerful smell of decay — but it could help keep millions of people from hunger.

Researchers say jackfruit — a large ungainly fruit grown across south and south-east Asia — could be a replacement for wheat, corn and other staple crops under threat from climate change.

The World Bank and United Nations warned recently that rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall had already reduced yields of wheat and corn, and could lead to food wars within the decade.

Now researchers say jackfruit could help provide the solution.

Jackfruit is the largest known treeborne fruit. Even a small jackfruit weighs in at 5-7 kg, and farmers have recorded specimens of more than 45kg.

"It's a miracle. It can provide so many nutrients and calories — everything," said Shyamala Reddy, a biotechnology researcher at the University of Agriculture Sciences in Bangalore. "If you just eat 10 or 12 bulbs of this fruit, you don't need food for another half a day."

Efforts in India to exploit the fruit's potential coincides with a global push to expand food production, especially in developing countries which are expected to face growing challenges to feed their people in the coming decades.

Jackfruit can fill the gap on a number of counts, said Danielle Nierenberg, president of Food Tank, which works on sustainable agriculture.

“It is easy to grow. It survives pests and diseases and high temperatures. It is drought-resistant,” she said. “It achieves what farmers need in food production when facing a lot of challenges under climate change.”

The fruit is rich in potassium, calcium, and iron, said Ms. Reddy, making it more nutritious than current starchy staples.

Sri Lanka and Vietnam have established jackfruit industries but the fruit remains a hard sell in much of India. Although the fruit was seen as an important staple 40 or 50 years ago, it is now derided as a poor man’s fruit, said Shree Padre, a jackfruit farmer from Karnataka.

Only one or two commercial-scale jackfruit plantations are in current operation.

The down-market reputation is unwarranted, said Nyree Zyrega, a researcher on plant biology at the Chicago Botanic Garden, who has studied jackfruit in Bangladesh.

In addition to its high nutritional value, the fruit is very versatile, she said. The seeds, young fruit, and mature varieties are all edible. The timber from jackfruit trees is also valuable. “It is just not being utilised,” she said.

“I think it could play a much more important role in diets than it currently does and be a staple,” she continued. “Processing the fruit can be offputting, she conceded. The larger fruit give off a strong odour, and ooze a thick white sap. “It is not the easiest fruit,” Zyrega said.

But jackfruit, breadfruit, and other non-traditional crops are being re-examined because of fears about future food supply.

A report from the International Panel on Climate Change last month warned that heatwaves, drought, and unpredictable rainfall patterns were already cutting into yields of wheat and maize.

The World Bank earlier this month predicted food shortages could lead to wars within the next five to 10 years. — © **Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2014**

Italy mulls international arbitration over two marines

Italy is mulling international arbitration over its two marines accused of killing two Indian fishermen in 2012 as bilateral efforts have failed, Defence Minister Federica Mogherini said on Thursday.

“We are off the bilateral level, to raise the dispute to an international level: we are still willing to talk to the Indians”, but “we have no other option than resorting to international arbitration”, she told the Senate.

Rome does not consider the court proceedings in India “valid”, Mr. Mogherini was quoted as saying by ANSA news agency.

“We do not accept a (future) Indian trial whose validity we do not recognise,” she said.

“...we are mapping out a panel of experts under the leadership of a coordinator to pursue the new phase,” Mr. Mogherini said.

Marines Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone are awaiting trial over the killing of two Indian fishermen off Kerala coast in February 2012, sparking diplomatic tensions between India and Italy.

The marines, deployed on the Italian-flagged oil tanker MT Enrica Lexie, had contended they mistook the fishermen for pirates. They are now staying in the Italian Embassy in New Delhi awaiting trial.

Italy has requested Latorre and Girone be allowed to return home and the whole case be dropped.

Rome wants the marines to be tried in Italy, claiming the incident took place in international waters. However, New Delhi says it has the right to try the Italians as the victims were Indians on board an Indian fishing boat.

A special court on March 31 has fixed July 31 for hearing the case of the two Italian marines.

The Supreme Court had sought response from the Centre on the petition filed by the two marines challenging the jurisdiction of National Investigation Agency (NIA) to prosecute and probe the case.

The marines had moved the apex court more than a month after the Indian Government had decided to withdraw their prosecution under the stringent anti—piracy SUA law that attracts death penalty as maximum punishment.

