

THE HINDU

Agriculture polytechnics in all districts

After obtaining the State Government's nod, the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will start agriculture polytechnic colleges in all districts in the State, said Vice Chancellor K. Ramasamy at a press meet held here on Tuesday.

The Central Government had approved of the start of such polytechnics in the district as it was aimed at promoting skill development. The move was also part of the national skill development mission. Once the University obtained the State Government's nod, it would start the colleges either in the public-private partnership mode or make them completely state-funded.

The Central Government had allocated Rs. 2,200 crore for the purpose under the Twelfth Five Year Plan.

In the existing affiliated institutions – private agriculture colleges – the University had posted its professors to ensure quality of education. Having seen what had happened in technical and arts and science education on the quality front, the University did not want to take chances, the Vice Chancellor said.

If the affiliated colleges suffered from shortage of faculty, the University was also ready to depute its faculty.

To further improve quality and bring about modernisation, the University had planned to upgrade its syllabus. The focus of the new syllabus would also be on entrepreneurship.

There was an increased demand for science and technology courses the University offered. But many students were not aware of the all-India agriculture entrance examination. Successful completion of the examination would help students get a set in any of the agricultural education institutions in the country, including the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Students pursuing agriculture courses were eligible for a number of scholarships. The students could get junior and senior research fellowships once they complete their postgraduate programmes. They could also jobs, as the openings for agriculture graduates

were plenty, Mr. Ramasamy said and pointed out that in the next few years, at least 25,000 jobs in the banking industry would be available.

The University had also drawn up a plan to appoint postgraduate candidates as assistance professors.

In short, the employment opportunities for agriculture candidates were high as the challenge at present was to increase the yield while the availability of land and water decreased.

Fishermen demand higher compensation during ban period

Even while mechanised boat fishermen are busy setting right their boats and nets, taking advantage of the 45-day ban period, fishermen's associations have urged the government to hike the compensation paid to fishermen for livelihood loss during the ban period. The two boating jetties in Jegathapattinam and Kottaipattinam coastal villages in the district are brimming with 750 mechanised boats anchored since April 15 – the date on which the ban commenced. Fishermen from other districts, who have been staying here, have already left for their villages.

About 2,500 fishermen and their families utilise the spare time to repair their nets, which costs between Rs.5, 000 and Rs.10, 000.

Depending on the extent of repair work needed, the maintenance work of mechanised boats is done either on the water or at the shore. While small repair works are carried out at anchored position, major repairs are carried out by moving the boats to the shore.

The fishermen will have to spend a minimum of Rs.1lakh for repairing the boats. Some of the boats have suffered an extensive damage in attacks by the Sri Lankan Navy. A few boats were seized by the Sri Lankan authorities and were released after a prolonged delay. These boats needed major repairs involving huge expenditure. Fishermen who have already suffered a big loss owing to the ban are facing an additional burden of undertaking the repair works, lament the local fishermen associations. Both the Central and the State government should come forward to bear the expenses involved in repairing the boats, they said.

Meanwhile, the State government has provided a compensation of Rs.2,000 to each mechanised boat fishermen.

Kuttiyandi, president, Mechanised Boat Fishermen Association of Jegathapattinam, said if the government factors in the heavy loss of livelihood suffered by fishermen, the relief was paltry and the government should hike it to Rs.4,000.

The government should also increase the subsidy provided to fishermen for procuring freezer box, net, rope etc., besides hiking the monthly quota of subsidised diesel for each mechanised boat from 1,500 litres to 2,000 litres, Mr.Kuttiyandi added.

Supplyco to procure 6 lakh tonnes of paddy

In a remarkable move that would boost the morale of paddy farmers across the State, the Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation (Supplyco) has decided to procure about 6 lakh tonnes of paddy from all districts during this fiscal. “We wish to enhance the total paddy procurement during 2014-15 to 6 lakh tonnes against 5 lakh tonnes during 2013-14. It was 3.6 lakh tonnes during 2012-13,” said Supplyco Managing Director Lakshman Gugulloth here.

The corporation would disburse Rs.150 crore to paddy farmers this week. “With this payment, all dues for farmers till March 31 will be cleared. Earlier, an amount of Rs.125 crore was paid to paddy farmers towards the cost of paddy during February and March this year,” he said.

How to know artificially-ripened fruits

Fruits ripened using the chemical will have an ash-coloured layer on the skin.

If you wipe this layer, you will find the skin of uniform colour without any green patches.

Also gradually, the skin gets dry and wrinkled and black spots develop.

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, he said elaborate arrangements would be made for the convenience of tourists.

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

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

Expressing concern over traffic congestions on Saturdays and Sundays, the Collector said vehicles were stranded to a distance of 16 km on prime road during these days. Forest officials had provided parking lots at places such as the Guna Cave, Moyar Point, Pillar Rock and the 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.

