

Farmers welcome decision to continue incentive for paddy

‘Centre’s decision to ban the incentive is shocking’

Farmers of the central districts have welcomed the State government’s decision to continue the incentive for paddy to benefit the farmers in the State, despite the Central government’s directive to withdraw the incentive concession. A number of farmers representing various associations have said that the State government’s stand will help increase paddy productivity and will be a great source of support in the wake of rise in the cultivation cost. P. Viswanathan, State president of Tamizhaga Eri Matrum Aatru Paasana Vivasayigal Sangam, said that the Central government’s directive banning the incentive has come as a shock to the delta farmers, as it deviated a system introduced in 2002. However referring to the status quo stand by the State government, he thanked the Chief Minister for her gesture. He said the State government’s per quintal procurement price at Rs. 1,470 for fine variety and Rs. 1,410 for common variety of paddy, which included an incentive of Rs. 70 and Rs. 50 respectively, and the Chief Minister’s announcement on the floor of the Assembly guaranteeing incentive to the paddy farmers has come as a big relief. A. Nagarajan, state vice president of Congress farmers’ wing, said the State government’s announcement on the procurement policy without any downward revision has been widely welcomed by the farming community. At a time when the cultivation cost is on the rise and farmers had to incur huge expenditure in the wake of failure of monsoon, the Chief Minister’s clarification has come as a great support.

The humble brinjal’s Bt moment?

JAIRAM RAMESH

Between the U.S. approach of permissions and the European one of prohibitions, there lies a middle path based on precautions, the approach India needs to follow on Bt brinjal



TO 'BT' OR NOT TO 'BT' ?

THE PRESENT ACRIMONY NEEDS TO GIVE WAY TO A REASONED AND SOBER DIALOGUE, SAYS FORMER UNION MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS JAIRAM RAMESH

- 1 In October 2009, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) gave a go-ahead to the commercialisation of Bt brinjal.
- 2 Jairam Ramesh, through a speaking order issued in February 2010, imposed a moratorium on following grounds:
 - a) Lack of consensus among State governments as well as in the scientific community
 - b) Concerns that seed supply would be the monopoly of one multinational company.
 - c) There appeared to be a persuasive case for more tests and trials
 - d) The speaking order was at pains to point out that the moratorium should not be construed as discouraging the ongoing R&D
- 3 Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, in his letter to Jairam Ramesh, had suggested that two steps be taken prior to approval:
 - a) Cataloguing and conservation of the existing genetic variability in brinjal
 - b) A careful study of the chronic effects of Bt brinjal on humans.
- 4 Jairam Ramesh had hoped that the moratorium period would be used productively to bridge the lacuna. This has not happened.

Shiv Visvanathan has, in his own inimitable style, called for a wider public debate on genetically modified crops (“Harvest of controversy,” *The Hindu*, July 29). While doing so, he has drawn attention to the genetically modified brinjal episode and my own role in it — a role that has attracted bouquets and brickbats in equal measure.

Moratorium on introduction

Briefly, on February 10, 2010, as the Minister for Environment and Forests, I had, in a detailed 19-page “speaking order” made public immediately, overruled the recommendations of the statutory Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) and imposed a moratorium on the commercialisation of Bt brinjal — the first genetically modified food crop sought to be sold in the markets. The moratorium had been imposed because of four crucial reasons. First, no State government cutting across party lines and ideologies supported the commercialisation. Second, there appeared to be no overwhelming consensus on it in the domestic and international scientific community. Third, there were concerns that seed supply would be the monopoly — direct and indirect — of one multinational company. Fourth, there appeared to be a persuasive case for more tests and trials under an agreed protocol and under an independent regulatory agency that would inspire wider confidence. Professor Visvanathan draws attention to the public consultations that were held which he feels strengthened the democratic process. These took place in seven cities — Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Nagpur. Kolkata and Bhubaneswar were selected because West Bengal and Odisha account for 50 per cent of brinjal production in India. Ahmedabad was selected because of the success of Bt cotton in Gujarat. Nagpur was chosen because it is the home of India’s premier research institution in cotton and there have been controversies over Bt cotton in Vidarbha. Chandigarh was included because it is the capital of India’s two most agriculturally advanced States while Bangalore and Hyderabad were chosen because they are the most important centres for biotech Research and Development (R&D). Over 8000 people from all sections of society — and I stress all — participated in these consultations. As expected, widely divergent views were expressed, including one that accused me of being an agent for the multinational in question! These consultations were videographed and put in the public domain. The extreme intolerance on the part of the civil society activists as well as the disdainful arrogance on the part of the scientists were on full display. Simultaneously, the views of over 60 scientists in India, the U.S., France, New Zealand and other countries were sought. A number of them supported commercialisation while many others opposed it. Some others advocated caution and called for more data.

‘Conserve genetic variability’

I spent long hours with the doyen of Indian agricultural scientists and one of the key architects of the Green Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, (whose eponymous foundation is very active in the area of genetically modified crops) and his letter to me is reproduced below almost in full:

“Dear Jairam:

My Postgraduate thesis at IARI [Indian Agricultural Research Institute] in 1949 was on Brinjal and non-tuber bearing Solanum species. I have studied our rich genetic wealth in this wonderful crop. What will be the long-term impact of numerous local strains being replaced with one or two varieties with Cry1Ac gene from Monsanto? I suggest that during 2010, ICAR [the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources], along with Dr. Anil Gupta of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad [he maintains a national database on indigenous knowledge and farmers’ innovations], should both collect, catalogue and conserve the existing genetic variability in brinjal. Such a collection must be carefully preserved, before we permit the extinction of the gifts of thousands of years of natural evolution and human selection. The second step which needs to be taken is to ask the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad and the Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore to undertake a careful study of the chronic effects of Bt brinjal on human health. This is analogous to the studies carried out on the impact of tobacco smoking on the incidence of lung cancer in human beings. It will be in the national interest to complete these two steps before a decision on the release of Bt brinjal for commercial cultivation and human consumption is taken.” The speaking order was at pains to point out that the moratorium should not be construed as discouraging the ongoing R&D in using modern tools of biotechnology for crop improvement and that it applied only to Bt brinjal commercialisation. Indeed, while announcing this moratorium, I announced my full support for genetically modified rubber. The speaking order had also expressed the hope that the moratorium period would be used productively to (i) operationalise the independent regulatory body in its entirety as recommended by many scientists as well as civil society organisations; (ii) build a broader political (and public) consensus on the use of genetic engineering in agriculture; and (iii) give serious thought to the strategic importance of the seed industry and how we can retain public and farmer control over it even as we encourage private investment in this area. Alas, none of these three hopes has been even partially realised as yet.

