

# THE HINDU

## Go in for sustainable cane initiative”

Efforts are needed to create awareness among sugarcane farmers on the need to conserve water and to go in for sustainable sugarcane initiative, according to Sandeep Saxena, Agricultural Production Commissioner and Principal Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Speaking at a seminar on ‘Drought Management and Improving Sugarcane Productivity’ organised here by the South Indian Sugar Mills’ Association and Sugarcane Breeding Institute, he said that farm ponds should be developed. In delta area, 3,000 to 4,000 farm ponds have come up. There should be regular interaction between industry, research institutes, and the Government.

According to the Director of Sugarcane Breeding Institute N. Vijayan Nair, the institute carried out a drought survey in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in the first week of August. Almost all cane growing areas had received 50 per cent or more deficit rainfall. This would affect seed availability for the next season.

With area under sugarcane declining, the sugar industry would be under pressure and the mills might face shortage of cane. This would have an impact on sugar production. In some places, farmers were in distress and did not have insurance cover.

M. Rajendran, Director of Agriculture, Government of Tamil Nadu, said that in several places, area under sugarcane was coming back to rice production. The opportunities for the sugar sector in ethanol should be explored further.

## Support

K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, said industry should support the institutes for research and scientists should work with the industry to address its challenges.

### **Boat operators, fisheries experts to meet on Aug. 30**

The rise in the cost of fishing operations and fish production cost across the country were grave concerns for the fishing industry in India.

Fisheries experts and boat operators will meet here on August 30 and 31 under the aegis of All India Mechanised Fishing Boat Operators' Association to discuss, among other things, their worries about increasingly poor remuneration from fishing expeditions and dwindling fish catch.

The two-day programme was being organised as part of the Boat Operators' Association annual conference, said the General Secretary of All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association Joseph Xavier Kalappurakkal here in a statement.

He said the rise in the cost of fishing operations and fish production because of increasing diesel cost and the lack of uniformity in build and size of boats across the country were grave concerns for the fishing industry in India.

He said it was high time that an all-India standard was evolved for the manufacturing of boats with the capacity of the engines and the boat's dimensions being taken into consideration.

The programmes are scheduled at the CIFNET Conference Hall, Fine Arts Hall Road. Minister for Fisheries and Ports K. Babu will inaugurate the programmes. K. V. Thomas, MP; S. Sarma, MLA and national president of FIFI Y. G. K. Moorthi are expected to be present.

### **Rs. 60 cr. fund for veterinary hospital**

The Government of India has sanctioned Rs. 60 crore for construction of a training centre on the premises of veterinary hospital, Machilipatnam, to train doctors and the farmers on various aspects of animal husbandry.

Excise and B.C. Welfare Minister Kollu Ravindra on Sunday inspected the hospital and directed the officials concerned to prepare the proposed site in order to start the construction works of the centre. The central government has already released the fund under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund.

[Vaigai can do well without these plants](#)



Water hyacinth on Vaigai riverbed near Arapalayam is a fertile breeding ground for mosquitoes in Madurai. Photo: G. Moorthy



Jungle growth of juliflora is leading to groundwater depletion in the city.

Photo: G. Moorthy

*Wild growth of 'seemai karuvelam' trees and water hyacinth choking the river's ecosystem*

It's ironical that Vaigai river with mythological and literary associations is in a pathetic state. Except for fresh water, the riverbed has everything that degrades the environment and the groundwater table.

Wild growth of 'seemai karuvelam' trees (*Prosopis juliflora*) and water hyacinth (*aagaya thaamarai*) on the river bed in the city limits and outside pose huge threats to the river's ecosystem. While the 'seemai karuvelam' trees guzzle precious groundwater on the already dry riverbed, the water hyacinth vegetation poses a health hazard to residents by being a veritable mosquito breeding ground.

"It's all because of letting sewage into the Vaigai," Madurai South MLA R. Annadurai says. Stating that the very presence of water hyacinth was a reflection



of pollution of water, he says the Corporation has been letting sewage into the river in 67 places within the city limits. "This act has cascading ill-effects. It leads to growth of hyacinth that in turn breeds mosquitoes that bring diseases," says the Communist Party of India (Marxist) MLA.

Another party functionary, A. Pitchaimani, says the cadres staged protests in the past, demanding the removal of water hyacinth. They removed the vegetation on two occasions. The Corporation got into the act after the protests, but left it abruptly, he says.

The MLA blames the Corporation, the Public Works Department and the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board for the mess. "The Corporation has not taken any steps to stop pollution of the river. Neither the PWD, the custodian of the river, nor the TNPCB takes steps to prevent it," he says.