Police officials replied that 2,600 private vehicles reached the hill station on weekends. 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 said.

The Collector advised the police not to allow vehicle parking on roadside.

To monitor the arrival of vehicles, CCTV cameras could be installed at the toll gate near the Silver Cascade area.

Life jacket was a must for tourists travelling in pleasure boats in the lake.

Scanty rains, high temperatures ratchet up vegetable prices



Vegetable prices have shot up by at least 25 percent over the last three weeks, owing to scanty rainfall and rising temperatures.

However, the increase has been attributed to an annual phenomenon observed during April as vegetable prices had similarly increased last year during the same time.

The price of beans, which has almost doubled in the last two weeks, is presently pegged at Rs. 70 as against its earlier price of Rs. 38 a kilo. Carrots have also become dear with a kilo of carrot now costing Rs. 40, a steep increase from Rs. 25 a kg three weeks ago.

Lemons cost Rs. 4 each in the retail market . Even brinjal prices have shot up to Rs. 27 a kg, while potatoes are priced at Rs. 31 a kilo. According to experts, Bangalore gets its supply of vegetables chiefly from the neighbouring districts of Kolar, Chikkaballapur and Ramnagar, which have seen little rains this year.

Keshav S. H., manager, procurement and marketing, Horticultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing and Processing Society (Hopcoms), told *The Hindu* that the supply of vegetables had fallen drastically starting last week of March. He said the yield per hectare had decreased by nearly half, as vegetables perished in the fields owing to soaring mercury levels.

However, onions and tomatoes have seen only a marginal increase in their prices, Hopcom sources said. Officials said that despite low rainfall and soaring temperatures, the supply of tomatoes, which was expected to fall, has not been affected.

Seed distribution

Free vegetable seed kits will be distributed to residence associations, agricultural organisations and Kudumbasree units by the Seed Development Authority here on Monday. For details, contact, 0487- 2360299 or 2390510.

Leading the way in organic practices



A young farmer from Churchigundi village in Shikaripur taluk has been cultivating paddy in a profitable manner for the past 15 years. B.N. Nandish has adopted green manuring, a practice of ploughing in green plant tissues grown in the field and incorporating them into the soil for improving the structure as well as fertility. The use of the humble legumes, millets and locally-available weed varieties as green manure has helped him do away with chemical fertilizers.

Mr. Nandish started cultivation on the family-owned agricultural land in 1998. Initially, like other farmers in the vicinity, he was under the impression that the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in a liberal manner would increase the yield substantially. In 2000, more than 50 per cent of the paddy he had cultivated in a 15-acre land was destroyed by brown planthopper disease. This left Mr. Nandish disillusioned with modern farming practices that advocate chemical inputs and improved varieties of seeds. Around this time, he happened to read an article by Japanese farmer Masanobu Fukuoka in a

Kannada daily. “I was impressed by the farming practices adopted by Fukuoka and decided to minimise the dependence on chemical inputs,” he said.

Interactions with various progressive farmers motivated Mr. Nandish to cultivate native varieties of paddy by using legumes and green manure to increase soil fertility. Prior to cultivation of paddy, he broadcasted seeds of legumes including Calliandra, Centrosema, Velvet bean, Gliricidia, Peanuts, and Clover, in the soil for nitrogen fixation. In addition to this, monocots, millets, and oil seeds were also sown.

“Guinea grass, Cockscomb, and Eupatorium are some of the plants cultivated as green manure. The rich biodiversity play host to various soil microorganisms and maintains ecological balance,” Mr. Nandish said. His field has over 100 species of green manure crops.

With the use of green manure, the yield of paddy from his land is 28 quintal per acre, four quintal more than the average yield in Shikaripur taluk.

Along with enhancing soil fertility, green manure plants like Gliricidia act as live fences, pest and rodent repellents, Mr. Nandish said.

“Though there are pest attacks even after opting for the green manure method, the situation has never gone out of control,” he said.

He cultivates Sidha Sanna, Budda, Rathan Sagar and Sannavalya varieties of paddy. The produce is marketed by Sahaja Samrudha, a Bangalore-based forum.

Mr. Nandish also grows arecanut on five acres of land through natural farming methods.

Innovative farming practices have taken Mr. Nandish to various parts of the world. He represented the Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) in the 17th Organic World Congress held at Seoul, South Korea, in 2011. He also represented Karnataka in BioFach-2012, a organic trade fair held under the aegis of International Forum for the Organic Agricultural Movements in Nuremberg, Germany.

Food Safety officials pulp artificially-ripened mangoes



Even as the European Union banned the import of Indian Alphonso mangoes, the Food Safety and Drug Administration unit swung into action in Chennai on Tuesday, raiding outlets selling artificially-ripened mangoes. Three teams of officials conducted raids in Koyambedu, T. Nagar, and Kothwal Chavadi.

