

## **Helpline for cattle farmers yet to get good response**

*Poll code hampers publicity drive plan*

Call it a side effect of the Lok Sabha elections, especially the model code of conduct. The exclusive helpline for cattle farmers, launched in February on a pilot basis to provide medical services, counselling and information on various veterinary schemes, has evoked poor response.

The helpline, a first such initiative in the country, was launched by the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department in the four districts of Bangalore Rural, Mysore, Belgaum and Gulbarga on February 11. The service, launched under the Central scheme of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, was to be extended to the entire State in May.

### **Two calls a day**

According to sources, the helpline, which has 30 lines, has been getting an average of two calls a day. A veterinary expert associated with the project told *The Hindu* that the declaration of the elections and the implementation of the model code of conduct clashed with the schedule of a series of supportive measures that was supposed to have been taken for publicising the helpline, and attributed this as the main reason for the poor response.

### **‘Awareness lacking’**

“The problems of dairy farmers are aplenty. But they don’t know that such a helpline exists to support them. We need to make efforts and create awareness among cattle farmers about the helpline,” he said.

According to him, various events were scheduled to be taken up till the end of March to create awareness among farmers about the service. But the declaration of the elections and the clamping of the code of conduct in March came in the way of initiating such supportive measures.

The department is expected to focus again on initiating supportive measures after the model code of conduct is lifted. The process of extending the project to the entire State, however, may have to be put off by a couple of months as the publicity exercise would take time, the expert said.

### **Call centre**

The helpline (080-23417100) has been linked to a call centre in Bangalore that is managed by veterinary surgeons and trained technical staff.

The staff would not only provide information, but also transfer the calls to local officials and doctors if medical service is needed. Veterinarians would visit the house of the caller within 24 hours.

For the present, the helpline would confine to only counselling, grievance redressal and providing information related to various schemes as the system needs to be stabilised for providing medical services.

### **Relief for groundnut, sunflower farmers**

After getting feedback that prices of groundnut pods and sunflower seeds might fall below the minimum support price, the State Agriculture Department and the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) have decided to take market intervention.

A survey conducted by Agriculture department and NAFED, sources said, had given clear indication that farmers would not be able to sell their produce above minimum support price declared by the government during current Rabi season.

The Odisha State Cooperative Supply and Marketing Federation Limited (MARKFED), the State Level Supporter of NAFED, would enter the market for undertaking Price Support System operation.

As per the action plan prepared by MARKFED, procurement of groundnut pods estimated at 28,300 MT will be taken up in different locations and that of sunflower seeds of 500 MT at the primary agricultural credit society (PACS) level in six districts of the State such as Puri, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Balasore and Bhadrak.

## **Waiting game**

“The cost of commodities to be procured and incidentals thereof has been estimated at Rs.127 crore,” a top State government official said, adding that farmers should not be in a hurry to dispose of their produce at lower than minimum support price.

Groundnut crop is being grown in nearly 16,000 hectares in the State.

## **Agricultural varsity moots collective action to control bud rot disease in coconut**

Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) has recommended collective action by farmers for the control of bud rot, a fatal fungal disease to which coconut palms are susceptible during the monsoon.

The university has mooted the concept of Compact Area Group Approach (CAGA) to promote and sustain group action in a contiguous area for scientific management of the disease and preventive action before the onset of monsoon. “Lack of awareness about the disease and its management practice are responsible for the spread of bud rot. Preventive steps adopted by a few farmers here and there are ineffective, as coconut is cultivated almost throughout the State. Therefore, we recommend CAGA as a durable method of control,” P. Rajendran, KAU Vice-Chancellor, said.

“Though the infectious outbreak was reported from the foothills and valleys of the Western Ghats, the entire State has to be on guard against the spread of this disease,” Dr. Rajendran said. Studies conducted by the university has revealed that the disease caused

by the fungus *Phytophthora palmivora* is more severe in the highlands (50 per cent) followed by midlands (30 per cent) and lowlands (10 per cent). Incessant rain with strong wind, high relative humidity (adjoining forest area), lesser sunshine hours, and overcast sky favours the spread of bud rot. Late last year, a team of KAU scientists and officers from the Department of Agriculture visited the infested areas and conducted detailed analysis. A survey by the team found that the disease was spreading at an alarming rate in areas bordering the Western Ghats in Kannur, Kozhikode, and Wayanad districts.

The team observed that discontinuation of lime application, a traditional method of controlling soil acidity, had increased the vulnerability to the disease. Preventive and curative measures such as prophylactic treatment, control of soil acidity, and application of fertilizers and micronutrients were proposed. KAU Director of Research T.R.