Manmohan Singh's take

The then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had himself spoken about the issue in his address to the Indian Science Congress on January 3, 2010, in Thiruvananthapuram and the spirit of his remarks permeated the speaking order. He had said: "Developments in biotechnology present us the prospect of greatly improving yields in our major crops by increasing resistance to pests and also moisture stress. Bt cotton has been well accepted in our country and has made a great difference to the production of cotton. The technology of genetic modification is also being extended to food crops though this raises legitimate questions of safety. These must be given full weightage, with appropriate regulatory control based on strictly scientific criteria. Subject to these caveats, we should pursue all possible leads that biotechnology provides that increases our food security as we go through climate related stress." The first Green Revolution was entirely public sector-driven. Improved varieties in rice and wheat were developed in publicly funded institutions and were disseminated through them. But over the past few years, the locus of R&D in agri-biotech has shifted to the private sector and it is this that has caused much of the concern. Strengthening public sector R&D and reviving the public sector seed industry are critical imperatives if India is to move ahead in this vital area. The U.S. approach has been one of permissions, while the European approach has been one of prohibitions. The moratorium was the middle path based on precautions, an approach that would be both responsible to science and responsive to society. That, in my view, is the only way forward. The present acrimony must give way to a reasoned and sober dialogue.

Water released from Mettur reaches Mutharasanallur



The dry Cauvery bed fizzed with life as water released from Mettur reached Mutharasanallur on Thursday. — Photo: A. Muralitharan

Water released from Mettur reached Mutharasanallur on Thursday evening and Public Works Department sources are confident that the water will reach the check dam at Kamarasampettai by midnight. Since the riverbed is dry, it takes a long time for the water to reach its destination points, source said. More than 6,800 cusecs of water was being released from Mettur dam on Thursday.

Plan to plant one crore saplings in Kadapa dt.

M.V. SUBRAMANYAM

District Collector K.V. Ramana has directed forest officials to plant one crore saplings in Kadapa district in the current year. Addressing them in his chambers, the Collector said the government was chalking out plans to take up afforestation. As part of the plan, it is targeted to plant 20 lakh saplings through the District Water Management Agency, 18 lakh saplings through the Kadapa Divisional Forest Officer, 12 lakh through the Rajampet DFO, 20 lakh through the Social Forestry Division, 10 lakh in municipalities, five lakh through the Industries Department and three lakh through other departments. Mr. Ramana also wanted saplings planted on government land on either side of the roads. He told officials of Roads and Buildings, Panchayat Raj, Irrigation, DWMA, Horticulture and Forest departments to formulate plans in this regard. District Industries Centre General Manager G. Gopal, Roads and Buildings Senior Engineer R. Manohar Reddy, Kadapa DFO B. Nagaraju, Social Forestry DFO Narasimhulu, Assistant Directors of Horticulture Dasaratha Rami Reddy and Madhusudana Reddy and Kadapa Municipal Commissioner C. Obulesu were present.

A.P. keen on farm-fresh outlets scheme

A.V.RAGUNATHAN

Impressed by the farm-fresh consumer outlets scheme of the Tamil Nadu government, AP Food and Civil Supplies Minister Paritala Sunitha visited Villupuram and Tindivanam today to study the supply chain for the scheme. The outlets have been set up in Chennai by the State government under the Peri-metro vegetable cluster development programme. The official sources here said that with a view to replicate the scheme in Andhra Pradesh, Ms. Sunitha had come down here to get acquainted with its modalities and practices. Accompanied by District Collector V. Sampath, Andhra Pradesh Horticulture Commissioner Pappi Reddy and Director of Civil Supplies Ravi Babu she went to the vegetable growing clusters at Olakkur near Tindivanam. She interacted with the farmers there.

No shift in stand against GM crops, says Minister

L. RENGANATHAN

The Tamil Nadu government will not encourage genetically modified (GM) crops and their field trials if farmers are opposed to them, Agriculture Minister S.S. Krishnamoorthy informed the Assembly on Thursday. Chief Minister Jayalalithaa had already clarified the State's position and there was no shift from it, he said in reply to a question from DMDK member C.H. Sekar. On organic and bio-farming, the Minister said the Chief Minister would soon announce a comprehensive package for organic farming. Dispelling fears over adequate availability of paddy seeds, Mr. Krishnamoorthy said the government agencies had enough stocks; if need be, seeds would be procured from private institutions.

Decline in area

K. Balakrishnan of the CPI(M) expressed concern at the steady and drastic decline in the cropping area and urged the government to tighten laws and prevent conversion of farmland into commercial space. The trend continued despite legislation, he said. Given the agricultural sector's importance, a separate budget must be brought out annually, said S. Gunasekaran of the CPI. The Minister announced that tropical fruit and plantation vegetables specialty centres would be established in Tiruchi and Nilgiris districts respectively at a total cost of Rs. 9 crore. A sum of Rs. 13.47 crore would be spent on soil enrichment and moisture-content enrichment in seven districts, characterised predominantly by black soil, and in 19 districts with red soil. To help sugarcane growers mechanise their activities, from sowing to harvesting, 18 agri-entrepreneur centres would be established at a cost of Rs. 9.80 crore, and they would make available implements for rent.

Tissue culture

Two new tissue culture centres would be opened in Theni district, while five centres would be renovated at a cost of Rs. 4.30 crore. An acid lime research centre would be established at Sankarankoil in Tirunelveli district at a cost of Rs. four crore, Mr. Krishnamoorthy said.