Over 51 kg of calcium carbide was seized from 218 shops. At least 1.7 tonnes of mangoes were found to be artificially ripened.

More than 200 food business operators also received awareness notices from the authorities,” according to an official.

According to food safety officials, calcium carbide, used to ripen mangoes, is a proven carcinogen.

On Tuesday, labourers were found packing calcium carbide into small sachets to be hidden in heaps of unripe fruits. Use of carbide to ripen mangoes is an offence under the Food Safety and Standards Act.

Common symptoms reported after eating such fruits are diarrhoea, vomiting, and eye and skin irritations.

Alphonso ban may not affect Salem mango growers



With about 5,000 acres under Alphonso mango cultivation, Salem may not be affected by the ban on Alphonso imports by European Union from India from May 1.

“Countries in the EU have never been favourite destinations for Salem mangoes,” says A. Jayapal, president of the Mango Growers and Traders Association. The district also exports about 60 tonnes of the Alphonso variety every year.

“One has to follow a lot of formalities from the time a mango sapling is planted. The demand is mostly for organic and pesticide-free mangoes from EU countries. And, the consignment is returned even if one fruit is damaged,” he says.

Apart from Alphonso, the main varieties here are Salem Benglura, Emampasand, Nadusalai, Senthura, Banganapalli and Benglura. Annually 60 tonnes to 70 tonnes of mangoes are exported from Salem and it is mostly the Alphonso variety. At times, exports go up to 100 tonnes.

“Export to Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and the West Asian countries is preferred, as the norms are not so stringent as in European Union”, says Jayapal, who has been in the business for over 55 years.

It will cost about Rs. one lakh for packing and transporting mangoes worth Rs. 50,000 to the European Union. “If it is returned, traders and exporters suffer heavy loss”, he said and added that this was the main reason to stay away from the EU market.

“Exporters from Chennai give the specifications on the size of mangoes and the traders and growers here pack and send them to the exporters accordingly,” says J. Srinivasan, a third-generation mango trader in Salem.

This year the yield has come down drastically due to deficient rainfall resulting in lesser availability of the fruits which has affected exports too, traders say.

R. Arivanantham writes from Krishnagiri

The ban will not affect farmers in Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts also as most of the mango produced in the two districts are used for producing pulp.

H.M. Sathyamoorthy, Project Head, KRISHMAA Cluster Development Society (KCDS) told *The Hindu* that the ban would not affect the mango growers as they supply to over 40 pulp industries operationing here.

But, the failure of summer showers in March and April will affect the mango yield in over 46,200 hectares in both the districts, says K. Kalaiselvi, Joint Director, Horticulture, Krishnagiri and in-charge for Horticulture department in Dharmapuri.

Varieties such as Alphonso, Senthura, Peethar, Himampasandh, Neelam, and Malgoa varieties are cultivated by the farmers in the districts. Over 85 per cent of the mango-producing belts in these two districts are rain-fed areas.

Deficit rainfall will affect mango yield during this season, she said.

The average yield per hectare is eight tonnes here. Only those farmers who have borewells or installed drip irrigation facility in their orchards have managed to get some yield, “The trees have almost withered and if there is no rain in the coming weeks, the situation will only get worse,” she says.

Quality and yield of the mangoes will be hit by the failure of rainfall, says M.C. Santhakumar, president, Innovative Mango Producers’ Association. Smaller cold storage facilities are the need of the hour. Due to lack of cold storage, 25 per cent to 30 per cent of production goes waste, he says.

Water level

TIRUNELVELI:

The water level in the Papanasam dam on Tuesday stood at 34.50 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 11.92 cusecs and 104.75 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam.

The level in the Manimuthar dam stood at 63.86 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 4 cusecs and 200 cusecs of water is discharged.

Kanyakumari:

The level stood at 15.50 feet in the Pechipparai dam, 37.25 feet in Perunchani, 3.15 feet in Chittar 1, 3.25 feet in Chittar 11, 1.80 feet in Poigai and 41.17 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru.



Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Wednesday, Apr 30

Max Min

34° | 27°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:48

Humidity: 75

Sunset: 06:23

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1009

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, May 1

Max Min

35° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday May 2	Saturday May 3	Sunday May 4	Monday May 5	Tuesday May 6
36° 28°	35° 26°	34° 27°	34° 26°	34° 26°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy

Coonoor tea prices rise Rs. 5/kg

When the leaf and dust auctions were held last weekend, there was increased demand particularly for the medium and plainer grades.

This pushed up the price by Rs. 5 a kg on the average compared with the previous week; still, as the price was as much as Rs. 25 lower than this time last year, as much as 93 per cent of the 10.41 lakh kg on offer was sold.

There was no leaf auction on Thursday because of elections to the in Tamil Nadu for the 39 Lok Sabha seats.