Gopalakrishnan said the technology for combating the disease developed by Krishi Vikas Kendra, Kannur, had proved successful in the management of the disease. The technique involves the use of fungicides such as mancozeb and bordeaux mixture in specified manner. The university has also advocated the constitution of a monitoring committee comprising agricultural officers, farmers, panchayat members, and coconut technicians for early detection of bud rot disease and its management.

## **370 lakh tonnes sugarcane crushed this season in State**

The quantity of sugarcane crushed in the State in 2013-14 is more than that crushed during the last season, despite a delayed start this time owing to growers' protests demanding judicious price for the produce.

Mills in the State have crushed 370.08 lakh tonnes of sugarcane and produced 406.62 lakh tonnes of sugar, with an average recovery of 10.98 per cent, as on April 15, 2014 (from October 1, 2013). In 2012-13, 328.96 lakh tonnes of sugarcane was crushed with an average recovery of 10.36 per cent, according to information available from city-based S. Nijalingappa Sugar Institute, the erstwhile Karnataka Sugar Institute.

As of now, there are 72 sugar mills in the State — two in the public sector, 13 in the co-operative sector, seven in the co-operative sector that have been leased to private managements, 38 in the private sector and 12 mills are not working.

As on April 15, the two mills in the public sector crushed 4.66 lakh tonnes of sugarcane and produced 43,718 tonnes of sugar, with 9.37 per cent recovery. The 13 mills in the co-operative sector crushed 62.433 lakh tonnes of sugarcane and produced 6.96 lakh tonnes of sugar, with an average recovery rate of 11.15, while the seven mills in the co-operative sector that have been leased to private managements crushed 30.243 lakh tonnes of sugarcane and produced 3.25 lakh tonnes of sugar, with an average recovery rate of 10.75. The 38 private sector mills produced 30 lakh tonnes of sugar by crushing 272.743 lakh tonnes of sugarcane, with an average recovery rate of 11.

The recovery rate registered by the seven co-operative sugar mills leased to private managements is less compared with that of the co-operative sector mills and private sectors mills.

Four mills registered sugar recovery rate of more than 12 — Venkateshwara Power Project (private) – 12.56, Halsiddhanath Sahakara Sakkare Karkhane, Nippani, – 12.52, Shree Doodhaganga Krishna Sahakara Sakkare Karkhane, Chikkodi, – 12 per cent, and Parrys Sugar Industries, Haliyal, – 12.

On the other hand, M.P.M. Ltd., Bhadravati, a public sector mill, and Pandavapura Sahakara Sakkare Karkhane, a co-operative sector mill, registered sugar recovery rates of 8.32 and 8.54 respectively.

## **Protest**

Though Karnataka has occupied a prominent place in the sugarcane sector in the country and is the third largest producer — with yield ranging from 50 tonnes per hectare to 100 tonnes a hectare, growers have not been able to get judicious price for the produce.

Sugarcane growers all over the State had launched a struggle demanding that the government fix the State Advisory Price at Rs. 3,000 a tonne well before the commencement of the crushing season for 2013-14.

Their agitation was intensified during the winter session of the State legislature in Belgaum during November-December. A debt-ridden grower, Vithal Arabhavi,

committed suicide at the protest site outside the Suvarna Soudha on the third day of the winter session.

Hours after the grower's death, the Siddaramaiah government announced an incentive of Rs. 150 per tonne of sugarcane in addition to the Rs. 2,500 per tonne that was already fixed.

But hardly any sugar mill in the State is willing to pay Rs. 2,650 per tonne. Farmers said none of the mills in Belgaum district was willing to pay more than Rs. 2,000 per tonne, and the government does not want to take on the powerful sugar lobby.

The farmers do not rule out launching a fresh agitation to get the promised price, soon after the results of the parliamentary elections are out.

### **Rescued nocturnal primate handed over to Forest Department**

A Slender Loris, a nocturnal primate found in thick forests, was rescued by members of New World Animal Rescue Charitable Trust, Pallikonda, from an illegal trader near the New Bus Stand here recently.

#### **Treatment**

The animal was treated by a veterinary doctor of the Trust and handed over to the Forest Department on Sunday.



According to S. Sugumar, founder and chairman of the Trust, on getting on information that a person was using the animal for illegal business near the New Bus Stand, he and other members of the rescue team went there. On seeing the team members, the man abandoned the animal and fled. The team rescued the animal, got it treated by the veterinary doctor, and handed it over to the Forest Department officials from Odugathur at the Trust's office in Pallikonda on Sunday. Forest officials M. Govindan and V. Subramani received the animal.