The Corporation had a plan to construct a channel along the banks to collect the sewage and drain it off Sakkimangalam where the Corporation has a sewage treatment plant. "I raised the issue many times with the local body and in the Assembly but to no avail," he says.

However, a PWD engineer says statutory power on the environmental issue vested with the Corporation and the TNPCB and not with his department. Construction of causeways with pipes to let water instead of vented bridges was the main reason for the growth of water hyacinth, he says. "This plant thrives on stagnant sewage as the pipes laid for Corporation to construct the causeways are above the river bed," he says.

Mr. Annadurai says, back in 1980, the Corporation had to abandon one of its drinking water headworks, put up in the British period near Arapalayam, owing to pollution of the riverbed. Similar was the case with the Manalur headworks. "This city has not learnt any lessons from the past," the MLA rues.

### **Killer hyacinth**

S. Rajendran, Coordinator of Rural Biotechnology Unit, Department of Botany in Saraswathi Narayanan College, says water hyacinth came to India as an ornamental plant, but turned out to be a big menace.

“Sewage water is a catalyst for its abundant and quick growth,” Dr. Rajendran says. It can be found in almost all water bodies. The aquatic macrophyte spreads over water, forms a green blanket over it and prevents oxygen from getting dissolved in the water. Usually, oxygen dissolves in water during waves. Lack of dissolved oxygen kills underwater living organisms such as fish and frogs. This leads to stench from the water body,” he says.

Besides, the plants deplete nutrients in the water. The heavy root system in the floating plants speed up the evaporation process and leads to water loss. The quality of water where the plants are found become un-potable.

Stating that seeds from the plant had the power to germinate even after 20 years, he says it will be difficult to completely eradicate it. “An integrated and continuous plan can control its growth,” he says.

A bio-herbicide suggested by Dr. Rajendran for weeding water hyacinth is under consideration by the PWD.

Mr. Annadurai says Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, who had given a new lease of life to farmers of southern districts through victory in the Periyar dam issue, should come forward to save the Vaigai from pollution.

### [Separate budget for agriculture sought](#)

*Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam wants the Centre to accord priority to the agriculture sector and plan accordingly*

The Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, affiliated to the Communist Party of India, has urged the Centre to come out with a separate budget for agriculture. It also

wanted the Centre to accord priority to the agriculture sector and plan accordingly.

A resolution to this effect was adopted at the Sangam's 25 State-level conference being held here. The three-day conference concludes on Monday.

It said India was an agrarian country with nearly 70 per cent of the population involved in agricultural production. Facing several challenges, farmers were losing hope and were driven to a situation of abandoning agriculture.

Lakhs of farmers have discarded agriculture, the Sangam said claiming that the Centre had not accorded due care for protecting agriculture. Another resolution urged the Centre to immediately constitute the Cauvery Management Board and the Monitoring Committee without any further delay and ensure water that was due for Tamil Nadu. By yet another resolution, the Sangam demanded the Centre to immediately withdraw the proposed coal-bed methane project and allay the fears of the people of delta districts. It wanted the State government to check illegal sand mining to protect rivers and water resources.

Steps to protect environment, linking of various rivers in the State and construction of check dams in the Coleroon river to improve groundwater table were among the other resolutions adopted at the conference. Atul Kumar Anjan, all-India general secretary, All India Kisan Sabha, senior CPI leader R. Nallakannu and representatives of the Sangam took part in the delegates conference held on Sunday.

## FAO official lauds T.N. model of managing irrigation tanks



Jim Hancock. Photo: M. Vedhan

The Tamil Nadu model of providing primacy to the views of farmers in the management of irrigation tanks has been lauded by an official of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), who is heading a team to review tank projects in India.

Conventionally, the tank management has been governed by the water engineering-centric approach. But, in Tamil Nadu, “the focus is on farmers, their needs. And, that’s the way it should move,” says Jim Hancock, Natural Resources and Livelihoods Officer at the Investment Centre, Asia Pacific Service of the FAO.



After observing the execution of the World Bank-funded Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water-Bodies Restoration and Management Project (IAMWARM) in Kancheepuram and Villupuram districts last week, Mr. Hancock told *The Hindu* that another feature that impressed him and his team was the way the existing institutions were working together, from the State down to the village, to address water issues.

In this context, he referred to the creation of single window information and knowledge centres at the community level, which were functioning as platforms for officials and farmers to discuss issues and find solutions. He called the facility a “very interesting innovation.”