Vigneshwar Estate topped the CTC market at Rs. 181 a kg. Deepika Supreme and Homedale Estate got Rs. 176 each, Hittakkal Estate Rs. 172, Shanthi Supreme Rs. 166 and Crosshill Estate Rs. 165. Among orthodox teas, Chamraj topped at Rs. 235 a kg followed by Kairbetta Rs. 221, Havukal Rs. 205, Corsley Rs. 192 and Kodanad Rs. 190. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 53-56 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-140 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 64-66 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-175 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Export purchase was limited to plainer less-priced teas. Some teas were bought for Pakistan in wide range Rs. 53-70 a kg.

Dry spell could affect next cardamom crop

Strong demand despite moderate arrivals pushed up cardamom prices last week at auctions. Absence of summer rains in 95 per cent of the growing areas this year has raised fears in the market that the next crop would not only be delayed but would also be less, market sources told *Business Line*.

Therefore, upcountry dealers were buying actively. Besides, those who postponed buying ever since the elections process began, have also started covering now, they said.

There is also an apprehension in the market of a late crop this year because of continuous dry spell in the cardamom growing tracts. The summer rains, which have been active in the midlands of Kerala, have eluded the main cardamom growing areas in the high

ranges, growers in Kumily told *Business Line*. The individual auction average on Thursday crossed Rs. 900/kg last week and on Sunday, it stood at Rs. 929 on demand. Export buying shrunk as no fresh orders were received following an upsurge in prices, exporters said. They attributed this phenomenon to the release of cardamom by Guatemala which was holding back its stocks for the prices to move up. They continued to offer to the main market for the commodity in West Asia at competitive rates. Prices of exportable variety 7 mm plus capsules are sold at Rs. 1,000-50 a kg. Exporters have bought an estimated 20 tonnes of capsules.

According to PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, Kumily, arrivals are expected to be around 50 tonnes per auction as the stocks held by growers have been, by and large, liquidated. At the KCPMC auction, 75 tonnes of cardamom arrived and almost the entire quantity was sold out, Punnoose said. The maximum price was Rs. 1,123 and the minimum Rs. 527. Auction average rose to Rs. 929 a kg, he said.

During the current season ending July, arrivals are 18,744 tonnes against 11,803 tonnes during the same period a year ago. Sales were 18,223 tonnes against 11,251 tonnes. The weighted average price as on April 27 was Rs. 627.33 (Rs. 734.80).

Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): AGEB 1,060-70; AGB 860-870; AGS 830-840 and AGS -1: 810-820. Bulk prices ranged between Rs. 480 and Rs. 1,200 a kg.

Cashew body heads to US to woo buyers

The Cashew Export Promotion Council of India is leading an 18-member delegation to attend the AFI Annual Convention at Naples, Florida, US to be during May 1-2.

The objective of the delegation is to study the current market trends/consumption pattern and preferences and strengthen India's trade with the US on cashew kernel and allied products.

Though India has been traditionally supplying high quality cashew kernels to the US, exports have been affected by global recession during the past couple of years.

Vietnam has taken position as the lead supplier to this region since the last few years. The US has been the major importer of Indian cashews and at present accounts for approximately 30 per cent of total export of cashew kernels from India. Exports of cashew kernels to the US last year were 34,282 tonnes against 33,344 tonnes in 2012.

The 18-member delegation, led by TK Shahal Hassan Musaliar, Chairman, CEPCI, will meet with prospective cashew nut buyers, roasters, importers, salters, traders, etc.

The Council is also organising Cashew Confluence – a networking meeting during the convention, which would be a premier gathering of Indian cashew kernel exporters participating in AFI 2014, prospective buyers and all those who are concerned with cashew around the world.

Cropping pattern to change on lower rainfall

A lower-than-normal monsoon may trigger a shift in cropping pattern this year, mainly in the South where farmers could plant more “dry crops”, such as maize and cotton which require less water.

“The prediction of a lower-than-normal rains may not have a significant impact on kharif plantings but could spell concerns for the rabi season if rainfall is less and soil moisture gets affected by low water levels in the reservoirs,” said M Prabhakar Rao, Chairman and Managing Director, Nuziveedu Seeds Ltd. Rao, who is also the President of National Seed Association of India, said that he expected cotton acreage this year to go up by about 5 per cent, as farmers in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka may plant more of the fibre crop.

Less water

Last year, cotton was planted on about 11.35 million hectares. Cotton and maize require relatively less water compared with paddy.

Echoing Rao’s views, Arvind Kapur, Managing Director of Rasi Seeds’ vegetable seed division, said the acreage under corn and cotton could see a rise, mainly in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Rasi Seeds, which earns a bulk of its Rs. 400-crore revenues from Bt cotton hybrids, had acquired the corn seed business of Bayer Bioscience in India.

“We are looking to sell about 8,000 tonnes of hybrid corn seeds this year,” Kapur said.