The Centre on February 24 had told the apex court that the marines would not be prosecuted under the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Maritime Navigation And Fixed Platforms on Continental Shelf Act (SUA).

Salem Farmers Press NOTA

A large number of farmers residing in villages close to NH68 passing through Thalaivasal and Chinna Salem in Attur and Kallakurichi taluks, reportedly opted for NOTA in the LS polls held on Thursday.

The main grievance of the farmers, whose votes are in Kallakurichi constituency, is that were provided with inadequate compensation for the lands taken over for the four-laning of Salem-Chennai NH 68 and the issue has not been addressed so far.

According to C Selvaraj, District Secretary All India Kisan Mahasaba, about 10,000 farmers and their family members have been affected by the land acquisition and the inadequate relief extended to them.

After several protests, the government conducted a public hearing. But that too did not bring any relief to the farmers. A case is also pending in the High Court.

Of the 10,000, victims, 8000 are voters of Kallakurichi constituency and the rest are in Salem. In the Yercaud by election also the farmers pressed the NOTA only. As many as 4,431 voters hit the NOTA button in the Yercaud by-election.

Depleting Forest Cover, Mining Make Talcher A Boiling Cauldron

Heat generating from coal mines, depleting forest cover and thermal power plants have a cumulative effect of heat on normal life in Talcher coal belt this summer. Making things worse are frequent power-cuts and water scarcity.

For the last one month, the day temperature has hovered above 41 degree Celsius and according to the weatherman, the heat wave will continue in days to come. In the past, Talcher has also recorded temperature as high as 50 degree Celsius.

The heat wave condition persists throughout the day as the coal mines release the absorbed heat in the evening. After 10 am in the morning, the roads wear empty look. The worst sufferers are the coal mine workers who are forced to work even during the noon hours despite the Government orders of not employing them in the afternoon.

There are 10 mega open cast coal mines which dump coal in hundreds of acres in the open. The coal stock yards also absorb the sun ray and heat up the area. Besides mining activities, thousands of heavy vehicles plying to transport coal every day emit a huge amount of carbon dioxide in the air. The massive depletion of forest cover due to coal mining and other industries has resulted in

high temperature in the area, said environmentalists. The water bodies in more than 100 villages in Talcher have dried up due to massive coal mining.

Tall talks by MCL and State Government of providing water to people affected by coal mining and the industry has not materialised yet, the locals alleged.

In some areas, people took to the streets recently over poor water supply.

“Neither the district administration nor the MLC officials have this time provided us water. In areas where MLC is providing water through tankers, the arrangement does not cater to all,” said Susanta Pradhan, a resident of Vikrampur Colony.

In areas where MCL provides water, locals alleged that MCL engineers in connivance with contractors who have been assigned the job of distribution, supply less water than promised.

Adding to the trouble is unscheduled frequent power cuts by CESU. “All these have made life miserable in Talcher,” added Pradhan.

MINING EFFECT

- Ten mega open cast coal mines dump coal in hundreds of acres in the open
- Water bodies in more than 100 villages in Talcher have dried up due to massive coal mining
- Talcher has recorded highest temperature of 50 degree Celsius in the past

Farmers Miffed over Delay in Payment for Procured Paddy

The delay on the part of the Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd (Supplyco) to disburse the payment for the paddy procured from farmers of Kuttanad after the harvest held last month has landed the farmers in deep distress.

The farmers were supposed to get the payment from the beginning of March. The harvest was completed by the second week of March in most of the fields in Upper Kuttanad. But the full-fledged procurement process was taken off only in April.

The procurement is done directly from the farmers at the minimum support price declared by the Government of Kerala. The Kerala Cabinet had decided to hike the procurement price for paddy from `18 to `19 per kg. The procured paddy is then distributed to rice mills for de-husking. The rice is then returned by the mills to the Supplyco and later sold through the fair price shops in the state to the general public.

The farmers are given receipts for the paddy purchased which would be reimbursed later.

The one-rupee hike was made applicable for paddy already procured during the current season for which the payments have not been made. The Centre has been offering a procurement price of

₹13.10 per kg for paddy. The current state subsidy for procuring paddy has been increased from ₹4.90 to ₹5.90. Meanwhile, the Supplyco officials said that the payment for paddy procured till the end of February has already been made.

