

Declare State drought-hit: farmers

The Tamizhaga Vivasayegal Sangam has urged the government to declare the State as drought-hit.

A resolution in this connection was passed at the State executive committee meeting of the association here.

The association's president, M.R. Sivasamy, presided over the meeting, when 14 resolutions were passed.

“Acute water scarcity across the State has curtailed the cultivation of short-term crops. Perennial crops such as coconut and betelnut have also fallen prey to drought. Considering the facts, the government should declare the State as drought-hit and help farmers get the required relief on time”, Mr. Sivasamy said.

The government should give Rs. 10,000 as drought relief for an acre of agricultural land for all farmers.

“Nationalised banks and cooperative banks should waive all the crop loans given to farmers,” he said.

Mr. Sivasamy appealed to the government to sanction drip irrigation at 100 per cent subsidy for all farmers.

Another main demand of the association was urging the government to fix the minimum price of a quintal of turmeric at Rs. 12,000.

Organic farmers to float federation

Organic farmers in Krishna district will soon float an NGO, National Natural Organic Farmers Federation. The objective is to assist organic farmers in finding good market for their produce and clarify their doubts with regard to their products.

The Andhra Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) organised a meeting on ‘necessity of certification of organic products’ here on Monday where speakers expressed concern over the fact that small and marginal farmers were not getting proper price for their produce. The speakers said the Federation would be helpful in achieving better price

to the farmer for his organic produce, compared to conventional products. Certification would be an important marketing tool, they pointed out.

Stating that certification would be the link between farmers, processors and consumers, they said it would also build trust between consumer and organic producers. The organic labels and certification marks would help the 'health conscious' consumers identify the organic products easily, they suggested.

The Krishna district organic farming chief coordinator K. Sambasiva Rao said a group of farmers could go for certification to bring down the cost involved in it. Each farmer will have to pay Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,000 for the certification. It will take two to three years to get the certification, he added. The Federation will also help farmers in issues related to thrift and crop loans besides providing linkage between 'gosalas' (cow shelters). Cow dung etc. are essential ingredients in the organic products and the federation would also supply green manure seeds to raise fodder.

ACCI president Muthavarapu Muralikrishna, Secretary Chukkapalli Prasad, Bangalore-based Certification Agency APOF representative N. Shiva Kumar spoke.

Scorching summer turns Bargur forests dry



Forests on the Bargur hills are turning dry due to the excessive heat conditions. A good number of trees and shrubs have already shed leaves completely and the remaining green patches are also vanishing at a fast pace. Some of the trees are now completely shorn of leaves. But, that does not mean that the green cover on the hills will be lost, according to Forest Department officials.

The skeletal appearance of the trees is quite normal during the summer season. Trees and plants tend to shed leaves irrespective of the extent of rainfall accruing from the monsoons, according to Forest Department officials.

Dryness of forests is caused by absence of precipitation for a long duration. The vegetation adapts to the dry conditions with its deciduousness whereby the leaves are shed since photosynthesis cannot be sustained, according to the officials.

If some greenery could still be found amidst the dry forest, it is because of some trees with green bark rich in chlorophyll, the officials explain, adding, that the dry appearance of the forests is a passing phase.

At the time of rainy season, fresh green leaves start sprouting on the trees, and the bed of leaves scattered on the forest floor starts decomposing, and releasing nutrients for the growth of the vegetation, the officials say.

Forest conservation brings more leopards to Horsely Hills

The protection of forest cover in the Madanapalle range, particularly the belt covering the famous tourist destination of Horsely Hills, has led to an increase in the number of leopards, bringing cheer to nature lovers. Different species of antelopes also are thriving in the area, forest officials have found.

Officials have detected the presence of two leopards in the forest fringes near Mulakalacheruvu, while three were earlier found in Horsely Hills.

No man-animal conflict

Three weeks ago, a leopard entered the hill station chasing an antelope, which it later killed. However, officials maintain that the chances of man-animal conflict were remote in the zone, given the luxuriant vegetation and availability of natural prey for the predators. The Forest Department is also maintaining ponds for the wildlife inside the forest, in addition to the natural sources.

Always on the move

Madanapalle Forest Range Officer Venugopal told *The Hindu* that unlike tigers, the leopards constantly keep moving from one zone to the other.