As for the role of tanks in the southern States of the country, he said: “The cultural, rural, dry southern India is centred on tanks.” Pointing out that tanks had a wider purpose, he said they served not only the requirements of agriculture but also those of drinking water, sanitation, livestock, horticulture and fisheries. This was why they were important to the development of the States.

Asked to list the areas of improvements in tank management, Mr. Hancock said sustainability of water management, operation and maintenance of tanks was a matter of concern to many States of the country.

As for tanks, there were several questions that needed answers. “What is the water balance? Where is water going? Who needs water? Eventually, you have to ask yourselves: should we have to allocate water for the urban sector and to the poorer and better-off users? To what degree, the community together with the government should fund the maintenance of a tank system?”

He said one had to get the facts first before taking any decision on the approach to be adopted to the management, operation and maintenance of tanks.

[Minister opens distribution of paddy seeds](#)

The government has allocated Rs. 94.5 lakh for the district for distribution of seeds for “samba” season with 50 per cent subsidy, said R. Kamaraj, Minister for Food.

The Minister was inaugurating the distribution at the primary cooperative credit society at Letchumankudi village near here on Sunday. He said that while Rs. 44 lakh had been sanctioned for primary cooperative societies, the balance Rs. 50.5 lakh would go to the agriculture extension centres.

He said that each farmer would be eligible for a maximum of 20 kg of quality seeds. Farmers identified by the Agriculture Department. A total of 1,342 tonnes of seeds had been stocked at cooperative credit societies and extension centres. About 5,600 tonnes of fertiliser had also been stocked to benefit samba farmers.

M. Mathivanan, District Collector, and Ravichandran, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies, spoke.

### Uncertainty about farm labour availability

*Working on private farms is a second option for labourers*

The kharif sowing is set to commence in the district now that water has been released into the Lower Bhavani Project canal from the Bhavani Sagar Dam.

Farmers are relieved, but are not certain about adequacy of human resource for carrying out agricultural activities for the next four months.

Working in private farms is only a second option for agricultural labourers who usually come under BPL (Below Poverty Line) category and hence, enlisted as beneficiaries under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, under which the primary task is to deepen water bodies to improve storage capacity during rainy season. In Erode district, the 100-day job scheme has helped in the deepening of the branch canals of Lower Bhavani Project

canal. There have also been instances of water bodies on patta lands being deepened by MNREGP workers.

Farmers in the district say there is no reason why the scheme should not be revisited to adapt it to the ground reality of depleted human resource for agricultural operations in private farms.

“A policy-level decision by the Union Government is necessary. Panchayats must be empowered to depute willing farm workers in their jurisdiction to work in private fields under the scheme,” said K.V. Ponnaiyan, president of Tamil Nadu Swadeshi Farmers' Association.

Such a system will result in a win-win situation for the farmers and the government as well. While the farmers will be assured of work force, the government could ensure that the BPL beneficiaries get work for more days.

For this to happen, the MNREGS activities must be put on hold when the agricultural operations are in full swing, he said.

### **Bidar heading towards a drought**

*‘Crops will be damaged if there is no rain in the next 10 days’*

Bidar district seems to be headed towards a drought. The district administration has sent a report to the State Agriculture Department saying crops will suffer serious damage if it does not rain within 10 days. Government sources said this is significant as officials responsible for weather forecasting had said there was only a 50 per cent chance of rainfall in the next few days.

### **Average rainfall**

According to the report, rainfall till now has been only 51 per cent of the aggregated annual average of 880 mm. Rainfall in the month of August, the wettest month for the district, has been only 30 per cent of the average.

Of over the 7 lakh ha of land available in the district, around 3.08 lakh ha has been covered in the kharif season. Of this, crops in around 40,000 ha are protected by irrigation. The rest — around 2.6 lakh hectares — will be badly affected if there is not enough rainfall in 10 days, the report said. It mentions paddy, sugarcane and bajra as crops protected by irrigation. The other dependent and are likely to suffer if there are long dry spells during the season.

### **Compensation**

“We might have to face a difficult time if crops in around 80 per cent of the total sown area suffer damage,” said P.C. Jaffer, Deputy Commissioner. “As per calamity relief fund guidelines, the district will be eligible for a crop loss compensation of Rs. 110 crore, in case crop loss is over 50 per cent,” he said.

### **Action plan**

However, the report contains an action plan to tackle drought.

It speaks of ensuring water supply to all affected villages by using surface or groundwater sources. It says each gram panchayat will draw up plans to take up works Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to reduce migration of labourers.