Kerala tender coconuts in demand

T. KARNAKAR REDDY



A vendor selling tender coconuts from Kerala at Nakerekal town in Nalgonda on Thursday.— Photo: Singam venkataramana

The reduction in supply of tender coconuts to Nalgonda from Andhra Pradesh has given a chance to the localites to taste Kerala ‘Kobbaribondalu’. The towns along the highway are dotted with merchants selling tender coconuts imported from Kerala. The local tender coconuts were sold at Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 whereas those from Kerala cost Rs. 30. Speaking to *The Hindu*, M. Lakshiminarayana, a vendor, said that the imported ones were in great demand as it had double the water compared to the local ones. “A Kerala tender coconut has about 500 ml of water”. “I have been in this business for over 20 years now, but I have not seen any merchant selling Kerala tender coconuts so far,” Mr. Lakshiminarayana said. Another vendor, S. Venkatesh, said that they initially had apprehensions about selling the bright orange-coloured coconuts as its price was high. “But now, they are selling like hotcakes,” he said. P. Shanthi, a customer, said that they simply wanted a best tasting coconut and it really did not matter where it came from. There are also some who opine that these imported coconuts are inferior in taste when compared to those from Andhra Pradesh.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Aug 1

Max Min
35° | 28°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 59

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:54

Sunset: 06:36

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Saturday, Aug 2

Max Min
36° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday
Aug 3



37° | 27°

Cloudy

Monday
Aug 4



37° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday
Aug 5



37° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday
Aug 6



37° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday
Aug 7



36° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:53

Humidity: 79 Sunset: 06:37

Wind: normal Barometer: 1004



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Flowers Prices Burn a Hole in 'Sravanam' Shoppers' Pockets



The demand for flowers in the city rose on Thursday ahead of 'Sravana Sukravaram'. Sravanam is an auspicious and among the most awaited month for women. Wholesale flower markets are busy with customers thronging the market to buy flowers for the 'Varalakshmi Vratam' on Friday, but many are upset with the high prices of flowers in the market. On the four Fridays and Tuesdays of 'Sravana Masam', women perform various rituals and 'poojas'. Of all the Fridays in the month, the second is famous for the 'Varalakshmi Vratam' when Goddess Lakshmi Devi is worshiped in the form of Varalakshmi. Women perform 'Sravana Managla Gowri Nomu' on Tuesdays and worship Goddess Parvati Devi in the form of 'Mangala Gowri'. During this festive month, people usually prefer flowers to decorate their houses. Around the same time, more weddings are performed and this pushes up the demand for flowers. Despite increase in the prices of flowers like jasmine, marigold, chrysanthemum and crossandra, customers have no choice but to buy them. Marigold sold at `40 to `50 a kg before its price suddenly soared to `90 per kg on Thursday. Jasmine price jumped up from `160 to `250 and chrysanthemum is selling at `200-250 per kg. The flowering jasmine (jaji malli) and crossandra (kanakambaram) earlier sold at `400 a kg are priced `600 a kg. M Satyam, a wholesale flower dealer at Rajiv Gandhi Flower Market in One Town, said that the prices of flowers in the market had increased Thursday due to huge demand. "As this season is famous for weddings, the prices may rise up to `600-1,000 per kg from August 10," he added. "It is very difficult to purchase flowers at high prices but they are indispensable

during the festival season so we are buying them in small quantities,” K Saraswathi, a housewife at Madhuranagar, said.

Govt Move for Double Output, Triple income in Agriculture Sector

Sticking to the goal of ‘double production, triple income’ for the agricultural sector for 2014-15, Agriculture Minister ‘Agri’ SS Krishnamoorthy made a number of announcements in the Assembly on Thursday to achieve this target. The initiatives, announced as part of the Budget Session, included projects to increase the use of recent farm technologies in a bid to increase productivity, promoting farm automation and setting up a robust seed and sapling provision backbone. The government, he said, would set up a model demonstration centre for tropical fruits in Srirangam and for hill vegetables in Nilgiris district, at a cost of Rs 9 crore, to show-case latest technologies and disseminate information. Two new horticultural farms would be set up at a cost of Rs 2.68 crore in the Jawadhu Hills in Tiruvannamalai district and Oriyur in Ramanathapuram district. Also coming up would be two new sapling production centres in Theni district, and repair and maintenance works to such centres in Coimbatore, Madurai and Tiruchy districts. The government would also set up 18 centres, at a cost of Rs 9.98 crore, that would give out farm mechanisation equipment for rent to sugarcane farmers. A gene bank would also be set up at the Giant Fruit Orchard at Karumandurai near Yercaud. Another notable venture that the government is set to undertake is the promotion of cultivation of Bellary onions on 5,000 acres of already identified lands, for achieving self-sufficiency in terms of the demand for the bulb. The government has also said it would pay attention to water and soil resources, announcing maintenance and repair works on 1,000 water storage facilities older than 10 years at a cost of Rs 3 crore and a soil conservation project worth Rs 13.47 crore to install water treatment facilities in seven districts with significant black soil and soil erosion prevention installations in 19 districts with significant red soil.

‘TN Not for Field Trial of GM Crops’

Minister for Agriculture SS Krishnamoorthy on Thursday assured the State Assembly that the government would not allow field trial of Genetically Modified (GM) crops in Tamil Nadu and as such, the farmers need not worry about that. Responding to the query of CH Sekar (DMDK) during the discussion on the demands for grants for Agriculture Department, the Minister said on August 12, 2011, Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa had assured the House that this government would not promote BT cotton in Tamil Nadu and that the policy holds good even now. The Minister said that the previous UPA regime had given permission for field trial of GM crops and cases were filed before the Supreme Court. Based on the directions of the Apex Court, the Genetic Engineering Appraisal

Committee was formed to give permission for field trial. Last year and this year, the committee had met more than four times and had given permission for many petitions on field trial of GM crops.

'Research Benefits Should Reach Farmers'



Innovative agricultural methods and results of research should reach farmers, said Chief Minister Oommen Chandy. He was chairing the meeting of State Agriculture Development Committee here on Thursday. “Many changes have been taking place in the field of agricultural research and farm modernisation. The benefit of these changes should fully reach the farmers. The productivity of tapioca has increased due to the efforts of Central Tuber Crops Research Institute. The production and marketing of Neera, sweet toddy, should be done in an effective way to make it beneficial for the coconut farmers,” he said. “The function to observe Farmers Day will be held at Kozhikode on Aug 16,” said Agriculture Minister K P Mohanan. Ministers K C Joseph, P J Joseph, C N Balakrishnan, Manjalamkuzhi Ali and MLAs E P Jayarajan, Moyinkutty, Dominic Presentation and Jameela Prakasham attended the meeting.