### **Jackfruits sold in a hurry in Alangudi**



With the harvest season at its peak during the close of this month, jackfruit cultivators have been working overtime to sell their produce through the commission agents without any delay.

The hurry for marketing the jackfruit just precedes the harvest of mango. As the arrivals of mango will directly affect the sale of jackfruit, the commission agents and the jackfruit

cultivators have been working overtime in and around Alangudi in the district to realise maximum sales turnover.

All the 30-odd villages around Alangudi account for a number of jack trees and in fact, the trees form the boundary for several houses.

The produce is marketed through the commission agents who auction the fruits fixing the price based on its size and deliciousness.

The poor irrigational facility and the failure of monsoon had resulted in a poor yield this season, say a cross section of farmers. Kamaraj, one of the farmers said that several seasoned trees were dead because of the consecutive failure of monsoon for the past two years.

This has resulted in the rise in the prices of jack fruit. “A fruit which was sold for Rs. 100 last year now costs Rs. 250,” says Parthiban, another farmer of Vadakadu. The farmers said that the size of the fruits was less than the usual growth this season.

Although the fruit could withstand drought condition, the consecutive failure of monsoon for the past couple of years had adversely affected the yield to a great extent, they said.

***Cultivators fear the arrivals of mango will directly affect the sale of jackfruit***

## **Wheat arrival picks up in Haryana**

More than 48.73 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of wheat has so far arrived in various mandis of Haryana in the current procurement season,

a spokesman of the Food and Supplies Department said.

He said HAFED has purchased highest 17.72 lakh MT of wheat followed by 13.99 lakh MT purchased by the Food and Supplies Department.

Similarly, Agro Industries Corporation has purchased 4.39 lakh MT, Haryana Warehousing Corporation 5.05 lakh MT, CONFED 1.15 lakh MT and Food Corporation of India had procured 6.40 lakh MT of wheat during current procurement season so far.

He said district Karnal is leading in the wheat arrival where 5.77 lakh MT of wheat has arrived in the mandis, followed by Kaithal with 5.49 lakh MT.

Farmers have been asked to bring dry and properly cleaned wheat in the mandis so that they might not face any difficulty while selling their produce, he said. PTI

## **Mango growers in distress in Kolar**

Mango growers in Kolar district, especially those in Srinivaspur taluk, are a worried lot as trees are withering owing to lack of moisture in the land. Many of them are planning to remove the trees and cultivate other crops.

Mango is being grown on 45,000 acres across the district while it is grown on 2 lakh acres across the State. The dip in yield may also lead to high prices for the king of fruits in the market.

Also, thieves are taking away dried trees from the orchards, says N. Sriram of Maniganahalli, a grower. “If more trees wither, we may be forced to deracinate the them and start growing rain-fed crops in their place,” he said.

T.P. Nareppa of Thotli village said he had lost 90 per cent of tender Badami breed fruit due to the rise in temperature. “I have lost hopes of even earning a decent income,” he rued.

Falling groundwater level at an alarming rate besides scanty rainfall in the recent past are the main reasons for the drop in yield of mangoes in the district. The increase in temperature this summer has only added to the problem, Mr. Nareppa added.

Growers in Arikunte, Neelatur, Kaniganahalli and other places in Kolar district too are facing a similar situation.


Horticulture Department Deputy Director Chandrashekhar M.R. told *The Hindu* that up to 15 per cent of tender mangoes had fallen due to dry weather conditions.

“Rain is necessary for mango cultivation. If it doesn’t rain in Kolar district in the near future, the yield will be poor.”

According to Mr. Chandrashekhar, some farmers are making all-out efforts to save their standing crops. They are trying to water the mango trees by getting water through tankers. Each water tank costs them Rs. 600. Not all farmers can afford to do this. The growers say only summer showers can save the trees.

### Coconut growers in Tumkur district hit by drought

PLIGHT ACROSS DISTRICT					
TALUK	COCONUT GROWING AREA IN HECTARES	AREA OF COCONUT TREES DRIED UP DUE TO			FARMERS AFFECTED
		drought (in hectares)	pests (in hectares)	Total (in hectares)	
TUMKUR	13,458	150	53	243	8,306
TIPTUR	30,111	1,666	361	2,627	25,132
GUBBI	30,680	274	640	914	11,676
KUNIGAL	6,588	54	09	63	3,411
CHIKKANAYAKANAHALLI	27,700	324	404	738	15,797
TURUVEKERE	28,153	374	78	452	5,473
SIRA	7,047	330	03	333	5,581
MADHUGIRI	1,642	11	06	17	152
KORATAGERE	1,710	07	11	18	117
PAVAGADA	450	04	03	07	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,47,539</b>	<b>3,994</b>	<b>1,618</b>	<b>4,812</b>	<b>75,688</b>



Source: Department of Horticulture, Tumkur

Coconut growers in Tumkur district are in distress as the palms are withering due to drought and disease. Compounding their woes is the delay in the distribution of relief by the district administration owing to the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha elections.