Thirdly, animal husbandry department officials have been asked to prepare a contingency plan for providing fodder to animals in case green grass availability is low.

### **Irrigation facilities**

“We have already distributed seeds to farmers with irrigation facilities, to ensure supply of around 40,000 tonnes of fodder. If the fodder crop fails, then we may have to procure fodder,” the DC said. Worst case scenarios will see the setting up of gruel centres in the affected gram panchayats.

The State government has asked for another report with additional details to be submitted in one week. We will wait for the rains before sending that report, the DC said.

- *'Only 50 per cent chance of rainfall in the next few days'*
- *'Officials have been asked to prepare a contingency plan for providing fodder to cattle'*

#### **'Amended APMC Act a sell-out of farmers' interests'**

Karnataka Pranta Raita Sangha (KPRS), Karnataka Pradesh Red Gram Growers Association (KPRGGA) and All India Kisan Sabha have termed the amended Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act a sell-out of the interests of the farming community and traders.

They also termed the Rashtriya e-Marketing Services (REMS), floated by the Union government, a service dominated by the National Commodities Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX).

Addressing a joint press conference here on Sunday, the president of KPRS Maruti Manpade, the president of KPRGGA Basavaraj Ingin and the secretary of AIKS Moula Mulla said that the NCDEX had 51 per cent equity in the REMS and private industrialists had major stakes in the NCDEX.

#### **'Left in a lurch'**

Mr. Manpade said that the NCDEX had liquor barons and owners of sugar factories on its board. He alleged that companies like NCDEX had left farmers in a lurch in Mumbai and Chennai with alleged multi-million scams and not making payments on time.

He added that REMS would not function independently as declared by the State government and its policies and marketing strategies would be decided by the



NCDEX. The latter would not protect the interests of the farmers and small-time traders. Mr. Manpade added that the NCDEX was the brain child of the previous National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government under Atal Behari Vajpayee and an amendment to the APMC act was also proposed by the then NDA government.

He wondered whether Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was trying to implement the ideas and principles of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and trying to placate the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that if the State government was really interested in protecting the interests of the farmers it should set up a State-owned procurement agency with revolving funds of Rs. 10,000 crore.

#### [River sand-mining poses threat to lifeline](#)

(Palakkad): A 20-year-old wild elephant was electrocuted at Abbanur in Atappady early July when it came into contact with a power line of an illegally installed high-capacity electric motor to draw water from the Bhavani River to irrigate a banana plantation. The elephant, which was on its way to drink water from the perennial river, was killed instantly. But, the practice of installing illegal pump sets to draw huge amounts of water to irrigate the mushrooming number of banana plantations in the area continues unabated. Banana plantations, which consume a lot of water, are killing the east-flowing river in Attappady along with massive deforestation and illegal sand-mining.

“The water level in the river is depleting alarmingly due to overexploitation at its origin. There are a number of banana plantations in Chavadiyur, Pakkulam, and Mulli areas in Attappady that depend on illegal extraction of water from the Bhavani. They even manage free electricity meant for normal agriculture activities to reap profit,” said P.N. Unnikrishnan, former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.

Sand-mining at the Bhavani is also posing a major threat to the river, the lifeline of Attappady as well as Coimbatore, Tirupur and Erode districts in Tamil Nadu.

The illegally mined sand is carried on donkeys. “The police can seize a jeep, lorry, or tipper used for carrying river sand. But in the case of donkeys, the officials are helpless. How can they seize a donkey,” said Nazir Ummer, a resident of Sholayur. As its origins spread across Attappady and the Nilgiri hills, which is hit by large-scale deforestation, the perennial river dries up during acute summer. Over-exploitation of the river has affected its ability to meet drinking water and irrigation needs on the 25-km stretch in Attappady. The rest of it flows through Tamil Nadu to merge with the Cauvery. It is the second largest river in Tamil Nadu. An official move to focus on the need to protect the threatened ecology of Bhavani River was initiated in May this year. A workshop with the participation of experts from both the

States was organised under the aegis of the Attappady Hill Area Development Society (AHADS) to prepare a comprehensive river and environment protection scheme with

the theme, ‘Save Bhavani and Attappady’. However, the efforts have not progressed beyond the seminar. “To protect the river, its banks should have trees and all destructive activities such as indiscriminate sand-mining should be stopped. The agricultural practices of the area should be reworked,” the workshop observed.

### [TS may take bond route](#)

The Telangana government is likely to take the bond route if the Reserve Bank of India refuses to reschedule the loans of farmers.