El Niño threat

In its first official forecast, the India Meteorological Department last week said that the South-West monsoon would be a tad lower than normal, while predicting a 60 per cent probability of El Nino's occurrence.

This could trigger dry spells and possibly result in drought. The monsoon is crucial to the country's agriculture as about two-thirds of farm lands are dependent on rainfall.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture Ministry and input makers, such as the seed and crop protection companies, are gearing up to meet any eventuality arising out of the potential El Nino.

"Crop plans of Karnataka, Punjab and Haryana were reviewed last week. We plan to take up the exercise for other States soon," a senior official in the Agriculture Ministry said. The Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture has already prepared contingency plans for about 500 districts.

"We are keeping an ear to the ground so that if there is a necessity for alternative cropping, we can quickly move the materials," said V Shankar, Managing Director and CEO of Rallis India, which is into seeds, agrochemicals and fertilisers.

However, companies such as Insecticides (India) Ltd see a marginal decline in their business in the event of lower rains. "Consumption of agrochemicals could come down by about 10 per cent," said Rajesh Aggrawal, Managing Director of Insecticides (India) Ltd.

Short-covering boosts spot rubber

Spot rubber made all round gains on Tuesday.

The market improved on fresh buying and short covering in the absence of genuine and quantity sellers at lower levels.

Sheet rubber was quoted firm at Rs. 141.50 (Rs. 140) a kg by traders. The grade improved to Rs. 141 (Rs. 139.50) and Rs. 138 (Rs. 136.50) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers.

May futures firmed up to Rs. 142.72 (Rs. 142.16), June to Rs. 145.75 (Rs. 145.01), while the Rubber Mini May futures improved to Rs. 141.10 (Rs. 140.80) and June to Rs. 145 (Rs. 143.77) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) inched up to Rs. 127.23 (Rs. 127.11) at Bangkok.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 141.50 (140); RSS-5: 137 (135.50); Ungraded: 133 (131); ISNR 20: 130 (127.50) and Latex 60%: 113 (111).

Business Standard

[Soya beans fail to bounce as crushing sinks to 4-year low](#)

Soya bean prices have gone up 18.6% to Rs 4,512.50 a quintal since the start of this year. But refined oil prices have risen 3% to Rs 716 per 10 kg due to cheaper imports



Soya-bean [crushing](#) activity has seen a huge drop due to lower availability. India's crushing capacity is 22.5 million tonnes. But only 10 per cent of units are in use. These are using 25 to 30 per cent of their capacities, said Rajesh Agarwal, spokesperson of [Soybean](#) Processors Association of India.

During summer, ahead of kharif sowing, bean crushing is usually low. But this year it is unusually so. Sources said this had not been seen in four years.

Since the start of this oil year (October to September) till March, India has crushed five million tonnes. It had crushed a million tonnes more a year ago.

This year, bean output is similar to last. Also, there has been crop damage, which has impacted quality and quantity. Last year, India had produced 1.2 million tonnes. This year, it produced 1.1 million tonnes.

Govindbhai Patel, managing partner at GG Patel and Nikhil Research Company, said, "Crushing has seen a huge impact and is at a four- to five-year low due to lower availability on the spot market."

B V Mehta, executive director of Solvent Extractors' Association of India, said, "There is a difference between Indian and global prices. So, importing oil is attractive. This has affected crushing." Arrivals have seen a hit in three months and have been lower 25 per cent compared to last year's.

Daily arrivals all over India are 200,000 bags (one is 100 kg), lower compared to last year's.

Bean prices have gone up 18.6 per cent to Rs 4,512.5 a quintal since the start of this calendar year. But refined oil prices have only risen three per cent to Rs 716 per 10 kg due to cheaper imports.

North increases area under kinnow as South set to peel it

The flourishing market for kinnow in the southern states of India has driven the farmers in north to increase area under kinnow



Farmer in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are diversifying into [kinnow](#), a [citrus fruit](#) resembling orange, for higher returns.

The area has been increasing in the semi-arid zones due to the flourishing market in the south. About 4,000 hectares is the area. Cotton and wheat farmers are also diversifying

into kinnow. Close to 2,200 acres in Punjab, 1,100 acres in Haryana and 700 acres in Rajasthan are being added a year.

Since kinnow fruit grows every alternate season, this year is off. So despite addition of plants (gestation: five years) in the fruit-bearing stage, the total output may remain slightly lower than last year's.

This may drive up prices 10 per cent on last year's. There is always demand for citrus fruit in the south. Orange is available till September and then malta for two months. The void after malta is filled by kinnow that arrives by end-December and is available till February.

Farmers in the kinnow areas of Punjab (Abohar, Fazilka and Hoshiarpur) and Haryana (Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar, Bhiwani and Jhajjar) got access to the markets in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu three to four years back and are now making a quick buck.