They would thus cover a vast area including Horsely Hills, Anantapur district and the neighbouring Karnataka. Forest cover beyond Horsely Hills melts into the Karnataka side, a mere four kilometres away.

Leopards further inhabit the revenue hillocks while crisscrossing forests, and this makes it difficult to bring in accurate figures of the leopard population. He also expressed happiness that the range was teeming with antelopes.

Officials have detected the presence of two leopards in the forest fringes near Mulakalacheruvu, while three were earlier found in Horsely Hills

Flower show in Kodaikanal on May 24 or 25

The two-day flower show and summer festival will be held on May 24 or 25 at Kodaikanal, according to Collector N. Venkatachalam.

Addressing a preliminary meeting to discuss festival arrangements with revenue, police and tourism officials here on Monday, he said that elaborate arrangements would be made for the convenience of tourists.

Priority will be given for providing basic amenities and developing infrastructure to enable tourists to enjoy without any hassles.

While the Sports Department will organise tournaments and team events, the Department of Fisheries will conduct 'catch a fish' competition and Animal Husbandry officials will hold a dog show.

Expressing concerns over traffic congestions on Saturday and Sunday, the Collector said that vehicles were stranded to a distance of 16 km on prime road during these days. The forest officials provided parking lots at places like Guna Cave, Moyar Point, Pillar Rock and Pine Forest areas.

Two police constables and an SI should be deputed to regulate vehicles and park vehicles in a row at each point, he added.

The police officials replied that 2,600 private vehicles reached the hill station on Saturday and Sunday. They sought officials to restrict buses a few km away from the bus stand.

One of the counters at the toll gate was not operated owing to lack of staff. Operation of two counters would ease traffic congestion near the toll gate area, they added.

Cotton yarn exports expected to be higher than previous year

Cotton yarn exports in 2013-14 are expected to be more than 10 per cent higher than the previous year. While it was 1,110 million kg in 2012-13, the exports are expected to be about 1,200 million kg or a little more in 2013-14.

An industry source says that yarn exports were good during the last financial year (2013-14) till December. For a couple of months earlier it went up to even 140 million kg. However, the demand reduced in February, especially for lower count yarn.

The actual exports might be lower than the registrations. One of the main buyers of Indian yarn is China and the Chinese demand had reduced during the last few months. Though the demand is yet to pick up, the situation could change in the coming months. The demand continues to be good for higher count yarn (more than 50s count).

Meanwhile, the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council has appealed to the Union Government to release the pending duty drawback amount (which is a refund of duties and taxes incurred at the input stage) for yarn exports.

Chairman of the council Manikam Ramaswami has said in a press release that drawback claims are pending since September 2013, affecting the cash flow for textile mills.

For some units, 50 per cent to 75 per cent of turnover is from exports and delay in getting the drawback claims is affecting them.

The industry source says that normally the drawback claims are settled in a month. The delay for the more than six months is affecting the competitiveness of the mills.

Water level MADURAI

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 109.60 feet (permissible level 136 feet) on Monday with an inflow of 100 cusecs and discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 23.16 feet (full level 71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The

combined storage in Periyar credit was 387 mcft. Sothuparai recorded 6 mm rainfall during the 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Monday, PWD Officials said.

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 34.478 feet on Monday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,426 cusecs and the discharge, 3,000 cusecs. — Special Correspondent

TIRUNELVELI

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Monday stood at 34.80 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 17.01 cusecs and 104.75 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 64.24 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 6 cusecs and 200 cusecs of water is discharged.

Kanyakumari

The level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 15.30 feet, 37.20 feet in Perunchani, 2.98 feet in Chittar 1, 2.80 feet in Chittar 11, 1.80 feet in Poigai and 41.26 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru.

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Rain: 0

Humidity: 56

Wind: normal

Tuesday, Apr 29

Max Min

34° | 27°

Sunrise: 05:49

Sunset: 06:23

Barometer: 1010

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Apr 30

Max Min

36° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday
May 1



37° | 27°
Partly Cloudy

Friday
May 2



31° | 28°
Overcast

Saturday
May 3



31° | 28°
Overcast

Sunday
May 4



30° | 28°
Overcast

Monday
May 5



31° | 27°
Overcast

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Record cashew exports last fiscal

Cashew exports rose to a record high last fiscal in volume and value compared with the previous fiscal.