“As many as ₹26 crore has been disbursed so far. The procurement process for this season is not yet over,” an official said. Procurement of paddy is over from the fields in Vaikom and Changanassery. The paddy marketing officials acknowledged that as much as 150 loads of paddy are yet to be procured from the fields. “Procurement is done from only those producers who have registered with Supplyco. The absence of a strong open market here makes this the only solution for farmers. Many people have registered with the Supplyco this time and the procurement will go to a record high if done properly,” said Shaji Cherian, a farmer from Vaikom.

“Most of the farmers in Kuttanad are waiting for the payment to invest it on the next crop. Many have taken loans at high interest rates also. Any delay in getting the amount due to them will affect the farmers massively,” he added.

Fertile Lands Left Unused for Want of Water

Kovur constituency in Nellore district, which was carved in 1952 is not only known for its fertile agriculture lands but also for the number of communist and social movements like anti-arack movement, Podupulakshmi and literacy movements.

Alaganipadu village in the constituency is the birth place of communist leader Putchalapalli Sundaraiyah and many farmer movements were taken up here but the fate of the downtrodden communities has not witness any social or economic uplift over the years.

The constituency has been represented by political stalwarts but no development has been witnessed in the lives of the farming community, agriculture labour, artisans, downtrodden communities and fishermen.

The prestigious Kovur Sugar factory, established under cooperative sector, is running in heavy losses and this has left sugarcane farmers in distress. The fate of the factory workers also hangs in balance as they have not been getting salaries since the past one year. The factory was closed long back but was reopened in 2004. However, the management could not generate profits.

Promising development of the area and to provide jobs, the Central government acquired vast chunks of land from farmers in Racharlapadu and Redgadichelika villages in Kodalavuru to set up Indian Farmers Fertilisers Corporation (IFFCO) factory but it did not take shape. In 2005, then chief minister the late YSR decided to set up a Kisan SEZ on those lands but that too did not see the light of the day.

The failure of the administration in supplying water for agriculture through Kaligiri reservoir or other irrigation canals is leading to heavy crop losses every year.

Fishermen Most Affected By Industrial Pollution

Kakinada Rural constituency, which came into existence during 2009 elections as part of reorganisation process, lacks development despite its close proximity to Kakinada town. People face severe problems due to industrial pollution, lack of drinking water and inundation of low-lying areas during monsoon.

Many of the industries located in Kakinada Rural mandal fall under the jurisdiction of the Kakinada Rural Assembly segment. The pollution and effluents from these industries have become major health hazards for the people in the constituency.

Fishermen are the worst affected due to pollution as they not only are exposed to the dangerous health hazards but also stand to lose their livelihood due to contaminated waters.

Oil packaging industries, fertiliser manufacturing units, chemical industries and others are adding to the pollution and creating panic among the residents of the locality.

Frequent leakages of petroleum oil, LPG and ammonia from the pipelines and fire mishaps in the industries have become a common sight in the mandal.

The local MLA and the officials of the Pollution Control Board (PCB) have failed to combat the problems arising due to such leakages.

Many of the industries located in the constituency release their effluents into open drains which finally get deposited into the sea resulting in the destruction of the marine wealth.

Meanwhile, people in villages like Turngi, Subbaraopeta, harbourpeta, Vakalapudi, Valasapakala, Indrapalem and Cheediga suffer from lack of potable water. Residents of Karapa and other mandals have been demanding proper medical facilities. Many areas in villages like Cheediga, Swamy Nagar, Ramanaiahpetta, Sarpavaram and Timmapuram face the problem of inundation.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University plans to organise an Agri Business Idol Camp on May 7.

The camp is being organised to encourage students develop and grow new agri ventures, create awareness about the opportunities available at the Business Planning and Development (BPD) unit and build a brand mileage for NAIP (National Agriculture Imagery Program).

Students of TNAU and its affiliated colleges and alumni of the farm varsity residing in Tamil Nadu can participate in the camp.

Participants need not pay any registration fee. The camp will be conducted at Farmers' Residency, Directorate of Agribusiness Development, TNAU, a farm varsity release said.

Resources would be provided to the best venture to assist the team pursue the launch of its agribusiness project and thereby link it with the appropriate BPD unit.

Five students/teams with innovative ideas will be invited to New Delhi and be given award. Further, the teams will have an opportunity to meet and network with key policy makers, mentors, and successful entrepreneurs who will serve as judges for the competition.