The government may release up to Rs. 5,000 crore out of the total burden of Rs. 18,000 crore on crop loan waiver which would bail out a majority of the 40 lakh farmers covered by the scheme who borrowed lower amounts. For farmers with borrowings up to the maximum promised amount of Rs 1 lakh, the government may issue bonds, sources in the government said.

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Sunday announced reservation of 16 per cent for SCs and 6 per cent for STs in the constitution of agricultural market committees.

The quota for Backward Classes in Panchayat Raj institutions would be maintained in market panels.

The SCs and STs would also be extended reservation in university senates by amending the Universities Act. Hostels would be constructed for SC girl students in every Assembly constituency.

### Rise in aquaculture, major threat to delta lands



Aquaculture being done in a fertile land near Mummidivaram.— Photo: B.V.S. Bhaskar

The lush green paddy farms in 16 mandals of two delta areas are fast turning into fish tanks as the aqua farming is rampant in most of the mandals.

Earlier, aquaculture was confined to those mandals which are nearer to sea, but now it has spread to all most all mandals in Konaseema.

The conversion of fertile land suitable for aqua farming is going in a big way as farmers are drifting from agriculture to aqua farming. According to statistics available with the Fisheries Department, prawn culture is spread in 16,000 hectares and freshwater fishing is going on in another 4,055 hectares in the district.

“Saltwater is being used in aquaculture and there is every possibility of groundwater salinity in the entire area. This scenario will affect the abutting farm fields in the long run and force the farmers to switchover to aquaculture,” said Sanjeeva Rao, Fisheries Development Officer, Amalapuram.

The businessmen in the guise of farmers have started purchasing hundreds of acres in Katrenikona, Tallrevu, I. Polavaram, Mummidivaram, P. Gannavaram, Mamidikuduru, Malikipuram, Razole and Sakhinetipalli mandals for aquaculture farming.

“It had become a fashion for every farmer in the Konaseema area to go after prawn culture,” says K. Tattabbai of Kamanagaruvu village.

The farmers have started digging their cultivable lands to start aqua farming in some of the mandals which are nearer to sea. Moreover, the Coastal Regulatory Zone Authority (CRZA) norms are being floated at many places along the coast. “We have brought it to the notice of the Collector. We hope that she will take action on this issue,” said Mr. Sanjeevarao, environmentalist.

### Transfer technology, CPCRI told

*It will aid production of value-added products*



N.K. Krishna Kumar, Deputy Director-General (Horticultural Science), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, has called up on the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) here to transfer technologies developed by it to boost manufacturing of value-added agricultural products.

Dr. Krishna Kumar was inaugurating an agro-business incubation centre and on-site incubation services of the Business Planning & Development Unit at CPCRI here on Sunday.

A memorandum of agreement on virgin coconut oil production by hot process technology was exchanged with Balakrishnan hailing from Ullody in the district at the function.

An agreement on transferring technology for the production of dessicated coconut powder was also signed with M.A. Harris of Mulleria in the district.

The function saw transfer of CPCRI-developed technologies to progressive agro-based entrepreneurs from Kannur, Bangalore, and Coimbatore.

### Neera

These included technology involved in the collection of fresh and hygienic Neera, production of natural coconut sugar, and tissue culture protocol for the multiplication of areca nut.

P.L. Saroj, Director, Directorate of Cashew Research, Puttur, Karnataka; George V. Thomas, director, CPCRI; and Suresh Kumar, chief administrative officer, CPCRI, attended the function.

### KLDB to expand cultivation of fodder through Kudumbasree





Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan disbursing financial aid to the beneficiaries of the Kerala Livestock Development Board's Kudumbasree-linked fodder development programme near Koothuparamba in Kannur on Sunday.

The Kerala Livestock Development Board (KLDB) will expand its fodder development activities in the North Malabar region through Kudumbasree units.

The KLDB has already launched a scheme for fodder cultivation through the Kudumbasree Mission in the region. Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan inaugurated the release of financial assistance for the scheme at a gathering of beneficiaries at Koothuparamba here on Sunday.

The scheme envisages a financial assistance of Rs.15,000 for fodder cultivation in a unit of one acre land. Each unit is given chaff cutters at subsidised rates. The Kudumbasree members engaged in dairy farming are also given training in fodder cultivation, a press release here said.

The scheme is being implemented to overcome the shortage of proper feed and their high cost, a press release said.

Apart from scientific fodder cultivation, the scheme includes proper storage and preservation of surplus grass, legumes, and hay available during flush season as feeding silage for the dry season, the press release said.