The mission director, horticulture, and nodal officer, Kinnow, in Punjab, Gurkanwal Singh Sahota, told Business Standard the state government would try to run citrus processing plants at full capacity this year. These will consume small-size kinnow, so there would be lesser supply in the market leading to a price rise.

He added under the diversification mission of the state government (from wheat-paddy rotation), the stress was to increase kinnow area.

The yield of kinnow in Punjab is 22 tonnes a hectare due to farm practices outreach.

The director-general, horticulture, Haryana, Arjan Singh Saini, said kinnow was the largest citrus fruit grown in Haryana.

It needed less water than paddy and gave a return of Rs 1-2 lakh an acre.

Kinnow is sold at Rs 60 a kg in the retail market. Farmers get Rs 8-10 a kg.

Some have started selling directly.

Farmer Deepak Puri from Hoshiarpur said even small farmers could make a group and

seek help from the state government to get higher returns by directly approaching traders.

Sahota said the Punjab government was considering launching a campaign for consumer awareness. "We plan to hit the target audience through electronic media in December. We will urge them to eat more kinnows for health benefits."

To raise yield, the states have set up centres of excellence under the National Horticulture Mission.

JUICING IT UP

Figures for 2013-14

	Output (tonnes)	Area (hectares)
Punjab	988,000	46,000
Haryana	231,000	19,402
Rajasthan	182,000	14,616
Himachal Pradesh	29,000	22,000

Source: Directorates of horticulture, Punjab and Haryana, and National Horticulture Mission

Exports are uncompetitive as Pakistan kinnow is cheaper.

State	Production (in lakh tones)	Acreage (in hactares)
Punjab	9.88	46,000
Haryana	2.31	19402
Rajasthan	1.82	14616
Himachal Pradesh	0.29	22,000

Production and area of year 2013-14

Barley down 1.5% on profit-booking

Near June contract slipped by 1.34%



Barley prices dropped by Rs 21.50 to Rs 1,392 per 100 kilo in futures trading today on the back of all round selling by traders, driven by weak spot markets sentiments.

Marketmen said pick up in supply and slackness in demand at higher levels in physical markets, mainly led to the fall in futures markets.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, barley prices for July contract dropped by Rs 21.50, or 1.52%, to Rs 1,392 per 100 kilo, with an open interest of 450 lots.

Near June contract slipped by Rs 18.50, or 1.34%, to Rs 1,360.50 per quintal, having an open interest of 9,180 lots.

May contract also lost Rs 16, or 1.18%, at Rs 1,338 per quintal, in an open interest of 9,150 lots.

Jeera remains weak on increased supply, low demand



Jeera remained weak for the second day and prices fell further by 0.74 per cent to Rs 10,695 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators trimmed positions on lower

demand in the spot market.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, jeera for delivery in June shed Rs 80, or 0.74 per cent, to Rs 10,695 per quintal with an open interest of 4,416 lots.

The May contract lost Rs 75, or 0.70 per cent, to Rs 10,570 per quintal in 7,899 lots.

Analysts said offloading of positions by speculators on lower demand in the spot market against increased supply from producing region mainly kept pressure on jeera prices at futures trade.

Chilli up 0.7% as demand picks up

Chilli prices rose by 0.79% to Rs 10,166 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions on pick-up in demand in the spot market.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chilli teja for delivery in June rose by Rs 80, or 0.79% to Rs 10,166 per quintal with an open interest of 1,575 lots.

Market analysts said fresh positions built-up by speculators after demand picked up the spot market against restricted arrivals from producing regions mainly led to rise in chilli teja prices at futures trade.

Turmeric down 1.1% on profit-booking



Turmeric prices fell 1.14% to Rs 6,930 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators booked profits at prevailing higher levels, driven by weak demand in the spot market against adequate supply.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, turmeric for delivery in May fell by Rs 80, or 1.14%, to Rs 6,930 per quintal with an open interest of 10,105 lots.

In a similar fashion, the spice for delivery in June traded lower by Rs 78, or 1.09%, to Rs 7,102 per quintal in 5,430 lots.

Analysts said besides profit-booking by speculators at existing levels, subdued demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position mainly pulled down turmeric prices at futures trade.

Sugar down 0.2% on ample supply



[Sugar](#) traded lower by 0.21% to Rs 3,251 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators reduced holdings at prevailing levels amid ample supply.

However, an estimated drop in production limited the fall.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), sugar for delivery in May declined by Rs 7, or 0.21%, to Rs 3,251 per quintal with an open interest of 70,170 lots.

The sweetener for delivery in June also shed Rs 2, or 0.06%, to Rs 3,229 per quintal in 29,020 lots.

Analysts attributed the fall in sugar futures to profit-booking at prevailing levels and ample supplies from producing regions but reports of an estimated drop in production restricted the fall.