Interested candidates can download the registration form by clicking on www.bpdtnau.org and submit their application through email to business@tnau.ac.in by April 28.

US scientists develop butter from rice bran oil



Chennai, April 24:

A process developed by scientists in the US to make a butter-like product from rice bran oil could come in handy for the Indian edible oil industry.

The extract has been derived by scientists of the Agricultural Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture. The product, somewhat resembling peanut butter, can be a partial replacement for margarine, butter or even shortening, says a release from the

service. Quoting Erica L Bakota, chemist of the research service, the statement says that the extract's texture and composition are unique.

During preliminary experiments at the office of the research body, Bakota and her colleagues used the extract instead of butter for granola (a breakfast item resembling muesli) and white bread.

But why rice bran?

Feedback from those who sampled the product showed that there was no change in the taste or texture of granola or bread. An advantage with the rice bran product is that it is free of trans fatty acids, which increase the risk of heart attacks. The product also has a longer shelf life, unlike butter.

The extract consists of unrefined rice bran oil and its natural wax, which is used in confectionary items.

It also contains vitamin E, and low levels of bad or LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol.

Another feature of the product is that it is produced by using low temperatures.

Bakota, along with her team, is trying to get a patent for the procedure while looking for collaborators interested in finding new uses for it.

Indian potential

India has a tremendous potential to produce rice bran oil and other by-products with paddy output topping 150 million tonnes.

Currently, production of rice bran oil in the country is nine lakh tonnes against a potential of over 15 lakh tonnes.

New uses such as butter are likely to encourage more productive use of rice bran oil in the country.

Despite long term bearishness, India can double maize exports



India produces about 23 million tonnes (mt) of maize annually, consumes 19 mt and exports 4 mt. The average yield is 2.5 tonnes/hectare. Our production, consumption and exports are under careful watch internationally by other competing origins (the US, Brazil, Argentina, Ukraine) because India's export intensity can scale up competitively over the next few years to nearby destinations such as the Far-East and West Asia.

It will be the Indian David that will compete against Goliaths of world corn trade. The US is more concerned as its share in world corn trade has declined from 63 per cent in 2000 to 36 per cent in 2014 with other nations boosting their output.

Indian agricultural exports topped \$45 billion this year from about \$20 billion in 2009-10. Rupee depreciation has also helped.

A Crisil report of March said: "Agriculture growth picked up to 3.6 per cent per year during the 10 fiscals from 2005 to 2014, from 2.9 per cent 10 years prior to 2005 and compared to sub-1 per cent in the 10 fiscals ending 2004. Agricultural investment, fertiliser-use intensity and credit growth stand out as three factors that improved markedly in the past 10 fiscals and boosted agricultural

growth.” This statistical narration of upward trajectory can be corroborated by expansion in rice output in eastern India, higher wheat production in MP, Gujarat and Bihar, cotton revolution and Bihar’s contribution to maize output.

Domestic demand vs export

At a recent conference on maize in New Delhi last month, Indian speakers were hopeful that with the current tempo maize production will double to 40-45 mt in next five years through a combination of higher yield (4-5 tonnes/hectare) and preferably, without significantly enlarging the acreage. (US’ yield is maximum 10 tonnes/hectare while Latin American range is 5-6 tonnes). Indian export surplus would be 7-8 mt.

Foreign delegates referred to declining usage/expenditure on gasoline in the US implying lower ethanol consumption, thereby leading to softening in corn prices. (In the US, 33 per cent corn out of total production of 353 mt is used for ethanol) .

US’ shale gas will also reduce prices of crude oil. Lower international energy values also mean lower corn prices. The US is simultaneously strategising shipments through shorter sea voyage channels for economising freight to neutralise India’s geographical advantage in Far-East/West Asia/South Asia, etc.

Thus India will be competing at bottom line values with the US, Brazil, Argentina, and Ukraine which, respectively, produce and export about 353 mt (export 42 mt), 70 mt (export 21 mt) and 24 mt (export 13mt), 30mt (export 14mt).

In short, the indirect message is that India should step up its domestic usage if it wants to increase maize production instead of relying on exports.

In a bearish scenario, India may also have to discount for quality too because of unhygienic storage practices in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, etc.

Demand for feed

Despite India’s growing prosperity of middle class, traditional demographic propensity is for vegetarian diet.