Total shipments during 2013-14 increased by over 13 per cent to 1,13,620 tonnes from 1,00,105 tonnes. Total value realisation was Rs. 4,975.96 crore (Rs. 4,046.23 crore) despite an increase in the average unit value to Rs. 439.34/kg, according to Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI).

“Performance in all the segments of exports, including cashew nut shell liquid, roasted and salted cashew kernel showed an upsurge as market conditions were favourable,” K Sasi Varma, Executive Director and Secretary, CEPCI, told *Business Line* .

Export of cashew nut shell liquid also rose during last fiscal to 9,226 tonnes valued at Rs. 37.26 crore from 9,192 tonnes valued at Rs. 29.84 crore during April-March 2012-13, he said.

Processing units

Varma said that the cashew processing facility in the country could process over two million tonnes of raw nuts but the availability is limited, making up some one-third of the requirement.

Therefore, the processing-exporting industry has to depend on imported raw nuts for decades. Unfavourable exchange rate, coupled with high (non-parity) prices, has caused a drop in imports of raw nuts which is likely to affect exports later on, Varma said.

Imports of raw nuts decreased during 2013-14 to 7,58,111 tonnes valued at Rs. 4,457.72 crore from 8,92,365 tonnes valued at Rs. 5,331.74 crore, he said.

Low yields

Though raw cashew nut production in India has more than doubled in the last two decades, poor yield is still a cause for concern compared to competitors such as Vietnam.

The area under the crop has increased to over 10 lakh hectares in 2013-14 from around 9.8 lakh hectares in 2012-13.

The production last fiscal is estimated at around 7.4 lakh tonnes against 7.3 lakh tonnes the previous financial year, according to official sources.

Viet statistics

Vietnam, of late, has emerged as the top producer of the commodity displacing India.

Total raw cashew production in Vietnam in 1993 was 1.86 lakh tonnes from 69,100 hectares. It shot up to 12.73 lakh tonnes from a total area of 3.31 lakh hectares in 2011, according to the latest FAO statistics.

The yield from a hectare is currently 3.8 tonnes in Vietnam against India's 772 kg.

Mixed trend at Kochi tea auction

A mixed trend prevailed in almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi auction last week. In sale no 17, the quantity on offer in CTC dust category was 10,84,000 kg.

There was lower demand in orthodox dusts and the quantity on offer was 7,500 kg. In the best CTC dusts, PD grades quoted Rs. 107/126, RD varieties fetched Rs. 115/130, SRD ruled at Rs. 126/148 and SFD stood at Rs. 135/154.

The leaf varieties also witnessed a mixed trend and the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 1,02,000 kg. The market for Nilgiri broken and whole leaf was fully firm to dearer. Corresponding Fannings witnessed strong feature and moved up by Rs. 5-10 and sometimes more. Clean black tippy grades, whole leaf and bolder broken remained steady and sometimes dearer.

The quantity on offer in CTC grades was 90,500 kg. The market for good liquoring broken was firm to dearer. Others were irregular and sometimes lower.

Rubber rules flat on lack of follow-up buying

Physical rubber prices were mixed on Monday.

Major counters including RSS 4 ended flat in the absence of follow up buying, while ISNR 20 and latex made moderate gains on enquiries at lower levels.

Sheet rubber closed unchanged at Rs. 140 a kg, according to traders. The grade improved to Rs. 139.50 (Rs. 138.50) and Rs. 136.50 (Rs. 135.50) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers.

May futures improved to Rs. 142.10 (Rs. 139.57), June to Rs. 144.99 (Rs. 142.33) while the Rubber Mini May futures closed firm at Rs. 141.99 (Rs. 138.34) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to Rs. 127.11 (Rs. 126.62) at Bangkok. May futures closed at ¥205 (Rs. 121.40) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 140 (140); RSS-5: 135.50 (135.50); Ungraded: 131 (131); ISNR 20: 127.50 (126.50) and Latex 60%: 111 (110).

Farmers as entrepreneurs

Ramesh Kumar, a farmer in his mid-forties from Dongali in Haryana, is busy these days levelling the land of fellow farmers in neighbouring villages. Kumar, who acquired a laser-leveller about two years ago, charges about Rs. 600 per acre for the service.

“Levelling of farmland at least once in two years is crucial as it helps irrigate the field effectively, thereby helping farmers conserve water,” says Kumar. Annually, Kumar earns an additional income of up to Rs. 2 lakh through this service.