Cardamom down 0.5% on sluggish demand



[Cardamom](#) prices declined 0.51% to Rs 982.50 per kg in futures trading today as speculators reduced positions amid sluggish demand against adequate stocks position.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in May declined by Rs 5, or 0.51%, to Rs 982.50 per kg in a business turnover of 247 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in June traded lower by Rs 3.60, or 0.35%, to Rs 1,013.30 per kg in 110 lots.

Analysts said speculators trimmed positions due to sluggish demand against adequate stocks position, leading to fall in cardamom prices at futures trade.

Palm oil down 0.3% on profit-booking



[Crude palm oil](#) prices fell 0.35% to Rs 564.50 per 10 kg in futures market today as speculators indulged in profit-booking at prevailing higher levels.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), crude palm oil for delivery in May traded lower by Rs 2, or 0.35%, to Rs 564.50 per 10 kg in a business turnover of 66 lots.

Similarly, the oil for delivery in April shed 70 paise, or 0.12%, to Rs 567.20 per 10 kg in

40 lots.

Market analysts said besides profit-booking by speculators at prevailing levels, subdued demand in the spot market, led to a fall in crude palm oil prices at futures trade.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Misguided mango import ban could hit India-EU free trade pact?

The European Union's decision to ban the import of Indian mangoes is "ill-conceived and misguided" and could impact the 28-member bloc's negotiations on a free trade agreement with India, a leading European trade body said on Tuesday. The Brussels-based Europe India Chamber of Commerce issued a statement on the ban on Indian Alphonso mangoes and some vegetables which comes into force from May 1.

"The EU bureaucracy thinks that this decision will strengthen its bargaining position on FTA and other bilateral issues with the new government but the EU's thinking is utterly 'misplaced' and very childish, and will only harden India's new government's attitude towards EU," warned Sunil Prasad, secretary-general of the chamber set up to promote bilateral trade, investment and economic relations between the EU and India.

The UK's department for environment, food and rural affairs (Defra) has said the temporary EU ban was necessary due to the pests found in fruits and vegetables which could threaten Britain's salad crop industry of tomato and cucumber. "Indian mangoes and vegetables are imported to Europe for centuries and by banning these, the EU has once again shown its immaturity and utter nonsense in policy decisions.

"There are countries in Africa and Asia where cultivation and packaging process of imported mangoes are far worse than India and by singling out India, the EU has demonstrated its complete disrespect and unbalanced attitude towards the existing negotiation on an FTA," Prasad said. He expressed hope that the EU will rethink its decision and create a "conducive environment" where issues of bilateral trade can be discussed with the new government in New Delhi.

Erratic weather to trim 2014 tea output, exports

Tea output in the country's top-producing state Assam is likely to fall by 10% in 2014 due to scanty rainfall and a sharp rise in temperatures, hitting exports of premium grade leaf from the world's biggest black tea producer, industry officials said. A drop in India's production and exports could push up global prices and boost shipments from competing countries like Ke-nya, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

Assam produced 618 million kg tea in 2013, more than half of the country's total production of 1,200 million kg. "We have lost production since the start of the year due to extreme dry weather. There could be a 10% drop in production this year," Rajib

Barooah, chairman of Assam Tea Planters' Association, said. "Higher temperatures are hitting the growth of tea bushes. There is a concern of pest infestation due to erratic weather."

In Assam and West Bengal, India's second-biggest tea producer, temperatures were hovering 2 to 5 degrees Celsius above normal, the weather department said on Tuesday. "Tea plantations badly need rainfall. Further dryness will increase crop damage," said Sujit Patra, joint secretary at the Indian Tea Association. Tea production in West Bengal could drop if adverse weather conditions prevail for next few weeks, Patra said.

From March 1 to April 23, Assam received 69% less rainfall than normal, while rainfall in West Bengal was 63% below average. The two states accounted for nearly 80% of the tea production last year. Rainfall in March and April determines production in May and June, when Indian tea gardens produce their premier second flush crop.

"Early onset of monsoon could limit the damage. But if the monsoon remains patchy as forecast, then production will suffer in the second half," said a researcher at Tea Research Association.

Kerala's fish catch going down fast



Kollam/Kochi: The coastal waters of Kerala are reputed for their abundance of fish and the state widely recognised as one of the largest fish consuming and exporting states of

the country. But mechanisation and advancement in technology has led to over-exploitation of the fish in the sea, and to a dwindling catch which in turn has led to growing poverty among the traditional fishing hamlets of the state.

Contributing to the fall in catch is the relatively new practice of netting the fish fry for insignificant purposes. The mindless destruction of the young fish has inevitably led to a fall in catch and a rise in the price of fish across the state. In blatant violation of the high court ban, the fish fry netted out of the sea are seen piled up at harbours in Azheekkal, Neendakara, and Sakthikulangara for transportation to neighbouring states.