Doubling maize demand as feed ingredient in short span may not be possible.

Should the production increase, Indian domestic prices will be resilient to adapt to market dynamics.

Freely marketable

Maize trade is market-centric with least intervention from Government.

Minimum Support Price of this coarse cereal generally remains a paper price and only in rare cases and years, the Food Corporation of India procures not more than half a million tonne. Even the inclusion of maize/coarse grain in Food Security Act is thus of little relevance.

Export is completely free from any quotas/registration procedure. Prices are fairly transparent in spot and future markets. Traders can trade as per their perceptions.

India-based MNCs can also hedge exposure both in India and through their parent counterpart abroad. No doubt, India has to expedite building up safe storage/handling capacities for ensuring quality premium on grains.

In this shackless environment which trade adores, additional export of about 3-4 mt (total 7-8 mt) of maize in world market of 115-120 mt can be realised in the short term whatever be the demand-supply matrix of major competing nations even though India lacks economies of scale at this point of time.

With coconut oil hovering near a high of Rs. 200/kg, threat of imports looms



Erode, April 24:

Coconut oil from other countries such as the Philippines may soon find its way into the country, thanks to its soaring prices.

Import ban

“The Government has banned import of coconut oil to help coconut farmers. In Kangeyam and other places, on Thursday, price of the coconut oil was up at Rs. 2,350 for 15 kg loose pack (Rs. 196/kg in wholesale market). But palm kernel and palm oil are selling below Rs. 75/kg.

“Coconut oil is available at a low price in other countries. If the situation continues, it will force the Government to lift the ban on imports,” said RM Palanisamy, a coconut oil trader of Erode.

Farmers hoarding

He said that the current rise in coconut oil prices is artificial. Farmers have exhausted copra stocks and noticing the increasing price, many have purchased huge quantities of coconuts from Kerala and Karnataka to convert them into copra.

Some farmers have hoarded huge quantity of copra expecting further increase in copra price.

On Thursday, copra was sold at Rs. 11,000 a quintal in open market and only a limited quantity was available for sale.

Edible copra was sold at Rs. 12,000-13,000 a quintal.

Crushers said that they are have huge stock of coconut oil, but sales are poor.

Only negligible quantity of coconut oil has been sold.

The sale of palm oil has trebled and is selling at Rs. 6,300 a quintal.

Hoping for recovery, rubber sellers stay off

Kottayam, April 24:

SELLERS STAY OFF RUBBER MARKET

Physical rubber prices improved on Thursday. The market gained strength mainly on covering purchases as sellers stayed away expecting a short term recovery in the commodity. There were no fresh enquiries from the tyre sector. ISNR 20 and latex ended flat amidst low demand. Sheet rubber was quoted firm at Rs. 139 (138) a kg by traders. The grade improved to Rs. 138.50 (138) and Rs. 135.50 (135) a kg, respectively, according to Rubber Board and dealers. May contracts closed at Rs. 138.44 (137.60), June at Rs. 140.51 (139.52), July at Rs. 141.50 (140.36) and August at Rs. 139.50 (139.82) a kg, while the rubber mini May contracts increased to Rs. 138.50 (137.16) and June to Rs. 141.50 (139) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. . Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4 139 (138); RSS-5 135 (134); ungraded 129 (128); ISNR 20 126 (126) and Latex 60% 110 (110). Aravindan

Business Standard

Integrated agri-infra scheme envisages Rs 56,000 cr investment in 12th plan

Scheme also defines integrated 'value chain' in agricultural marketing so as to facilitate proper flow of subsidy to entrepreneurs



duplexes in coimbatore

Silver Springs Near RS Puram, Cbe 3BHK Row House @ Rs.70 Lac Onwards*silversprings2.com/Duplex-Builders

The [Integrated Scheme](#) for [agricultural marketing](#) proposed by the department of [agriculture](#) has estimated an investment requirement of Rs 56,000 crore for marketing infrastructure and value chain development during the twelfth plan period. The investments are intended for developing agriculture marketing infrastructure, secondary agriculture and policy for internal and external trade.

This integrated scheme will encompass all other existing marketing infrastructure schemes operational right now Accordingly, the scheme envisages a requirement of 35 million MT storage capacities during XII Plan period based on the recommendation of the [Planning Commission](#) Working Group on Warehousing Development and Regulation.