About 700 km away in Central Uttar Pradesh, Shamsuddin Siddiqui, the owner of Siddiqui Krishi Farm Centre in Budha village near Hardoi, has become an agricultural technology service provider.

Siddiqui has been renting out a range of farm implements, such as rotavators, disc harrows, threshers, trench planters and tractors, for a fee. He employs four workers trained in handling the equipment and earns about Rs. 4.5 lakh a year from his services.

The rapid adoption of mechanisation is creating a new breed of farmers-turned-entrepreneurs, such as Kumar and Siddiqui, offering custom services for hire.

Siddiqui is one of 60 farmer-turned-entrepreneurs shortlisted by Mitha Sona, a sugarcane productivity improvement project launched by DCM Shriram and IFC. He will soon be trained in financial management. “We are facilitating entrepreneurs to gain access to credit, and putting them in touch with farmers who are in need of these services,” says Joy Mukherjee, Deputy GM (Cane) at DCM Shriram’s sugar factory in Loni.

“A farmer just needs to own land and not equipment,” says Siddiqui, explaining that the entire spectrum of operations — tillage, planting, weeding and harvesting — can now be outsourced.

Yet another example is that of Ravindar Singh, a farmer in his mid-thirties, from Ugala, near Ambala. Singh not only cultivates land on a lease basis, but also offers his equipment and services for hire.

Dattatreya Kalokhe, a farmer in early sixties from Dehugaon near Pune, is another. “We have been using two tractors and a range of implement for our farming operations. We rent them out whenever we don’t use them,” says Kalokhe, adding that it helps him earn incremental income.

Tea output may wilt 10% on N-E dry spell



A prolonged dry period for the last six months in the North-East, particularly Assam, is likely to result in tea production dropping during January-April period of the current calendar year.

The loss could be 50 per cent in Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam during the period and 10 per cent for the whole of this year, according to BidyanandaBarkakoty, Chairman of North-Eastern Tea Association.

These five districts account for 70 per cent of Assam's tea production. Last year, they together produced 450 million kg (mkg) out of the 620 mkg that Assam produced. India's production last year was about 1.2 billion kg.

Crop loss

Many tea estates have suspended plucking and stopped production as the plants have no leaf on them.

“The present weather condition leading to phenomenal crop loss and shutting down of manufacturing facilities on the eve of second flush is unprecedented,” MayankAgarwalla, a tea planter of the rain-fed Doomdooma, was quoted as telling a team of Assam planters which carried out a survey of the crop loss in the five districts.

If the current situation continues, Assam could be badly hit during the second flush of the crop, which commands a premium in the market.

Temperature stress

A team comprising members of the Assam Tea Planters' Association, Bharatiya Cha Parishad and North Eastern Tea Association carried out a survey since Assam has received 67 per cent lower rainfall since March 1. The north-eastern State has received only 64 mm of the normal 196 mm rainfall until last week.

ManojJallan, a planter from Golaghat, told the team that he has not experienced such a long dry period in the last 25 years. What is aggravating the situation is 40 degree Celsius temperature and 20 to 50 per cent humidity in the region.

Due to higher radiation and temperature stress, reports of tea leaves wilting in many estates have been received. Food manufacturing capability of tea declines rapidly above 35 degrees Celsius and no food is manufactured when the leaf temperature rises from 39 degrees Celsius to 42 degrees Celsius.

“Visual symptoms of wilting tea leaves have been noticed but the physiological, biochemical and anatomical damages have occurred much earlier,” PrafullaBordoloi, a Consultant Tea Scientist, told the survey team.

The current dry spell has defoliated bushes in some cases, placing them under severe stress and even causing death of plants.

Dry spell

Delayed fertiliser application, which now will have to be done during the monsoon, may have an impact on the crop as well.

According to Raj Barooah, a planter in Sivasagar, 60 per cent of the crop could be lost in May if the current trend in the weather continues. The loss could be some 50 mkg. The situation can be salvaged to some extent only if Assam receives at least 200 mm rainfall in May besides a drop in temperature.

The dry spell has brought with it higher incidences of pest attack, which could also affect the crop and its quality.