The alternative food crop

Millets are highly nutritious food crops which consume very less amount of natural resources like water and soil nutrients compared to other cereals and are resilient to climate changes. Ironically over years, these crop areas are declining due to state agriculture policy that promotes the growth of paddy and others, ignoring multiple benefits of millets. One of the flipside of the green revolution has been that farmers have been forcibly asked to grow crops like rice and wheat in conditions where farmers have been traditionally growing millets for centuries. Apart from being extremely nutritious, millet crops are also less dependent on rainfall and can survive for a long period of time.

Since conditions are not ideal to grow crops like rice and wheat, farmers are forced to use a lot more pesticides and other chemicals. However, several organisations have been tirelessly working to revive and promote millet crops once again. “In order to foreground the multifarious nutritional and ecological advantages offered by millets, we have been seeking to deepen its engagement with the governments at the local, state and national level to exert greater pressure to implement on the ground, what has been enacted as a law in order to increase millet farming on the fields and farms of India and millet foods on the plates of rural and urban population of India,” says Giridhar Rao, an official from the Millet Network of India (MINI). Another huge advantage provided by millets is that they are extremely eco-friendly crops which help with bio-diversity water conservation. “We are engaged in a relentless argument with the government to provide millet farmers a “scientific” price that takes into account not only the cost of raising millet farms but also the contribution it makes towards conservation of water, biodiversity, generation of livelihoods, reclamation of poor soils and their regeneration. Thus millets are the best farming answer to the coming decades of climate crisis and therefore need to be considered for a string of bonuses beyond the MSP offered by the governments across the country,” he explains. MINI, through Medak District Millet Farmers Federation, has successfully implemented INSIMP on its own terms-without the use of chemical inputs and exotic seeds and with organic inputs alone-over two successive seasons. In the first season, 1000 hectares of land encompassing about 1400 farmers were brought under millet cultivation. MINI worked on more than 2000 hectares and 3000 farmers in the second season. “More than the government, the INSIMP programme has benefitted us greatly. Financially, it was more beneficial for us as compared to what the government has promised,” says Jayappa, a farmer from Zaheerabad in Medak district, just 96 km from the city. The farmer, however, urges the government to provide more support to millet crops. “We are all protecting our own livelihood and are living on our own terms. By now we have realised better than to depend on the government. However, I would urge them to show more support towards millet crops,” he says. Monsoons have arrived late this season, when asked if that has affected the crop, he says, “One of the major advantages of millets as opposed to other crops like rice and wheat, is that we are not dependent on rainfall. Having said that, it is always better for the crops if it rains more.” Explaining that they grow 85 different types of millet crops, he says the growth is completely natural. “We do not use any pesticides or other chemicals. Millet crops are completely natural and it takes about three months for them to grow,” he shares. Lakshamma, a seedkeeper in the Medak district, also explains the benefits of millets. “They are extremely beneficial for health. The soil in Telangana is much more suitable for millets and the harvest is of a better quality,” she

says. Explaining that most crops grow in three to four months, she says that the demand for millets has significantly increased in recent times. “There is a lot of demand for our crop now as people have realised that it’s extremely nutritious and beneficial for health. The orders for the crop has significantly increased from places like Guntur and Hyderabad,” informs Lakshamma. Even as farmers struggle due to the delayed arrival of monsoon and the lack of substantial rainfall, the government would be well-advised to promote and support the growth of millets, rather than forcing farmers to grow crops which are ill-suited to the climatic conditions in the state.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Volume declines at Coonoor tea sale

PS SUNDAR

The offer for Sale No: 31 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association ending on Friday has dropped to 17.29 lakh kg from year’s highest volume of 24.10 lakh kg offered last week. Of this, a volume of 12.30 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.99 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 16.16 lakh kg belongs to the CTC variety and only 1.13 lakh kg, orthodox variety. In the Leaf auction last week, Hindustan Unilever Ltd bought brighter liquoring varieties. Tata Global Beverages Ltd., was fairly active on good medium sorts. In the Dust auction, HUL, was fairly active on good medium varieties. Indcoserve was active on good medium smaller grades.

Cotton edges up as arrivals ease

Cotton prices in Erode markets edged up on the back of dwindling arrivals. “Usually in July and August huge quantity arrives for sale at the Bhoodapady Regulated Market in Erode district . But this year, arrivals have been low. On Wednesday, 138.8 tonnes (3,851 bags) arrived for sale, said a spokesperson. He said cotton prices increased marginally and the Bt variety fetched Rs. 4,960-5,570 a quintal, while the Surabi variety was sold at Rs. 5,460-6,500. At the Anthiyur Regulated Market, 120 tonnes were sold this week for Rs. 5,500 a quintal.

Turmeric loses sheen for want of demand

Spot turmeric prices decreased in Erode markets on Thursday for want of demand. "No trader has received fresh order from North India; so they quoted lower price and procured some stocks. Further, only medium variety turmeric is arriving for sale," said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. Meanwhile, one exporter showed keen interest in buying the root variety, but at a lower price. Farmers said the purchase may be for turmeric powder units and also for building inventories to fulfil their committed orders. Farmers expect prices to increase in mid-August. On Thursday, the price of the Hybrid finger turmeric decreased by Rs. 200 a quintal and the hybrid root by Rs. 100. Of the 5,300 bags that arrived for sale, only 45-50 per cent was sold. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 4,219-6,489 a quintal; the root variety Rs. 4,099-6,296. Salem Hybrid: The finger variety fetched Rs. 5,677-7,333; the root variety Rs. 5,457-6,559. Of the 1,253 bags on offer, 320 were traded.

What farmers are looking for on Kisan TV

AJ VINAYAK/LN REVATHY

At a time when the changing scenario in agriculture sector requires training, education and maximum use of technology, farmers feel that the proposed Kisan TV channel should focus on these issues. The Union Budget for 2014-15 has earmarked Rs. 100 crore for setting up a television channel dedicated to farm and allied sector. P Anantharamakrishna, a young farmer from Peruvai village of Dakshina Kannada district, told *BusinessLine* that every farmer can't go and visit the good farms and agri enterprises that he/she is interested to see. "The proposed channel can be a good medium in this regard. It should include various agricultural practices and modern techniques and mechanisation. This will save valuable time, effort and money of the farmer," he said.

Pest information

Prabhakar Mayya, a progressive farmer from Belthangady taluk of Dakshina Kannada district, said that one of the major problems being faced by the farmers is the attack of diseases and pests on crops in their field. The programmes should focus on identifying such problems and controlling them. This should be done at the farmers' field rather than recording at studio-level, he said. Marketing the produce is a major problem several times. The lack of information on the market conditions such as price, availability/lack of stock, etc is a reason for this. The channel should focus on providing information of a

particular crop from local level to the national and to international level, he said. Shyam Bhat, an expert in farm broadcasting, said that the content should focus more on marketing, processing and modern technologies.