Various activities to be developed under market infrastructure are developing infrastructure for effectively managing marketable surplus of agriculture including horticulture and of allied sectors including dairy, poultry, fishery, livestock and minor forest produce. Besides, basic infrastructure, the scheme will promote innovative and latest technologies in agricultural marketing infrastructure, encouraging private and cooperative sector investments.

Besides, storage, infrastructure facilities will be developed for grading, standardization and quality certification of agricultural produce with the objective of ensuring a price to the farmers commensurate with the quality of the produce, promoting pledge financing and marketing credit, negotiable warehousing receipt system and promotion of forward and future markets to increase farmers' income.

The scheme has also defined integrated 'value chain' in agricultural marketing so as to facilitate proper flow of subsidy to the entrepreneurs. Accordingly, integrated value chain denotes a set of inter-linked chain of activities that bring specific agricultural commodity / commodities from harvesting till retailing and for the purpose of this sub scheme may include those activities where value is added to the produce without change in the form of the produce.

One of the focuses of the agriculture marketing subsidy is to transfer direct benefit to the farmers, integrated value chain projects involving activities from post-harvest stage to the stage of primary processing only are to be covered.

Another focus will be to push for pledge finance to the farmers to prevent them from distress sell and to keep their produce in the storage infrastructure. In fact those who will keep the produce in storage infrastructure will be eligible for pledge loan on hypothecation of their produce.

In order to discourage distress sale by farmers and to encourage them to store their produce in warehouses against warehouse receipts, benefit of applicable interest subvention will be available to banks for extending credit support to small and marginal farmers having Kinas Credit Card against negotiable warehouse receipt for keeping their produce in warehouses.

Potato prices spurt as bad weather threatens output

In Amritsar mandis, average price was Rs 1,000 a quintal on Tuesday from Rs 800 a quintal last Saturday

Dilip Kumar Jha | Mumbai



The price of [potato](#) has jumped 25 per cent in the past four days, due to reports of massive damage of the harvested crop from inclement weather.

“There has been intermittent rainfall, followed by hailstorms and rapid increase in temperature, which reduced supplies to mandis and damaged the harvested output,” said R P Gupta, director, National Horticulture Research & Development Federation.

In the Amritsar mandis, the average price was Rs 1,000 a quintal on Tuesday from Rs 800 a qtl last Saturday. In Rajkot, the price has jumped 17 per cent in four days, to trade at Rs 1,550 a qtl. In the Delhi mandi, potato arrivals fell to 12,547 qtls on Wednesday, as compared to 15405 qtls four days earlier; in Kolkata, to 2,160 qtls from 2,700 qtls earlier.

Arrivals in major mandis across the country have fallen 25-30 per cent. Most of the unharvested crop in the field is damaged through excess soil moisture; by the time the mud dries, it leaves dark spots, which also reduces shelf life.

The quantity hitting the mandis is being bought largely by bulk consumers, who first store it in a closed environment, to reduce moisture. Spreading in the open air for a short period before dispatch to cold storages also helps segregate good quality from the spoilt one. “There has been at least 30 per cent reduction in storage this year. Last year by this time, bulk consumers had filled their storages; only 65-70 per cent of storage is full this year,” said Gupta.

India produced 44.7 million tonnes from 1.96 mn hectares in 2012-13. This year, output is expected to be 15-20 per cent lower.

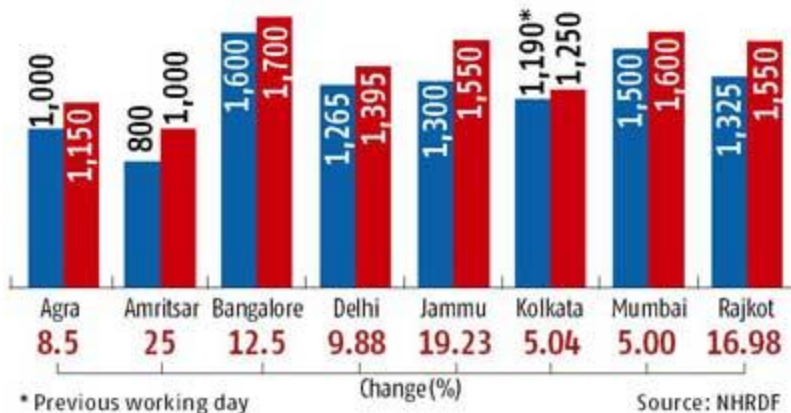
“The government is aware of the lower crop estimates. Therefore, it should encourage sowing of kharif potato to reduce the shortage and the fear of unprecedented price escalation,” said a senior official of the Central Potato Research Organisation.