They have been reeling under drought for the last three years. Coconut is largely grown in Tiptur, Turuvekere, Chikkanayakanahalli, Tumkur and Gubbi taluks, where farmers are entirely dependent on the crop for livelihood.

According to the Department of Horticulture, the total area under coconut cultivation in the district is 1,47,539 hectares. However, the prevailing drought has brought down the yield to less than 50 per cent on about 36,502 hectares.

In addition, coconut palms on about 4,812 hectares have completely withered due to drought and pest attacks, affecting 75,688 farmers. About 70 per cent of those affected are small and marginal farmers.

Lack of irrigation facilities, decline in groundwater level, and scanty rainfall are the main reasons for the withering of coconut palms. In addition, stem-bleeding, bud rot and other diseases and pest attacks too are affecting the palms. Many farmers are migrating to nearby towns and cities in search of job, leaving their children and aged parents in villages.

S.K. Santhosh, a farmer from Soralamavu in Chikkanayakanahalli taluk, said, “I am working as a helper in a private factory in Bangalore to look after my aged parents, as we are not getting any income from the coconut farm.” He said that 80 palms, aged about 30 to 40, had withered, causing a huge loss to his family.

Gowramma from Muniyuru in Turuvekere taluk said, “It’s painful to see the coconut palms withering as they are like my children.” Borewells have gone dry and it is not possible to get water even after sinking borewells to a depth of more than 1,200 ft, she said.

A farmer gets compensation of Rs. 12,000 a hectare for 150 coconut palms, which works out to Rs. 80 a palm, subject to a maximum of 2 hectares for every grower.

State secretary of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha B.S. Devaraj told *The Hindu*, “We cannot even plant a new coconut sapling with the compensation given by the government as a sapling costs Rs. 300. The relief should increase to Rs. 45,000 a palm.”

He urged the government to fix a reasonable compensation. Coconut palms live for 60 to 70 years and on an average, each palm helps generate an income of about Rs. 1,000 a year. If a 25-year-old palm withers, the farmer should get Rs. 45,000 as compensation as the palm would have helped generate that much income if it had lived for the next 45 years, he said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner R.S. Peddappaiah said that although the Union government had released Rs. 10.61 crore as relief to farmers, it could not be disbursed now because of the enforcement of the model code of conduct.

### **Water level**

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 35.10 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 12.27 cusecs and 100 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 64.60 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 6 cusecs and 200 cusecs of water is discharged.

## Kanyakumari

The water level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 15.10 feet, 37.15 feet in Perunchani, 2.95 feet in Chittar 1, 3.05 feet in Chittar 11, 1.80 feet in Poigai and 43.26 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru.


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Delhi - INDIA






Today's Weather

**Monday, Apr 28**  
Max Min  
39° | 22°  
Clear  
Rain: 0  
Humidity: 23  
Wind: normal  
Sunrise: 05:46  
Sunset: 06:52  
Barometer: 1007

Tomorrow's Forecast

 **Tuesday, Apr 29**  
Max Min  
40° | 22°  
Sunny

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday <b>Apr 30</b>	Thursday <b>May 1</b>	Friday <b>May 2</b>	Saturday <b>May 3</b>	Sunday <b>May 4</b>
				
40°   23° Partly Cloudy	40°   23° Sunny	39°   23° Sunny	41°   24° Partly Cloudy	44°   29° Sunny



## Forests Under Watch for Naxal Movement

In a bid to prevent infiltration of naxalites into Tamil Nadu from the neighbouring Kerala and Karnataka, plans are afoot to intensify combing operation in the forest areas of Nilgiris district.

Sources in the Forest Department told Express that a meeting was held recently with the forest staff, in which it was discussed to intensify the combing operation in the forest areas of Nilgiris South division, Gudalur and Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

About two weeks back, the Special Task Force (STF) carried inspection in the areas of Gudalur range, based on information of a suspected Naxal movement in the area. But, it turned out to be a false alarm.