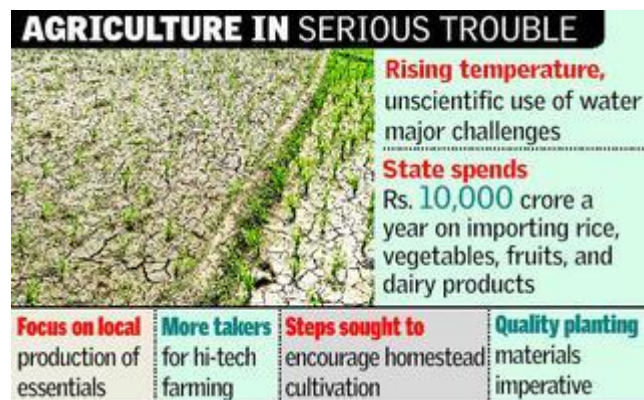
At the function on Sunday, Koothuparamba block panchayat president V. Soumini inaugurated the disbursement of funds for silos for converting the grass into silage. Koothuparamba municipal chairperson Padmaja Padmanabhan disbursed chaff cutters, and Thrippangottur panchayat president Selma Mahmood formally released quality fodder seeds for the beneficiaries.

### [Comprehensive farming project](#)

Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan will launch a comprehensive agriculture project for the farming community in Mananthavady taluk of the district at the

Mananthavady grama panchayat community hall at 3 p.m. on Monday. The project is aimed at achieving all-round development of the sector. The government has earmarked Rs.7 crore for the project. — Staff Reporter

### Climate change, poor market acumen hit farming



Climate change, dearth of young people in agriculture and poor market intelligence are key factors that are putting agriculture in serious trouble in the State even as food crops give way to cash crops.

Kerala now depends on import of rice, vegetables, fruits and dairy products estimated to cost around Rs. 10,000 crore annually. Of this, rice constitutes Rs. 4,000 to 4,500 crore; vegetables Rs. 1,500 crore; fruits Rs. 1,200 crore and milk Rs. 400 crore.

### Recast farm policy

At least 50 per cent of our requirements should be met through local production, says Vice-Chancellor of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) P. Rajendran as he underscores the need to restructure our agricultural policy and working of the agricultural university.

Farmer age in the State is in the range of 50 to 60 years. Though young people are not keen on conventional farming involving drudgery, there are takers for hi-tech farming. How do we leverage this advantage is a question before the State,

he said as he pointed out how hi-tech farming training sessions overflowed with young enthusiasts.

He laid stress on encouraging homestead farming; making available gender-friendly farm equipment and quality seeds and planting materials. Soil testing and more field orientation for KAU scientists are the other solutions he suggests for a revival of agriculture in the State.

A veteran rice researcher says that rising temperature, unscientific use of water and paucity of straight fertilizers are big challenges before rice cultivation in Kerala. He said that since 1997 temperature had risen between 0.92 and 1.5 degree Celsius.

Though, he said, some areas in the State had achieved high productivity levels of 7.5 tonnes a hectare, fallout of climate change such as increased attack by pests like earhead bugs ( *chaazhi* ) posed significant threats.

B. Ajitkumar of KAU's Agri-Meteorology Department said climate change had its impact also on cash crops such as cardamom, pepper and coconut. Increasing frequency of extreme climatic events had its impact on the quality and quantity of production.

A farm consultant in Thrissur called for appropriate mechanisms to reach farmers data on climate and market situation on a real-time basis. He pointed to the current rubber prices, the lowest over the last five years, which was predicted at the end of November 2012.

### Farm awards given away

Distribution of farm awards and a seminar marked the Farmers' Day celebrations organised by the Agriculture Department at Kuduppanakunnu on Sunday.

K. Muraleedharan, MLA, inaugurated the celebrations in the presence of Mayor K. Chandrika.

Doordharshan Kendra, Thiruvananthapuram, got the award for best institution for airing programmes with the 'intent to inspire people in farming' and for taking up terrace farming at its office.

The students of St. Thomas Higher Secondary School and PSNM Higher Secondary School shared the award for setting up the best school vegetable garden.

### Nil interest in farming a problem'



Saplings being planted in the residence of T. N. Prathapan, MLA, in Thalikkulam to launch a farming scheme for families on Sunday. Photo: By special arrangement

A major problem of modern Kerala is that its people are increasingly turning away from agriculture, Therambil Ramakrishnan, MLA, has said.

He was addressing Farmers' Day celebrations organised by the Thrissur Corporation on Sunday.