Rubber rules flat on lack of follow-up buying

Physical rubber prices were mixed on Monday. Major counters including RSS 4 finished steady in the absence of follow up buying, while ISNR 20 and latex made moderate gains on enquiries at lower levels. “With the global market currently in a state of oversupply and slow growth in demand, rubber is likely to rule steady in the coming months unless some of the bullish or bearish factors begin to play,” analysts said. Sheet rubber closed unchanged at ₹140 a kg, according to traders. The grade improved to ₹139.50 (₹138.50) and ₹136.50 (₹135.50) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers. May futures improved to ₹142.10 (₹139.57), June to ₹144.99 (₹142.33), July to ₹146 (₹143.52) and August to ₹143.51 (₹142.38) while the Rubber Mini May futures closed firm at ₹141.99 (₹138.34) and June at ₹141.61 (₹141.34) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to ₹127.11 (₹126.62) at Bangkok. May futures closed at ¥205.0 (₹121.40) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (₹/kg) were: RSS-4: 140 (140); RSS-5: 135.50 (135.50); Ungraded: 131 (131); ISNR 20: 127.50 (126.50) and Latex 60%: 111 (110).

Rice likely to trade in ranges

Following steady demand in the domestic market and ample stocks, the rice market may continue to witness a steady to range-bound movement in the coming days, said trade experts.

With the trading being lukewarm, prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties ruled amid nominal fluctuation on Monday.

AmitChandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told *Business Line* that after witnessing a fall last weekend, a steady trend has prevailed in the market. The situation is likely to persist even in the coming days, he said.

According to the trade experts, buyers are placing orders according to their needs only. Any major fluctuation is unlikely and rice prices may continue to rule around current levels with nominal alterations, said experts.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) sold at ₹9,400, while Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at ₹8,300. Pure Basmati (raw) was ₹12,450. Duplicate basmati (steam) sold at ₹7,500.

Pusa-1121 (second wand) was at ₹7,350, Tibar at ₹6,400 while Dubar was at ₹5,400 a quintal.

In the non-basmati section, Sharbati (steam) was sold at ₹4,850 while Sharbati (sela) quoted at ₹4,300. Permal (raw) sold at ₹2,350, Permal (sela) at ₹2,320, PR-11 (sela) sold at ₹2,725 while PR-11 (raw) at ₹2,700. PR14 (steam) sold at ₹2,900 a quintal.

Sugar turns sour on selling pressure

Sugar prices ruled weak on Monday on slack local demand amid normal supply. On the Vashi wholesale market spot prices dropped by ₹10-20 a quintal for normal quality and rose by ₹10-20 for fine variety. *Naka* rates were down ₹10-20 on increased pressure for lifting the commodity before month-end. Producers sold commodity at ₹10-30 lower on lower demand. Sentiment was weak, said sources.

Jagdish Rawal, a trader, told *Business Line*: “Due to month-end slack demand and sufficient stocks available at market level stockists’ buying remained need-based.

Pressure on stockists for lifting commodity from mills before month-end due date also weigh. Those who don’t have a capacity sold sugar at lower rates in *naka* trades. Vashi market carries about 115-120 truckloads of inventory.” Arrivals at Vashi market were around 62-63 truckloads (of 100 bags each) and the local dispatches were 60- 62 loads. On Saturday evening, about 19-20 mills offered tenders and sold 45,000-48,000 bags at ₹3,000-3,100 (₹3,030-3,130) for S-grade and ₹3,150-3,320 (₹3,160-3,320) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association’s spot rates were: S-grade ₹3,212-3,312 (₹3,182-3,350) and M-grade was ₹3,346-3,492 (₹3,300-3,482). *Naka* delivery rates were: S-grade ₹3,150-3,250 (₹3,170-3,260) and M-grade ₹3,252-3,350 (₹3,260-3,400).

Cotton flat on limited buying

Cotton price remained unchanged as demand from domestic mills and exporters were dull. On the other hand, *kapas* or raw cotton market was seen steady with ginning demand. Gujarat Sankar-6 best quality cotton was traded around ₹43,000 for a candy of 356 kg, while average cotton was ₹40,000-500 and lower grade cotton ₹35,000-37,000. About 30,000 bales (of 170 kg each) arrived in Gujarat and 85,000-90,000 bales arrived in India. *Kapas* was traded at ₹900-1,075 for a *maund* of 20 kg in Saurashtra region. Gin delivery *kapas* was quoted ₹1,050-60. Traders said that cotton price will remain at this level and there is no hope for rise or fall as demand is very limited at this time. However, some analysts believe that as stock is declining across the country, farmers may expect some price rise in coming days

Business Standard

Odisha to procure Rs 127 cr worth groundnut, sunflower seed at MSP rate



The state government has decided to spend Rs 127 crore for procuring [groundnut](#) and [sunflower](#) seed from farmers at minimum support price (MSP) rates to avoid distress sale of the oilseed varieties.