The Forest Department raised objection as the operation was carried without permission, sources said.

Meanwhile, the STF has plans to conduct another combing operation on April 28 in the bordering areas of Kerala and Karnataka. A source said that the areas of Cherampandi, Pandalur, Devala, Yermadu, Ambalapuzha and Upper Bhavani were under vigil of the large contingent of the STF.

He further said there were possibilities of naxal regrouping in the tribal areas of Kerala and Karnataka. All preparations are on to prevent any Naxal from sneaking into TN, he added.

In Coimbatore too, the forest officials have been intimated to keep proper vigil. The vigilance is being mounted along with the help of Kerala Forest Department, especially in areas near Annaikatty, Siruvani-Boluvampatty forest ranges.

Tribals and people on the fringes of the forests have been briefed to inform suspicious movement of armed people or naxals, he added.

### **Fisheries Dept Takes Up Experimental Project On Exotic Fish**

Farmers interested in rearing fish with good commercial value will have to wait for another eight to ten months for the availability of Pangasius sutchi.

The Department of Fisheries has taken up an experimental project of rearing Pangasius sutchi in the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS)reservoir.

The project is expected to be completed in a few months, after which the fish may be made available to rearers. Pangasius sutchi is an exotic fish imported from Thailand for its high commercial value.

Fisheries officials said if the experimental project becomes successful, then farmers can take up its rearing which can fetch them a good value. “The current market value for each fish is `75-`100. Farmers can rear this fish in small areas and the government will provide subsidies for it,” said an official.

The fish is mostly used for ornamental purposes and displayed in big aquariums in corporate offices. For the first time, the Fisheries Department has taken up fish farming in the KRS reservoir.

The fish is reared extensively in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and other states.

Farmers in Raichur and Bellary districts also started rearing *Pangasius sutchi* in small areas.

Rearing of the fish has been taken up in 48 compartments and each has 4,000-5,000 fingerlings.

The fish will be of two colours — black and white. Due its small size, rearing it in a reservoir is not easy.

Officials are using small nets to prevent it from swimming out of the reservoir through canals. The fish, a voracious eater, is fed pelleted food.

According to Department sources, the experimental project should have started in 2011, but due to severe drought and shortage of water in the reservoir, the project was delayed.

Mandya Fisheries Department Assistant Director of Fisheries (ADF) Swetha said *Pangasius sutchi* production is done under cage culture in the KRS reservoir.

### Farmer Burns Pomegranate Crop

Depressed over the bolworm attack on his pomegranate crop, a farmer from Kadagamdoddi village in Raichur taluk burnt the crop on Sunday.

Sources said Guruswamy had grown 3,000 pomegranate trees in his eight acres by availing loan `23 lakh loan from a local bank.

He had received normal crop for the past three years. However, this year the horticulture officials failed to advise him on how to prevent the disease.

As he was disgusted on seeing the loss to the crop due to pest attack, he removed the whole crop and burnt it.

Guruswamy was expecting an income of over `15 lakh through the sale of crop this year, they added.

Though the State government has announced waiver of agriculture loans. But this measure was not extended to horticulture crops, the sources said.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha's district unit president Lakshmanagouda has urged the State government to waive the loan of farmer Guruswamy and help him this year.

### Coconut Yield Crashes; Prepare to Shell Out More

The price of coconuts will continue to remain high for at least another year, horticulture officials say.

Now selling at `20 to `25 a piece in the retail market, the South Indian cooking essential has seen a steep fall in production over the last three years. Thousands of trees in traditional coconut-growing areas such as Tumkur, Tiptur, Hassan, Chikmagalur,

Mandya, Ramanagaram, Chamarajnar and Mysore have perished because of drought that has persisted year after year.

Coconut production has dipped by 30-40 per cent in Karnataka since 2011. "The price may go up further and customers may have no option but to buy it at whatever price is quoted," said Dr D L Maheswar, director of the Department of Horticulture.

Coconuts grown in Karnataka are said to be superior in taste to the ones grown in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In Karnataka, coconut is grown on 4.9 lakh hectares, but drought and pest attacks over the last three years have affected palms on nearly 1.75 lakh hectares.

Farmers have cut down trees with no yield in some places. In fact, the decline in coconut production in Karnataka started in 2010, Dr Maheswar explained.

The Department of Horticulture does not maintain demand and supply details.

Coconuts now available are grown on irrigated farms. It takes 12 months for a tree to bear flowers and for the flowers to turn into coconut shells.