"The farm sector's plenitude is a thing of the past. People once took pride in being farmers. They no longer do. This should change," he added.

Deputy Mayor P. V. Sarojini, former Mayor I. P. Paul, Standing Committee chairmen Kiran C. Lazar, K. Gireesh Kumar, Davy Silas, M. Usman, Standing Committee chairpersons Jaya Muthipeedika, Nancy Akkarapetti, Smini Shijo, Corporation secretary K. M. Basheer, Agriculture Deputy Director Anitha Sivaraman and Division Councillor Annam John were present. A farming scheme for families was launched at the residence of T. N. Prathapan, MLA, at

Thalikkulam on Sunday. He and his wife are planning to grow brinjal, cauliflower, cabbage, spinach and chilli this season.

Grama panchayat president P. I. Shoukat Ali said that the scheme would be popularised among families in Thalikkulam with the support of Kudumbashree.

### Vented dams proposed across west-flowing rivers in Udupi



These dams are expected to help raise the groundwater table. —File photo

Vinay Kumar Sorake, Urban Development Minister, has said that a Rs. 350-crore proposal had been submitted to the State government to construct vented dams across west-flowing rivers in coastal districts. He was speaking after inaugurating the first hobli-level Farm Machinery Custom Hire Service Centre in the district, here.

Mr. Sorake said besides providing better irrigation facilities to farmers, these dams would also help raise the groundwater table in Udupi district. Efforts were being to expedite the Varahi Irrigation Project. Water was expected to flow in the Varahi canals by the end of this year. The government had decided to spend Rs. 10,000 crore a year in the irrigation sector .

One of the chief grouse of farmers was that they did not get good price for their produce.

The State government had set up an Agriculture Price Commission to help farmers get better price for their crops. The commission could seek governmental intervention if there was a downfall or crash in the prices of agricultural commodities. It had powers to fix minimum price for crops.



Small and scattered land holdings had increased input costs for farmers in the district. Most farmers complained of shortage of labour. If farmers took to mechanisation by using more agricultural equipment, it would reduce their dependence on labour. To provide these equipment on rent that the State government had decided to set up 186 hobli-level Farm Machinery Custom Hire Service Centres.

Two more such centres would be set up at Kambadakone in Kundapur taluk and Marne Guddengadi in Karkala taluk in the district by the end of September.

The government was thinking of extending the milk provided to school under the Ksheera Bhagya scheme from three days to five days. This measure would benefit the dairy farmers, Mr. Sorake said.

Anthony Maria Immanuel, Joint Director of Agriculture, said that the aim of the centre was to provide farm machineries to small and marginal farmers on rent at the right time and at reasonable rates.

- *'These dams will also help raise the groundwater table in Udupi district'*
- *Government to spend Rs. 10,000 crore a year in the irrigation sector*

### Fodder-cutting machines

The Department of Agriculture has invited applications from farmers to receive fodder-cutting machines free of cost under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) for 2014–15, sources said.

Interested self-help groups, milk producers' cooperative societies and farmers can apply.

Additional details can be collected from the office of the Department of Information and Public Relations (08232-224153).

### Government told to plough on, allocating more for agriculture

*A discussion on Union budget 2014-15 makes a slew of suggestions*



BJP's national secretary H. Raja speaks at a discussion on Union budget 2014-2015 at VIT University on Sunday.— Photo: C. Venkatachalapathy

Speakers at a discussion on the Union budget 2014-2015 on Sunday stressed the need for better allocation for agriculture, gradual withdrawal of tax exemptions for corporates, measures targeted at generating employment, developing small and medium enterprises and rural development.

Looking at various elements of the budget, columnist S. Gurumurthy said one of the highlights of the budget was formation of a committee to provide suggestions and find innovative means to improve the non-corporate sector — micro, small and medium enterprises.

It is this sector that accounts for 90 per cent of employment in the country according to a study by Credit Suisse.

This sector contributes to 46 per cent of GDP compared to 23 per cent by public sector, 15 per cent by the corporate sector, he added.

The government has announced Rs. 10,000 crore for the venture capital for start-up enterprises.

Mr. Gurumurthy also called for a ban on circulation of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 currency notes to curb black money.

Black money shot up in the last 15 years and became easy money because government printed Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 currency notes, he said.

“All political parties should decide that these currency notes should not be circulated. Then, black money transaction will come down by 50 per cent. These notes can be exchanged for Rs. 100 notes,” he said.

Noting that the economy was “mismanaged” in the last one decade, he said the government should gradually withdraw tax exemptions for corporates in the next three years so that fiscal deficits will reduce.