The decision has been taken as per a request by National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd ([Nafed](#)), which is undertaking such exercises all over the country in association with state government agencies. The money spent by the state government will be reimbursed by Nafed. As per an action plan prepared by state government farm produce marketing agency, [Markfed](#), about 28,300 tonne groundnut would be procured under the price support system operation in the state.

The exercise would be conducted at six districts namely Puri, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Baleswar and Bhadrak, where the crop is grown in nearly 250,000 hectare

(ha) areas. “Markfed would soon begin its survey about identifying the crop procurement centres in these districts. The procurement process would be initiated immediately after the ongoing harvesting process is over,” said an official of the state government undertaking.

In January this year, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) had asked the Nafed to increase the volume of groundnut procurement to arrest steep price fall in key growing areas. In Odisha, a survey conducted by state agricultural department revealed that groundnuts are sold at Rs 3,500 per 100 kg at market yards, lower than the MSP fixed by Central government.

For 2014-15 rabi season, the MSP for groundnut has been fixed at Rs 4,000 per 100 kg, unchanged from the previous crop season. Similarly, nearly 500 tonne sunflower seed is targeted to be procured under the scheme. The oilseed is being sold around Rs 3,200 per 100 kg in the state, lower than Rs 3,750 per 100 kg MSP set by the Union government. It is grown primarily in Kalahandi and Boudh districts.

In terms of production, Odisha is the sixth largest in groundnut and fifth biggest producer in sunflower in India.

Jeera down 0.8% on weak demand



[Jeera](#) prices declined 0.84% to Rs 10,630 per quintal in futures market today as speculators reduced holdings, tracking a weak trend at spot market due to sluggish demand.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), jeera for delivery in May declined by Rs 90, or 0.84%, to Rs 10,630 per quintal with an open interest of 8,124 lots.

Likewise, the spice for delivery in June traded lower by Rs 70, or 0.65%, to Rs 10,765

per quintal in 4,302 lots.

Analysts said offloading of positions by speculators following sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position mainly led to decline in jeera prices at futures trade.

Mustardseed up 1.6% on firm spot cues



[Mustardseed](#) prices hardened by Rs 62 to Rs 3,755 per quintal in futures trading today, following fresh buying by stockists in tandem with improved sentiment in spot markets.

Marketmen said fall in supply against pick-up in demand in physical markets led to the rise in mustardseed futures prices.

Strong demand from oil mills coupled with vanaspati units largely pushed up prices, they said.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), mustardseed for far August contract gained Rs 62, or 1.68%, to Rs 3,755 per quintal, clocking an open interest of 1,120 lots.

Near June contract rose by Rs 31, or 0.86%, to Rs 3,642 per 100 kg, with an open interest of 63,290 lots.

Most active May contract improved by Rs 29, or 0.81%, to Rs 3,588 per quintal and open interest persisting in 1,03,890 lots.

Refined soya oil up 0.5% to Rs 725/kg



Supported by rising domestic demand, [refined soya oil](#) prices moved up by 0.51 per cent to Rs 724.70 per 10 kg in futures trading today as speculators created fresh positions.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, refined soya oil for delivery in May rose by Rs 3.65, or 0.51 per cent, to Rs 724.70 per 10 kg with an open interest of 85,780 lots.

The April contract gained Rs 2.40, or 0.34 per cent, to Rs 716.30 per 10 kg in 1,22,020 lots.

Analysts said fresh positions built-up by speculators on the back of rising demand in the spot market, mainly pushed up refined soya oil prices at futures trade.

[FCI](#) earns Rs 9,310-cr by selling 5.8 MT of wheat under [OMSS](#)



State-owned Food Corporation of India ([FCI](#)) has earned Rs 9,310 crore by selling [wheat](#) under the open market sale scheme ([OMSS](#)) in 2013-14.

The Corporation, however, was able to sell only 5.8 million tonnes (MT) of wheat under this scheme at the end of 2013-14 against the target of 8.5 MT, sources said.

The average price realised from the sale was Rs 1,602.85 per quintal, they added.