Multilingual

However, a survey needs to be done first as the number of viewers of Doordarshan may differ from State to State, he said. Mayya said that the channel should give importance for telecasting programmes in regional languages, rather than Hindi or English. This will help reach people faster. The regional language content should focus more on the region-specific crops in different climatic zones. He said that separate channels for different languages may yield results. Bhat suggested that there be advisory committees at local levels as a link between those involved in content creation and farmers. Such committees should review the contents at least once in a month.

24-hr channel

Mahesh K, a farmer from Bantwal taluk of Dakshina Kannada district, said that the channel should plan programmes in such a manner that programmes suit the farmers' schedule. Farmers can't sit and watch TV like a reality show or 'saas bahu' serial viewer does, he said. Mayya also expressed such a view.

New thinking

Dhandayudapani, who looks after his father's land in Coimbatore after a stint abroad in a software company, said that one should not wait for a TV channel to address their issues, but get connected on social media for better understanding. Sources in TNAU in Coimbatore said that they have a ready list of successful stories, which they have uploaded on their ePortal. This would come in handy for use, should such a channel come live.

Dairy sector opposes free market access to New Zealand products

VISHWANATH KULKARNI



New Zealand's renewed effort to secure a preferential trade access to the Indian market has drawn the ire of the domestic dairy industry. Dairy co-operatives and private sector players are against granting any preferential access in the Indian market through a free trade agreement (FTA) to New Zealand, the world's largest exporter of milk products. "We are resisting granting any free market access to New Zealand," said Rs. Sodhi, Managing Director of Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which owns the Amul brand.

Fonterra scare

"Today, India is the only country in Asia that's self sufficient in milk production. Granting any free market access to New Zealand will not only hit our farmers hard, but will also expose the consumers to volatility of world markets," Sodhi said. New Zealand is in search of a large market for its dairy products, especially after the Fonterra contamination scare last year that led to slowdown in dairy exports to China, its largest buyer. With the change in Government and the rising milk prices presenting an opportunity, New Zealand has renewed its efforts to gain a preferential market access to the Indian market. A high level New Zealand delegation is in Delhi exploring the opportunity.

Chinese example

At the India-New Zealand Dairy Dialogue, organised by the Agriculture Ministry early this week, the Indian players made it clear that the country was self sufficient in milk production and does not need any imports now. Some players were also surprised at the Ministry's haste in arranging the dialogue without taking the domestic industry into

confidence. "We can take their help to enhance and boost productivity and skill development, but are against giving them a free market access," Sodhi said. He further said that India could go the Chinese way, where growth in dairy sector has come down significantly after granting FTA to New Zealand some six years ago. China's dairy sector growth has now been reduced to a mere 2 per cent against 25 per cent before granting FTA in 2008, Sodhi said. "India's dairy sector has grown at 4.2 per cent over the last decade, at twice the growth rate of world average. We have self-sufficiency. As a country, we don't require imports," said RG Chandramogan, Chairman and Managing Director, Hatsun Agro Product Ltd. "If they see a market in India, let them export after paying the prevailing duties," said Kuldeep Saluja, Managing Director of Sterling Agro. The skimmed milk powder imports attract a duty of 60 per cent. Imports of other products are levied 30 per cent duty.

Indian output, exports

India is among the fastest growing dairy markets and the rapid rise in milk prices – by 15-17 per cent over the past one year has been a concern. Milk production was estimated at 132.43 million tonnes in 2012-13 and was targeted to reach 139.67 mt in 2013-14. India turned a net exporter of dairy products in 2013-14 with skimmed milk powder shipments of over 1.22 lakh tonnes. In last five years, India has exported about six lakh tonnes of SMP and imported about one lakh tonnes of the same. Total value of dairy products shipments were estimated at over Rs.3,318 crore. But with the decline in global price on improved supplies, the exports of SMP from India are currently seen unviable as domestic prices are high.

Rain deficit down to 23% as monsoon batters west Maharashtra

VINSON KURIAN

The rain deficit has been brought down to 23 per cent as on Wednesday with indications that the strong monsoon phase would continue early into next week. India Met Department graphics showed shades of green sprouting and growing in the east and south of the map to denote areas converting into 'normal rainfall category.'

Shoots into green

In the south, the contiguous Kerala, south interior Karnataka and Tamil Nadu shot into the green signalling good spatial distribution over the south peninsula. In the east and north-east, a green corridor cut its way from Arunachal Pradesh into Sub-Himalayan

West Bengal and into the plains. It then checked into Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, and west Madhya Pradesh. In the north-west, Uttarakhand alone is in the green while to the west it was Konkan-Goa which shared the honours. Large parts of north-west India and parts of north peninsula are still quite in the red. It remains to be seen what a 'low' brewing next in the Bay of Bengal can do to alter the situation. Meanwhile on Thursday, a vigorous monsoon current entered west Rajasthan, the last meteorological outpost on the north-west front overnight.

Still in red

Elsewhere, it was active over east Rajasthan, Konkan-Goa, Madhya Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha during the 24 hours ending in the morning. The monsoon reserved its virulent best during the period for western Maharashtra, with popular hill station Mahabaleshwar recording 43 cm of rain. Other centres receiving major rainfall were Dahanu-27 cm; Silvasa and Bhira-19 cm each; Shirali-14 cm; Phulbani, Honnavar and Karwar-13 cm each; Ratnagiri-12 cm; Valsad-11 cm; and Goa-10 cm.

Harvesting agri waste – the Ford way

R BALAJI

The company believes that alternative fuel is the future



John J. Viera, Global Director- Sustainability and Vehicle Environmental Matters, Ford Motor Company
Bijoy Ghosh

Soy oil, rice and wheat straw, coconut husk, discarded plastic bottles and denim scrap... items one would not expect to figure on the shopping list of a global automobile manufacturer. But they do; and the century-old Ford Motors is confident they will ensure the company lasts a century more, says John Viera, Global Director, Sustainability and Vehicle Environmental Matters.