Coconuts from Tamil Nadu are expected to arrive in the state in two to three months but the department is not sure that will bring the prices down. The coconut yield per tree in Karnataka is about 9,000 a year, while in Tamil Nadu, it is 12,000.

**Shell Out More for Coconut**

Dr Maheswar said the demand for tender coconuts had shot up by up to 20 per cent this year because of the severe heat in Karnataka.

Tender coconuts sold for `15 a piece four months ago are now priced at `25. Farmers get `12-14 of this. Although packed coconut drinks are available in supermarkets, people still prefer fresh tender coconuts.

Tender coconuts grown in Karnataka are exported to neighbouring states too. The sharp rise in the price of coconuts may be burning a hole in the consumer's pocket, but it is fetching farmers a better-than-usual deal, he added.

### Forest Dept Comes out against Move to Amend EFL Act

The Department of Forest and Wildlife has raised objection to the government's move to amend the Kerala Forest (Vesting and Management of Ecologically Fragile Lands) Act pointing out that 14,000 hectares of land will be converted to other purposes if the act is amended.

The content of the report of former Principal Chief Conservator of Forest R R Raja Raja Varma which was earlier submitted to the government was leaked to the media on Saturday.

“14,000 hectares of forest will be lost, as it will be converted for other purposes, if the amendment is made. Valuable assets of places, including Nelliampathy, would be destroyed. The government has no right to give back or denotify land taken under the Act if it is reserve forest. The denotification of land can be done by the Union Environment

and Forest Ministry with the Supreme Court's permission," the report is learnt to have said.

"There is also no provision to give compensation for reserve land. The amendment would also weaken the government's stand in cases related with EFL," Varma, who retired from service in March, said in the report.

The report also said that the government has no right to give back ecologically fragile land. In March, the government had decided to amend the Act to exclude up to two hectares from its purview and to pay compensation in cases where releasing of land was not possible.

The government's decision was based on the recommendation of Oommen V Oommen Committee constituted to take evidence from the public on Kasturirangan panel's recommendation. The government's decision had also got the Law Department's approval.

But the report said that the decision was not practical or legal.

## Harvest season adds to respiratory woes, say experts



The harvesting season has begun, and with it, the respiratory problems among farmers.

The problems will further worsen in the coming weeks, when stubbles of wheat residue will be burnt in the fields.

Asthma, long-lasting lung infections and other respiratory problems are the results of the air pollution caused by the practice of burning crop residue in the months of April and May.

“The cases of asthma attack increase during this period. Daily, we come across four or five new cases of severe asthma attacks among children. Apart from the new cases, about 10 follow-ups are there,” Dr Arpinder Gill, Max Hospital, said.

He added, “In old cases, where we know that the patient’s condition will deteriorate, we increase the dose of medicine. From March 15 to April 30, these children will be on high dose.”



Similar is the situation in other hospitals. Dr Zafar Ahmed Iqbal, consultant, Pulmonology and Critical Care, Fortis Hospital, said, “Patients with signs of respiratory problems have increased since the beginning of harvesting season. In my OPD alone, the increase has been 2 or 3 patients more per day. They come with aggravated asthma and allergies that have worsened in the grain harvest season.”

## Business Standard

Cotton outlook: Prices to be guided by factors other than cotton

The first half of the October-September [cotton](#) season is over. A majority of the demand and supply data is already factored into the prices. Production is expected to be 37.5 million bales (of 170 kg each) or slightly more.

Total exports so far, at 9.4 million bales, have already exceeded the [Cotton Advisory Board](#)'s estimate of nine million bales. Euphoria in cotton consumption has reduced slightly due to Chinese economic slowdown. Even with a moderate consumption growth of about six per cent at 29 million bales, Indian exports would be considerably less by one million bales in the next six months. Quarterly demand and supply numbers indicate that April-June contract has the highest stock to use ratio due to higher arrivals and lower export demand. However, if the exports continue, even if in small quantities, and reach close to 10 million bales (for the full cotton season), the ending stock will become very tight and India will be left with stocks equivalent to less than two months consumption.

There are three factors, not connected to cotton, that will guide the prices from here - Chinese policy, weather and currency. China holds 60 per cent of the world stocks and has a stock to use ratio of 163 per cent. To put it in perspective, China consumes 7.7 million tonnes (mt) of cotton annually and has stock of 12.6 mt! China now wants to get rid of reserve stocks, some of which are more than three years old. China reduced its price for reserve stocks from 18,000 yuan a tonne to 17,250 yuan. If the demand for domestic cotton does not revive, China could cut the prices further and thus cap the demand for imported cotton. There are also rumours that China could impose import duty on cheap cotton yarn. Chinese risk to global prices is on the downside.