WEATHER COULD PLAY SPOILSPORT

City-wise potato prices

■ April 19 ■ April 22

(₹/quintal)



In India, potato is sown in both kharif and rabi seasons. Available between August and October, the kharif produce accounts for 15-20 per cent of annual output.

The other 80-85 per cent comes into the market between mid-December and mid-April, considered rabi produce. The rabi potato is stored till November and made available for domestic and export markets.

Wheat procurement in 2014-15 may slip, says food secretary



The government on Tuesday said its [wheat procurement](#) for the 2014-15 marketing year (ending March 2015) is likely to be below the last year's level of 25 million tonnes (mt) due to poor quality of the crop. However, for a government which has been battling lack of storage space during the ongoing wheat procurement season, this has come as a blessing in disguise.

"Last year, FCI (Food Corporation of India) had procured 25 mt of wheat. As per my own assessment, this year's overall wheat procurement would be lower than the last year's," Food Secretary Sudhir Kumar said at a seminar on flour mills.

Good purchases by private millers might also restrict government procurement to below 25 mt, another official said. If procurement drops below 25 mt, it would be the lowest ever wheat purchased by government agencies in the past three years. However, low wheat procurement would not hamper India's public distribution system, as the government still holds over 48 mt grains (wheat and rice) in its warehouses. The government had set a target of purchasing 31 mt wheat in 2014-15.

According to food ministry data, FCI and state government-owned agencies have procured 7.5 mt wheat so far this year, significantly lower than 11.96 mt purchased in the year-ago period. FCI along with state agencies have around 80 mt of storage capacity with them.

The wheat marketing year runs from April to March but FCI's procurement operation gets completed in three months.

According to food ministry officials, the pace of wheat procurement in Punjab is very slow due to delayed harvesting in the state,

following recent unseasonal rains.

FCI has been able to procure 940,581 tonnes in Punjab this year, against 4.3 mt in the same period last year, showed official data. Wheat growers in Punjab have complained of non-procurement of crop by procurement agencies, citing higher moisture content. In Haryana, procurement is down marginally at 3.2 mt as of Tuesday, against 3.7 mt a year ago. Procurement in Madhya Pradesh is at 3.17 mt against 3.6 mt during the year-ago period.

Procurement in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and other growing states is trailing behind the last year's level.

[Wheat production](#) in India, the world's second largest grower, is earlier pegged at 95.6 mt for 2013-14 (July-June), but bad weather during the harvesting stage is expected to drag it down by three-four mt. The production stood at 93.5 mt in the previous year.

Highlighting the importance of fortified wheat flour (enriched flour) to address malnutrition in the country, Kumar said the flour milling industry should take proactive steps to promote the product in the country.

"About 30 per cent of world flour is fortified. It is very less in our country. There is nutrition deficiency not only in poor section but also among affluent class," he said.

Coconut Board clears 30 projects in four south states

These would come up in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra



[Coconut Development Board](#) (CDB) today cleared 30 projects across four states with an outlay of Rs 87.97-crore with a subsidy of Rs 11.15 crore.

A meeting of the [Project Approval Committee](#) (PAC) on [Technology Mission on Coconut](#) (TMOC) held here has approved three research projects, one project on pest and disease management and 26 projects on processing and product diversification. These would come up in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

Out of 26 projects on processing and product diversification, 12 projects were exclusively on [Neera](#) processing and packing units.

All the coconut producing companies of Kerala registered with CDB submitted their project proposal on processing of Neera and value-added products, and were sanctioned with an outlay of Rs 59.82 crore covering a subsidy of Rs 6 crore.

The output of Neera expected from these units is 147,000 litres per day, of which 60 per cent will be processed and packed as nutritious natural Neera drink and 40 per cent as Neera honey, sugar and other value-added products, said [TK Jose](#), chairman of CDB.

Three integrated coconut processing units, six desiccated coconut powder manufacturing units, one coconut chips unit, one ball copra unit, two coconut shell charcoal units and one coconut shell-based activated carbon unit have been sanctioned.