Viable options

Sustainability is about ensuring resources last longer, even better, using resources that can be replenished, and reducing and recycling waste. To an automobile manufacturer it is inevitable that means reducing dependence on petroleum-based products, a natural resource that is not only getting used up fast but is growing more expensive. But it is not just about vehicle mileage or alternative fuels though they hog a lion's share of the research spend, says Viera. As the leader of a team that addresses sustainability in Ford, alternative fuels, renewable energy, are major issues. "If you look at the projections of oil prices going up it is important to replace oil-based products with waste. People may even pay you to take away waste. The financial impact will be positive," he says. "We have in place plans for how much recycled content, how much plant-based materials will go into our vehicles over the next five years. While being environmentally friendly we will also be financially positive," Viera says. "Globally we are now using oil from the soy plant – soy oil – instead of petroleum products to make foam for the seats," says Viera. The thinking is that as production of vehicles increases, the tendency is to continuously pull out iron and petroleum from earth that is going to run out. But plants are grown all the time. Also, recycling materials keeps them from going into landfills and avoid pollution.

Reusing waste

In the midsize segment, in the Ford Fusion and Mondeo, "We grind down and weave disposable plastic bottles into seat material. Ford Fusions throughout the world use recycled water bottles", says Viera. "Look at the carpeting in the cars. They are padded to make them softer and keep out noise. The padding is a cotton-type of fibre." "What we have done is worked with a denim manufacturer that makes blue jeans. A lot of scrap denim is normally disposed in land fill. We asked the padding supplier to take the scrap and use it to make padding for carpets." So this is all about taking waste and reusing them in new products. That is being sustainable. Ford has a strategy to increase plant-based

materials and recycled material going into its products region-wise. Plastic parts are strengthened using fibre glass, a petroleum-based, energy intensive, product. Instead we found we could actually use plant fibres, straw from different plants through out the world, says Viera. In India one can use rice straw, in Canada wheat straw and in Brazil coconut husk. Use local people and local materials to actually then produce those parts for the vehicles, that is sustainability initiative, he says. Europe is most advanced in this concept of using plant-based material where it has been used in making storage bins in cars. “And we hope to adopt more of this approach to India, China and Brazil where it is relatively new,” says Viera. In Canada, which grows a lot of wheat, and where Ford has an engineering team as well wheat stalk is used in making storage bins of Ford SUVs, sold in the US, So to the US-based company plans for sustainability are intertwined with its One Ford initiative with the goal of creating “an exciting viable Ford delivering profitable growth for all.” “Basically the business plan what we call One Ford in terms of how we want Ford to operate is very much tied into these sustainability plans. They are really one and the same,” says Viera.

Naidu speaks to RBI Governor on crop loan rescheduling

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu today said he had had a telephonic conversation with Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan on the issue of crop loan rescheduling and was hopeful that the apex bank would consider the State’s request favourably. Addressing a media conference, he said the RBI Governor had expressed certain reservations about the loan rescheduling scheme. However, Naidu said: “I have assured him that there will not be any problem from the State Government side in terms of the loan reschedule and that there will not be any pressure on the banking system.” Responding to this, the RBI Governor said he would look into it again and had sought some details. Referring to the fee reimbursement for engineering students, Naidu said that Andhra Pradesh was willing to bear 58 per cent of the cost and that the rest could be borne by the Telangana Government. He said he was doing this to ensure that the student community and the parents do not suffer and to resolve the issue amicably, in the best interests of both the States .

Business Standard

Farm loan operations come to a halt in AP



Kharif loan disbursements have hardly taken off in Andhra Pradesh even after sowing is complete in almost one-third of the crop area owing to the continued stand-off over repayment of the previous loans. "The credit cycle has come to a complete halt because farmers are not even willing to pay interest on loans and this gesture does not make them eligible for fresh credit. They are not repaying fearing they could miss the opportunity of loan waiver," a senior official of Syndicate Bank told Business Standard. A few other bankers and government officials tracking the ground situation said recovery was hardly around 5 per cent of the total demand while new loan disbursements were also at a minimum since fresh loans could be given to only those who have either repaid the old loan or to a fresh borrower. According to Anil Chandra Punetha, principal secretary - agriculture, AP government, sowing in the ongoing kharif season has been completed in 1.4 million acres of a total crop area of around 4.5 million acres due to the delayed monsoon. "If the rains continue like this we may complete sowing across the rest of the area in the next fortnight," he said. On the status of farm loan disbursements, he said the delay in loan rescheduling was hampering the credit flow to the agriculture sector. Leaving aside the uncertainty over the loan restructuring issue, lack of clarity at the ground level on who is eligible for the loan waiver scheme is also affecting recovery and credit operations. "The committee constituted by the government had already framed the guidelines prescribing the eligibility criteria for the beneficiaries of the loan waiver scheme. However, these guidelines have neither been circulated to the banks till date nor the borrowers have been told about this in clear terms," a former banker said. Until the government identifies the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, it would be very difficult to motivate farmers to start repaying. The government has, however, maintained those who repay loans would also be compensated under the loan waiver scheme, according to the bankers. A senior government official said the government had commissioned for a special software for identifying the family-wise borrowers list so as to enforce the cap of Rs 1.5 lakh per family. "But it would take at least one month to make this tool ready," he added. According to him, it was not possible for banks to achieve the farm credit targets in the present kharif season. On the other hand, banks will have to face a sudden spike in NPA

levels on account of the added overdues of last year and will have to reverse the interest income that was booked on these loans, bank officials said. "According to the norms, even if someone repays Rs 99 out of a Rs 100 loan overdue, the entire loan amount will be treated as NPA because of the remaining Re 1. Therefore, the governments will have to work with the RBI to sort out the issue without making it a bigger mess," a bank official said. While the commercial banks are sound enough to bring fresh money into circulation even in the face of a near zero recovery on this front, regional rural banks (RRBs) and co-operatives, which had lent around Rs 12,000 crore to the farm sector, have no hope of functioning without an external assistance, the officials said. While there are over Rs 1 lakh crore in agriculture loan overdues in AP, the government had decided to repay as much as Rs 42,000-plus crore under the loan waiver programme. However, it is yet to announce a clear plan regarding its implementation.

Naidu speaks to RBI governor

Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday today spoke with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan in the light of the banking regulator's reservations over restructuring farm loans in AP. According to an official release, the chief minister forcefully presented the case of distressed Andhra farmers while reiterating his request for a loan reschedulement. Following the conversation, the RBI governor has suggested to the state government to send a team of officials to discuss the issue with his executive director, the statement stated.