“Tonnes of young fish are transported to Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh as chicken feed for as little as Rs 10 a kg, while the fully grown fish fetch around Rs 200 a kg in the markets. As tens of thousands of fry are caught, there are fewer adult fish around today,” says Mr Jacob Joseph, a sea food commission agent.

Fishes like Painthi, Maana, Etta, and Thirandi are no longer found in the same numbers along the state’s coast owing to the unscientific and unsustainable fishing that goes on unchecked. Worryingly, the fish varieties too have reduced drastically owing to the dumping of waste into the sea. “Even small fishing vessels catch fish fries going against the law which is not effectively enforced. The concept of a trawling ban too needs to be rethought according to the shift in the breeding patterns of fish,” says Adv. John Cyril, a marine expert.

While eight commissions have been appointed to check unscientific and improper fishing practices along the Kerala coast, only one recommendation on engaging trawling has been implemented as a statute so far. The commissions had also recommended banning fishing nets with a mesh size below 28 mm, but this has been largely ignored. Global warming is also playing a role as the fish species near the shore tend to migrate to the cooler interior and deeper waters, badly affecting shallow fishing.

Fishermen look for other jobs

The fishermen in the Kozhikode coast are a worried lot over the sharp decline in catch which has been continuing for last many months. The sharp decline in rains and the subsequent summer along with deep sea fishing by huge fishing vessels might have caused the fall in fish availability, says fishermen. “Many fish species are not even seen these days”, said KS Nissar, a fisherman at Nainamvalappu, Kozhikode.

“The extreme heat and ubiquitous fishing vessels with all fishing nets robbing all the sea wealth result in low catch”, he said. “Now the sea is hotter than the tarred road and it is tough for us to sustain during day time”, Mr Nissar said, adding that many varieties have

dwindled almost to nil. “We had never faced a situation where we had to depend on some other job for livelihood. Although there have been fluctuations in the catch, we have somehow managed to meet the daily needs”, said NV Ashraf, another fisherman.

Fisheries deputy director S Selvest told DC that the department had conducted a study on the impact of ban on monsoon trawling which proved that there was a steady increase in sea wealth after the introduction of the ban. “But the entry of huge fishing ships eliminated countless fish varieties and also resulted in fast dwindling of sea wealth”, he added.

Sharp decline in fishlanding in 2013

The year 2013 saw a sharp decline in fish landing in Kerala, according to the figures of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) here. While the catch was 8.39 lakh tonnes in 2012, it came down to 6.71 lakh tonnes in 2013. The catch was 7.43 lakh tonnes in 2011. But CMFRI has no evidence that the practice of catching juvenile fish for making fish feed is a reason for the fall in catch.

“Fluctuations in quantity of the catch happen due to various reasons. We have come across destruction of habitats of fish due to over exploitation. There are environmental reasons as well,” said Ms V. Kripa, senior scientist with CMFRI. According to the agency, 25% of the catch in the state comprises of oil sardine and mackerel. While oil sardines accounted for 3.99 lakh tonnes of the catch in 2012, this came down to 2.46 lakh tones in 2013.

Ms Kripa added that normally February to May was a lean season for fish landing in Kerala. “The rise in prices of fish is also on account of increasing demand,” she explained. As per the Marine Census of 2010, there are 1.45 lakh active fishermen in Kerala.

Forest department buys 18 cameras to monitor movements of wild animals

COIMBATORE: In the aftermath of recent incidents of wild animals including leopards and other predators straying into human settlements, the forest department has decided to install 18 cameras, each worth Rs 20,000, in the six forest ranges in the district.

The camera traps will be set up in areas where there have been frequent reports of animal movement and near water holes. The main objective of the exercise, according to officials, is to track and record the movement patterns of animals.

"We have selected important areas where these cameras will be fixed in the six forest ranges. Once a week, the cameras will be fixed in the reserve forest. The camera trap will help us monitor the movements of wild animals," said M Senthil Kumar, district forest officer,

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Coimbatore forest division.

The division has six forest ranges - Coimbatore, Boluvampatti, Perianaickenpalayam, Karamadai, Mettupalayam and Sirumugai. The officials conduct a wild animal census once a year using cameras. As the division has bought 18 cameras, each range will get three cameras. Senthilkumar said the forest department staff had seen a tiger in Sirumugai and Mettupalayam forest ranges. "We have decided to get a camera trap of the tiger in the two forest ranges," Senthil Kumar said.

The cameras have sensors and they would click automatically whenever objects cross their path. "It would also help us during the elephant migration season in the forest ranges," Senthil Kumar said.

On January 31, three sheep were found dead and two injured in a cattle shed situated on a farm land at Zaheernaickenpalayam on the outskirts of the city. The farmers of the village claimed that a leopard had attacked the sheep. But forest officials suspect the sheep to have been killed by a jackal, fox or wild dog.

"We have fixed a camera in the village recently and found that a group of stray dogs had entered the farm land and killed the sheep," Senthil Kumar said.

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