The apprehension regarding the occurrence of [El Niño](#) in 2014 has intensified. Some meteorological agencies assign a probability of 75 per cent for the manifestation of the phenomenon in the current year. The last time the phenomenon was recorded with a moderate intensity was in 2009, causing significant impact on agriculture. Moisture stress is already evident in the crucial cotton state of Texas in USA. There are already reports of less than ideal sowing weather in Yangtze River basin of China. Indian cotton crop remains heavily monsoon dependent due to lack of irrigation in most cotton growing region. The weather risk to prices are on upside.

Last but not the least, is currency. Towards the fag end of the season, when the good quality cotton is scarce, chances of cotton import increase. Import parity is not currently there. Considering that Indian prices have limited downside, if the currency was to

appreciate sharply, it will result in higher imports. There was a time when the rupee touched 59.50 against the dollar and the Indian currency has appreciated around two per cent year-to-date. In that, Chinese yuan depreciated three per cent. This scenario is a double whammy for Indian exporters of cotton as well as cotton yarn.

Historically, the studies indicate that the monthly average prices dip marginally during April to July and then rally in the last quarter. Sufficient supply this quarter and risk of cheap imports could keep the prices capped in the near term. But tight ending stock and weather vagaries would only accentuate the year-end rally in cotton prices.

## **THE TIMES OF INDIA**

Farmer stumbles on ancient buried treasure

CHANDRAPUR: A farmer tilling their land unearthed a hidden treasure in their farm in Kirmiri village in Gondpipri tehsil. Historians suspect that the coins found may belong to the Bahamni dynasty that ruled Gulbarga to Vidarbha during the 15th century.

Farmer Kisan Balki was ploughing his farmland when he struck a metal pot under the ground. He took the pot to his house, suspecting that the coins were made of gold.

However, as he washed the coins, they turned out to be made of copper. As the news spread, Dhaba police seized the hoard.

Renowned numismatist and historian Ashoksingh Thakur suspects that the coins belong

to Bahamni era. "Coins minted with hands with Persian letters on it were made during Bahamani era. The place where the hoard was found was once under the domain of Bahamni dynasty. Similar hoards of Bahamni coins have earlier been discovered in the district," he told.

Thakur claimed that if he could have chance of close examination of the coins, he could tell the exact year of its minting and the name of the king who had minted the coins. Meanwhile, Tehsildar MM Virani has handed over all 2,604 coins to the ASI officials.

#### Sugar factories object to low levy purchase price

KOLHAPUR: Representatives of sugar factories have objected to the state government decision to buy the levy quota of sugar at Rs 2,768.20 a quintal though the wholesale sugar price in the domestic market is hovering around Rs 3,100 per quintal.

Officials at the Maharashtra State Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories, the apex body of sugar factories in the state, said that there is significant difference between levy sugar purchase price and the market price and it would affect their profit margin. The levy sugar is distributed through fair price shops. Sources in the government said the purchase rate of sugar for levy is based on daily market prices in the last week of March.

"The sugar factories have already faced financial crisis in the last season because of

sugarcane shortage. The international prices of sugar have remained stable for almost one year, thereby, restricting sugar export. Export was an assured source of higher income, but as it reduced, the domestic stock of sugar continued to surge with beginning of the crushing season 2013-14."

The pressure of excess sugar stock further mounted because of the lower response from the international market. Meanwhile, the union government sanctioned a package of Rs 6,600 crore to sugar factories, where interest free loan was offered, which can be repaid in next few years. The package came as a relief and many factories could make payments to farmers for the sugarcane purchase, said the sources.

Till February this year, the sugar prices in last 18 months have remained less than Rs 3,000 per quintal. It led to slow release of sugar in the market. The demand for sugar increased in the summer season generally from the beverage makers and confectionaries. The wholesale price is currently hovering around Rs 3,100 per quintal. The state government had recently issued a directive to purchase the levy sugar, which is 10% of the total stock at every sugar factory that is a member of the state federation. But the members of the Federation have written that they do not want to sell sugar at less than Rs 3,000 per quintal.

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

## **Coop bank staff to observe April 26 as 'Farmers' Advancement Day'**

The All India Cooperative Bank Employees' Federation (AICBEF) has decided to observe April 26 as 'Farmers' Advancement Day'.

The day marks the beginning of the 28th year of the federation. (The AICBEF was founded on April 26, 1987).