Sugarcane committee soon, K'taka Minister



Following the approval by the state legislature of certain amendments strengthening the Karnataka Sugarcane(Regulation of Purchase and Supply) Act, a committee will soon be constituted as per its provisions, Minister for Co-operation and Sugar H S Mahadeva Prasad said in Mysore today. Addressing a press meet, he said, the amendments approved after the consolidated opinion of the House had plugged certain loopholes in the act, which would from now on benefit sugarcane growers in the state. They would now be able to get the fair and appropriate price fixed by the Centre for the sugarcane supplied to factories on time, now on. The committee would comprise of representatives of sugarcane growers, sugar factories, sugarcane experts and government officials. Sugar factories

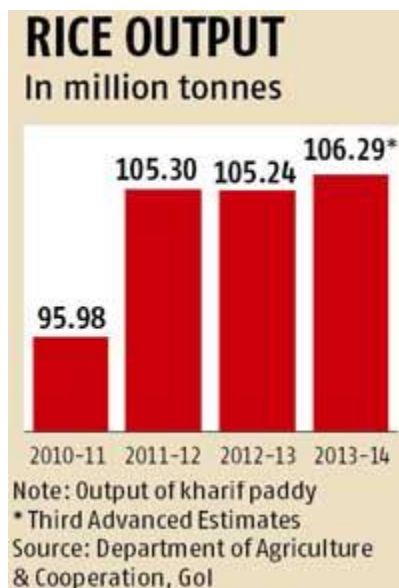
have to make payments on the guidelines of the fair and remunerative price fixed by the Centre. Payment should be made within a fortnight failing which they will have to pay interest at 15 per cent. At present, the guidelines of the Centre were not being followed by the sugar factories. The committee can look into these issues, he said. The government had fixed July 1 to June 30 as the sugarcane season. Crushing of sugarcane begins in October. July 1 would be taken into consideration for the year of the sugar as inspection of accounts and supervision over payments shall commence on that day. Around 60 sugar factories are there in the state, with 48 in North Karnataka and 12 in South Karnataka. Under the amended legislation, farmers can voluntarily supply sugarcane to sugar mills, or the mills themselves can harvest the crop. These issues can be locally-decided. Prasad also stated that with amendments to the Co-operative Act 1959 its election commission would become an authority instead of a commission. Information should be given to a member who seeks membership of a society within three months. Otherwise, his application would be considered as approved. The number of associate members should not exceed 15 per cent of the ordinary members of any co-operative society. A primary co-operative society must have a minimum of 11 members of which five should be for reserved categories, two for women, two for SCs and STs. Amendment had been also made to the restriction that any challenge to the elections should be made only in the High Court. Instead, it could be taken up at the registrar level of the Department of Co-operation. This would help dispose off cases without any delays, he added. The amendment had also been made to the Male Mahadeswara Hills Authority of Chamarajanagar district. Under this, 80 per cent of the temple income would go to the authority. While the remaining would go to the Department of Religious Endowment. The revenue earned by the temple could be utilised for infrastructure development and development of temples where Male Mahadeswara had stayed, the minister added.

Hope revives on paddy output



Adequate rains in most parts of India and a revival in paddy sowing has sparked hope that the rice crop will be better than estimated this kharif season. Across the country, the area

under paddy is about 44 million hectares, with about 40 million hectares accounted for by kharif paddy. For 2013-14, the kharif paddy output stood at an estimated 92.78 million tonnes (mt). Trilochan Mahapatra, director, Rice Research Institute, Cuttack, said the pace of paddy sowing had improved across Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Bihar. He added if the rains continued to be good, the paddy acreage target would be met. “The monsoon is late; this is July-end. But most farmers had sown seeds in nurseries, and only transplantation of paddy in fields remains to be carried out.” A senior Union food ministry official said foodgrain production might drop five-eight mt compared to 2013, primarily due to a fall in the output of pulses and coarse cereals. He added the paddy crop wouldn’t be hit much, as in the North, irrigation and pump sets could help make good the loss. If post-harvest losses were controlled, the impact wouldn’t be much, he said. “The long-duration paddy crop (non-basmati varieties) needs 140-150 days. Under the current circumstances, we might see a late harvest, but the crop size shouldn’t be affected. The situation will be more discernible after two weeks, when the sowing is complete. Any lag in the rainfall might effect sowing,” he said.



While paddy fields in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh are primarily irrigated and, therefore, aren’t substantially affected by delayed and deficient rains, paddy-growing areas in other parts of the country are hit by a below-average monsoon. An official said though heavy rains in Saurashtra in Gujarat might have some adverse impact on the paddy crop, as states in western India didn’t contribute substantially to rice production, the situation wasn’t alarming. Under the ‘Bring Green Revolution to Eastern India’ initiative, the Centre has made an annual allocation of Rs 1,000 crore to improve paddy production. The scheme covers Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, eastern Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Vijay Tayal,

secretary-general, Chhattisgarh Rice Millers’ Association, said though paddy sowing in the East had been delayed by a month, the situation had improved. “There is no draught-like situation and paddy transplantation is on in full swing. The production might be close to that recorded last year if there monsoon rains are sufficient.”

Karbi ginger farmers take to tapioca

SMITA BHATTACHARYYA



Tapioca

Nearly 7,000 ginger farmers in Karbi Anglong district have taken up commercial cultivation of tapioca, considered the poor man's potato. The farmers, who have formed an organisation called Ginfed, hope to tap into the commercial value of the crop after it is processed into flour, starch, semolina and *saboodana*. Jiten Sarang Fangsa, marketing manager, Ginfed, told **The Telegraph** over phone from Diphu, the district headquarters, that though Karbi Anglong was the highest producer of tapioca known locally as *himolu alu* in the region, the crop was usually consumed locally after boiling it. "The Assam Agricultural University showed us the commercial viability of the crop. Some of us tried it out last year and after being able to sell the flour in various expos and melas at about Rs 50-60 per kg, many more have taken to the crop this season," Fangsa said, adding that he had also cultivated about 100 plants. Fangsa said while the flour was instantly sold out in neighbouring Nagaland but in Assam, "people were not aware of its value and were not so keen to buy it". Tapioca flour has to be added to wheat flour in a 50:50 ratio so that