The reserve price under OMSS was fixed at Rs 1,500 per quintal plus applicable taxes and other levies in case of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh.

While, in respect of other states the freight cost from Ludhiana to the concerned state was added to Rs 1,500 for the purpose of fixing the reserve price.

The maximum quantity of wheat sale was in Haryana at of 1.13 MT, followed by Punjab with 7.63 lakh tonnes, Delhi with 7.6 lakh tonnes and Haryana with 6.24 lakh tonnes.

The amount realised from the sale of wheat could be of some help to the FCI at a time when it is facing liquidity crunch and has food subsidy dues of about Rs 50,000 crore.

The government pays bulk of food subsidy to FCI as it is the nodal agency with the primary task of purchasing and ensuring effective prices to farmers. It also ensures required supply of food grains at cheaper rates throughout the country.

In September last year, the government had allowed FCI to sell wheat stocks under OMSS it has excess of stock of the [grain](#).

Chilli down 1.3% on sluggish demand



[Chilli](#) prices fell 1.36% to Rs 10,030 per quintal in futures trade today after speculators trimmed positions amid sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position.

At the [National Commodity and Derivative Exchange](#), chilli teja for delivery in June fell further by Rs 138, or 1.36%, to Rs 10,030 per quintal with an open interest of 1,545 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in July shed Rs 68, or 0.67%, to Rs 10,150 per quintal in 85 lots.

Analysts said speculators offloaded positions due to sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position which mainly kept pressure on chilli teja prices at futures trade.

Turmeric up 0.6% on export demand



[Turmeric](#) prices rose 0.62% to Rs 7,190 per quintal in futures market today as speculators enlarged positions on pick-up in export demand in the spot market.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), turmeric for delivery in June rose by Rs 44, or 0.62%, to Rs 7,190 per quintal with an open interest of 5,140 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in May traded higher by Rs 40, or 0.57%, to Rs 7,044 per quintal in 9,815 lots.

Analysts attributed the rise in turmeric futures to pick-up in export demand in the spot markets against restricted supply from producing regions.

Rainless weather condition hits Assam tea production

[Rainless weather](#) condition, coupled with low humidity levels, has hit tea production in [Assam](#). As per industry estimates, there would be around 50 per cent drop in production till April, as compared to production figures of last year.

Assam has received 64 mm of rain between March 1 and April 23, which is a departure of 67 per cent from normal. The industry feels if the present weather condition continues till May 5, then the crop production till May will be 60 per cent less, which would be around 50 million kg, compared to leaf harvested during normal weather. A turnaround in production in coming months can only come if, according to the [tea industry](#), Assam receives at least 200 mm of rainfall in the month of May along with lowering of

temperature and proper distribution of rainfall.

Moreover, there has also been high incidence of attack by pests and insects like looper, thrips, redspider and helopeltis due to weak health of tea bushes. The rainless condition has also cast doubts on second flush production, which generally starts from May and produces the best quality Assam tea.

"We fear a total crop loss of around 10 per cent in the whole season of 2014 which will be near about a whopping quantum of 60 million kg of tea. Production this year up to end April will be 50 per cent less, which would be about 30 million kg. The output of premium second flush tea will be severely limited, said Bidyananda Barkakoty, Chairman NETA.

There have been reports of dry and hot spell scorching and defoliating tea bushes, placing them under severe stress and even causing plant death.

"Due to radiation and temperature stress, scorching of tea leaves has been reported from many tea estates. Exposure to ambient temperature of 35 degree celsius to 38 degree celsius during six to seven hours of the whole day has resulted in leaf temperature of 37 degree celsius to 40 degree celsius even in well-shaded area of tea estates. Food manufacturing capability of tea declines rapidly above 35 degree leaf temperature and there is no food production from 39 degree to 42 degree leaf temperature. The visual symptoms of wilting of tea leaves have already been noticed but the physiological, biochemical and anatomical damages have occurred much earlier", said Prafulla Bordoloi, a consultant tea scientist.

According to the Assam tea industry, it had never experienced such long rainless period with temperatures even crossing 40 degree celsius. Normally, the humidity levels during this period of the years hover between 50 to 90 per cent, but this year it's around 20 to 50 per cent. Many tea estates have suspended plucking and stopped production due to no leaf. "Phenomenal crop-loss and shutting down of manufacturing facilities on the eve of second flush is unprecedented," said Mayank Agarwalla, a tea planter of Doomdooma. Doomdooma is otherwise known as a rainfed area.