Sharing this information with *Business Line*, AICBEF General Secretary P Balakrishnan said that the federation would reiterate its demand for prioritising the needs of the farmers, stress the need for enhancing agriculture infrastructure, fixing a fair price for foodgrains and use of improved technology in agricultural operations on that day.

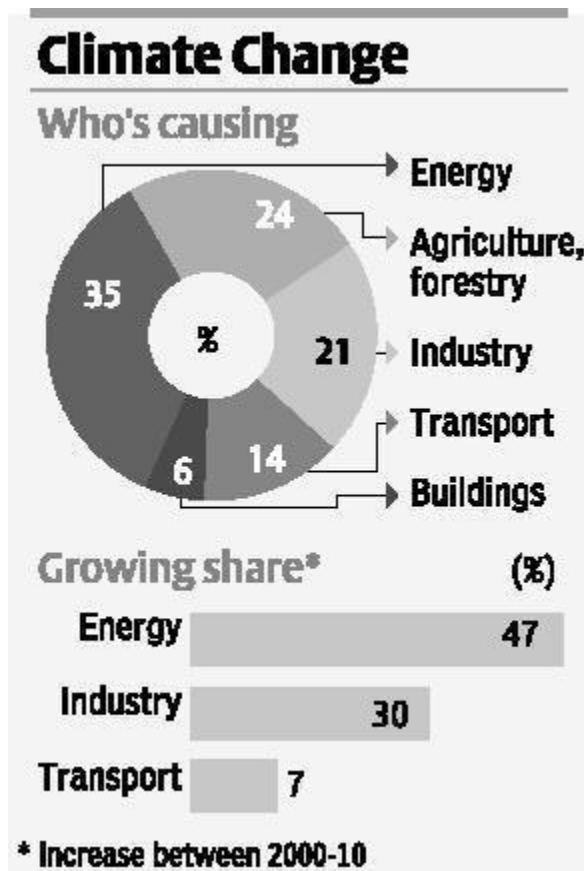
Suggesting ways and means to make agriculture a profitable proposition, Balakrishnan said: "Indian agriculture is facing lot of issues. The issues can be resolved only if the Centre and State Governments join hands to strengthen the agriculture infrastructure, enhance the credit flow, establish Agricultural Risk Fund to take care of risks and uncertainties in agricultural production and by putting in place a long-term agricultural credit policy among others."

The State Government should strengthen the agricultural marketing infrastructure and the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies.

Cooperative Banking Technology Development Fund should be set up with an initial corpus of Rs 2,000 crore with proportionate contribution from the Centre.

Income-tax levy on profits of the state cooperative banks and district central cooperative and urban cooperative banks should be withdrawn and farmers should be empowered, he said, and added "at least 100 lakh new farmers will have to be brought within the fold of cooperative banks every year".

### Spending climate



Scientists fear that the glaciers casing Mt Everest are melting at an unprecedented pace, thanks to changes in climate due to global warming. What causes this? Green house gas (GHG) emissions by the energy sector are the key culprit, as per the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). GHGs are atmospheric gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, which absorb and emit radiation. The emission of these gases leads to a rise in the earth's temperature. The IPCC report details the various sectors that contribute to GHG emissions. Energy generation including electricity, heat production and other sources tops the list, accounting for over 35 per cent of the GHG emissions.

While coal plants or cars on the roads are what comes to our minds when we think of emissions, 'green' sectors such as farming account for almost 24 per cent of the total GHG emissions. There is carbon dioxide from agriculture, forestry and other land uses, such as forest fire, peat fire and peat decay. Industry (21 per cent) and transport (14 per cent) have been identified as the other major contributors of GHGs.

Economic prosperity and population growth have been the two key factors responsible for higher carbon dioxide emissions globally from fossil fuel combustion. Assuming no additional measures to reduce GHG emissions beyond the ones currently in place, the baseline scenario indicates that the mean surface temperature may increase between 3.7 and 4.8 degree Celsius by 2100, compared to the period before 1750.



The report estimates that developed countries have mobilised \$213-255 billion annually during 2010 and 2011 for managing climate change. Developing countries are estimated to have mobilised \$120-141 billion.

### **Big rise unlikely**



With the peak harvest season coming to an end, tomato prices have nearly doubled in the last one month to ₹20/kg. This year, it is feared, the harvest in Punjab and Haryana is will be lower due to chilly weather conditions that prevailed in the region in December and January. However, with prices still below the November high of ₹50/kg, people are buying more of the vegetable. Tomato prices in April last year was ₹32/kg, and as the prices were skyrocketing, the farmers had sowed more of the crop. This year, therefore, the prices may not go up very significantly, say market observers.