chapattis, cakes, biscuits and other items can be made. Compared to rice and wheat, tapioca (dry) has less fat (0.3 per cent) than rice (milled) (0.6) and whole wheat (2.7). It also has more carbohydrate (82.6 per cent) than rice (78.2) and wheat (69.4). However, the protein content in tapioca (dry) is less (1.3 per cent) compared to rice (6.8) and whole wheat (12.1). Regarding the high cost of the flour compared to wheat, Priyanka Das, scientist, biochemistry department of Assam Agricultural University, said in the south of the country, tapioca flour sold for Rs 30 per kg but here most likely the raw material was procured at a high price owing to which the price became high. Das said tapioca was an indigenous tuber crop, which could be grown at a very low cost. "Apart from its value as a processed food like flour or semolina, we want the farmers to benefit from extraction of the starch from the plant as India is still very dependent on import of tonnes of starch from neighbouring Thailand and Indonesia. Tapioca has the largest amount of pure starch, more than any other crop, including rice or potato and is of much value in the textile, paper and food industries," she said. The AAU has provided an electric dryer and other equipment for processing whereas the army under its Sadbhavana project has provided equipment worth about Rs 9 lakh, which includes grinders, peelers, drying trays, water pump and tanks, among others. The state agriculture department has also provided three dryers, of which one uses LPG and two machines use wood. The 7,009 farmers under Ginfed had till now grown ginger, turmeric and *bhut jolokia* but have decided that they will try out tapioca, on a small scale initially and if found profitable, go in for larger production. S. Sandhan, deputy director (hills), state agriculture department, Karbi Anglong, said the greatest problem in the district was the extremism problem apart from the high transportation cost and almost no equipment to process the produce at a low cost. In India, Assam stands sixth in tapioca production and Kokrajhar is another place in the state where tapioca is produced in a large scale.

Farmer sows intercrop seed, reaps benefit

- Successful experiment with sugarcane and marigold in East Champaran sets off a trend

R.N. SINHA IN MOTIHARI



Lalan Prasad Shukla (right) at his farm. Picture by Ajit Kumar Verma

Intercropping by a progressive East Champaran farmer and subsequent good returns have encouraged many others to emulate him. Lalan Prasad Shukla is a graduate and comes from a suburban village near Motihari town. Shukla first began intercropping — growing two or more crops in proximity — as an experiment in 2011. He grew sugarcane with marigold over an acre of land and the total output of about Rs 1.75 lakh encouraged him to expand this kind of farming over more acres. He now intercrops on over five acres and earns not less than Rs 9 lakh annually. His investment is around Rs 1.5 lakh. His successful experiment prompted the district horticulture officer to host a meeting of the district-level horticulture development committee under the district magistrate in September 2013 to encourage local farmers. The meeting was attended by district horticulture officer, agriculture officer, officials from Nabard, district industries office, the lead bank and the farmer at the centre of it all, Lalan Prasad Shukla himself. The meeting resolved to extend subsidies to farmers to encourage intercropping. The subsidy amount remains an unfulfilled promise but the inspiration farmers from nine blocks in the district derived from Shukla proved to be an eye-opener to many. District horticulture officer Ganesh Prasad and agriculture officer S.K. Vajpayee had no answer when asked about the subsidy to farmers. But farmers like Ram Pukar Singh of Kalyanpur and Indrajit Chauhan of Turkaulia have switched to intercropping and are doing well.

“Over 12 farmers from Lalan’s and adjacent villages in Motihari block have switched to intercropping. The system pays well,” said a farmer, Lokesh Kumar Shukla. “We intercrop marigold with sugarcane in October-November and then again in February-March,” Lokesh said. “Farmers who adopted intercropping are now free to sell their products — flowers as well as jaggery — in the open market without depending on any sugar factory for safe disposal of their farm produce,” said Lalan. Lalan was earlier known for his record sugarcane produce but as the condition of sugar mills in Champaran dwindled, he toyed with the idea of floriculture in 2000 and after procuring knowhow from Calcutta, began the same. Soon others followed suit. Farmers like Pawan Kumar Shukla, Dinesh Kumar Kushwaha, Vinod Prasad, Mangal Prasad, Subhas Kushwaha, Lakhan Ram, Kedar Shukla and Shyamakant Shukla — once aggrieved by the closure of sugar mills — are now a happy lot. He then agriculture minister had honoured Lalan with the title of “Kisanshri” in 2007. In 2012, during the centenary celebrations of Bihar, Lalan was one of eight people from various fields whom then chief minister Nitish Kumar honoured with the title of “Bihar Gaurav” in the field of floriculture. The same year, Lalan was a special invitee for a discussion on agriculture by actor Aamir Khan, who was visiting Bihar to promote his television programme *Satyamev Jayate*.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Cardamom futures weaken 0.20 per cent on profit-booking

Cardamom prices were down by 0.15 per cent to Rs 916.70 per kg in futures trade today as speculators booked profits at prevailing levels amid sluggish demand in the spot markets. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in August declined by Rs 1.80, or 0.20 per cent to Rs 916.70 per kg in business turnover of 73 lots. Likewise, the spice for delivery in September contracts shed Rs 1.30, or 0.15 per cent to Rs 884.00 per kg in 15 lots.

Market analysts said besides profit-booking by speculators at prevailing higher levels and subdued demand in the spot markets mainly led to the fall in cardamom prices at futures.

Chana futures fall 0.66 per cent on increased supply

Chana prices declined 0.66 per cent to Rs 2,855 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators reduced exposures amidst increased supplies from producing regions in the spot market. At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in August moved down by 0.19, or 0.66 per cent to Rs 2,855 per quintal with an open interest of 1,18,540 lots. Similarly, the commodity for delivery in September declined by Rs 17, or 0.57 per cent to Rs 2,943 per quintal in 93,370 lots. Marketmen attributed the fall in chana futures to increased arrivals from producing regions in the physical market against sluggish demand from dal mills.

Potato futures climb 2.15 per cent on rising demand

In restricted activity, potato prices surged by 2.15 per cent to Rs 1,390 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators enlarged positions amidst rising demand in the spot market. Tight stocks position following limited arrivals from producing regions also supported the upward movements in potato. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato for delivery in July month shot up by Rs 29.30, or 2.15 per cent to Rs 1,390 per quintal in just one lot. Market analysts attributed the rise in potato prices at futures trade to rising demand in the spot market against tight supplies from growing belts.