Owing to the dry spell, the tea estates could not apply fertilizers till now, which might have an effect in tea production in coming months.

"Delayed fertilizer application, which now will have to be done during the monsoon season, may have an impact on the monsoon crop as well", said Prabhat Bezboruah, a tea planter of Jorhat.

Assam produced 620 million kg of tea in 2013 and around 52 million kg till April.

The Telegraph

calcutta, india

Rain brings relief to tea plants

Tea growers in north Bengal said yesterday's light rainfall would help the plants to some extent as fresh leaves were likely to come up and pest attacks might decrease.

The tea industry in the region was affected by the absence of rainfall since March 20. The plants were in the grip of pest attacks and the plucking had to be stopped.

"Spraying water through irrigation can never meet the gap caused by lack of rainfall. Also, there are several small tea plantations where growers cannot provide water through irrigation. Yesterday's rain would help the tea industry as a whole. We hope fresh leaves would come up because of a change in the weather. Pests had destroyed tealeaves because of the scorching heat and the rain will help reduce such attacks," said Amitangshu Chakraborty, the principal advisor to the Indian Tea Planters' Association.

A planter said tea cultivation had been hit in the past one month because of the dry spell. "We had to stop plucking because of rise in temperature and absence of rainfall since March 20. The dry spell occurred ahead of the second flush, which is known to be of excellent quality and fetch good prices. Yesterday's rainfall has brought some respite to the industry. We look forward for more rainfall in the coming days as there are forecasts of thundershower by the India Meteorological Department," said a planter.

According to IMD sources, Madarihat recorded a rainfall of 7.10mm yesterday, while Malbazar and Dhupguri received 3.28mm and 15.98mm of rain, respectively. The rainfall recorded at other places in north Bengal were 16.74mm in Alipurduar, 28.27mm in Kalchini, 15.74mm in Mohitnagar, 10mm in Siliguri and 12mm in Jalpaiguri.

Following the rainfall, the maximum and minimum temperatures have also come down in the region. In Jalpaiguri, the average maximum and minimum temperatures had been hovering around 35-37 degrees Celsius and 22-25 degrees Celsius, respectively.

In the past 24 hours, the maximum temperature has come down to 33 degrees Celsius and the minimum to 20 degrees Celsius in Jalpaiguri.

Small tea growers, however, do not think that the crisis is over yet. “Because of the dry weather over a month, several acres of tea plantations have been damaged. Our members are in a pathetic situation and many of them have stopped plucking tealeaves as no fresh leaves are coming up in the bushes,” said Bijoygopal Chakraborty, the president of Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers’ Associations.

Although the rain was light, it would help other farmers as well. “The rain would largely help farmers who planted jute and vegetables. There is now relief for dried up agricultural fields and saplings,” said Tapan Sarkar, an agricultural department officer.



Farmers to Get Compensation for Crop Loss Due to Hail, Rain

The cabinet has decided to provide liberal compensation to farmers who suffered crop loss due to the recent hailstorms and untimely rains.

The interest on farm loans of affected farmers would be waived, the repayment tenure of their loans rescheduled and input subsidy to raise new crops provided.

The cabinet has decided on compensation of `15,000 per hectare for crop loss in dry land, `25,000 for wet land and `40,000 for irrigated land against `4,500, `9,000 and `12,000 respectively set by the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

Briefing reporters about the cabinet decisions, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister T B Jayachandra said, “Hailstorms and unseasonal rains damaged crops in around 160 villages. However, the compensation will cover just one hectare per farmer”.

End of Affidavit Raj

In a major decision that could bring relief to beneficiaries in availing various welfare benefits, the cabinet has decided to scrap the submission of affidavits.

Henceforth, a self-declaration form providing the required information is enough to avail the benefits, Jayachandra said.

Those who furnish false information or indulge in misrepresentation would be dealt with severely with six months' imprisonment or a penalty of `1,000 or both.

The departments will publish the model self-declaration form within two months.

More Teeth to Sakala

The Sakala scheme that assures time-bound services in government departments will get more teeth through greater accountability, the minister said.

The maximum limit of the fine, which is `500 at present, will be removed.

The cabinet has also decided to bring more services under Sakala. At present, only 478 services are under the scheme.