In 2004, the then Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said there was no starvation of funds, but in 2013, he told the Parliament that the fiscal deficit was a cause of concern to the economy, BJP’s national secretary H. Raja pointed out.

Terming the period between 2004 and 2014 as “disastrous economic management,” he said industrial growth was sluggish, manufacturing sector recorded negative growth and rupee has fallen against the dollar.

“This budget is for seven months. The expectations of the public will find a place in the next year’s budget,” he added.

Former MLA and vice president of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee C. Gnanasekaran asked the ruling BJP party not to follow the foot steps of former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram. He said the BJP should not allow FDI in defence and insurance.

VIT University Chancellor G. Viswanathan said more than 60 per cent of the population in India depended on agriculture.

He stressed the need to increase agricultural productivity and interlinking of rivers to solve crisis in water supply for drinking and irrigation purposes.

Former MP Era Sezhiyan, Leader of Parliamentary Party of TDP Y.S. Chowdhary, General Secretary (AIBEA), Communist Party of India C.H. Venkatachalam and State Secretariat Member of Communist Party of India (Marxist) N. Gunasekaran spoke.

### [Govt. urged to set up Agri varsity in Chintalapudi](#)

An all-party delegation from Chintalapudi Assembly constituency on Sunday requested Minister for Women and Child Welfare Peethala Sujatha to lobby with the government for establishment of an agriculture university in their area. Incidentally, Ms. Sujatha is representing Chintalapudi. The delegation members said the university could be established in a place between Chinntalapudi and Lingapalem in view of the availability of government land in the particular stretch. Bejjam Kirankumar of the CPI(M), who was on the delegation, said agriculture in the upland region in the district would receive a boost if the agriculture university was set up in the region. They said the officials had identified a big patch of 1,600 acres of government land in the Lingapalem-Chintalapudi stretch which could be used for the university.

The Minister also received another request for an RTC bus depot at Chintalapudi. The bus depot at Chintalapudi would establish a better transport connectivity from the upland areas to the district headquarters with a promise for good market facilities for agriculture and horticulture produces, they pleaded. The leaders from the Congress, YSRC, CPI(M), Lok Satta and the BJP were among those who met the Minister.

### [Clear uncertainty over debt waiver'](#)

Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACS) and Rural Banks Employees Union have expressed serious concern over the stagnation in the cooperative banking sector caused by the alleged uncertainty over the debt waiver scheme.

The union appealed to the State government to clear the “air of uncertainty” by talking it out with the Reserve Bank of India and restore vibrancy in banking activity across the State. “The TDP government in the State proposes, while the RBI disposes, leading to confusion among farmers over the fate of the debt waiver scheme,” it observed. Consequently, recoveries in the PACS and other rural banks have fallen drastically, and there have been no credits and debits either. It has all brought banking operations in rural areas to a grinding halt, the union regretted.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

Green Revolution or Silent Spring?





<b>Food baskets to dust bowls</b>			
<b>How civilisations collapsed when the soil was abused</b>			
<b>Civilisation</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Era</b>	<b>Cause of Collapse</b>
<b>Sumerian</b>	<b>Mesopotamia</b>	<b>10000 BCE</b>	<b>Salinisation of soil</b>
<b>Harappan</b>	<b>Indus valley</b>	<b>2000 BCE</b>	<b>Desiccation of soil</b>
<b>Incan</b>	<b>Andean region</b>	<b>750-900 CE</b>	<b>Soil erosion</b>
<b>Mayan</b>	<b>Central America</b>	<b>750-900 CE</b>	<b>Soil erosion</b>
<b>Axum</b>	<b>Northern Ethiopia</b>	<b>100-600 CE</b>	<b>Ecological degradation</b>
<b>Roman</b>	<b>Mediterranean</b>	<b>27 BC-395 AD</b>	<b>Soil exhaustion</b>

Chemical-intensive agriculture has ravaged our soil quality. History tells us that the consequences could be catastrophic

During the 86th birthday celebrations of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that Indian farmers “deserve a standing ovation”. However, he reminded the gathered scientists that it was not enough to sit in five-star seminar rooms and analyse why something could not be done; rather, they should think constructively.

In 1986, at the international soil science congress in Hamburg, Germany, I ventured to describe soil as “The Soul of Infinite Life”, and, compared it to a gift of God to humankind which should be handled with utmost care. The description drew both surprise and disdain from the assembled audience.

The gathering went on to discuss why the factory-type, high-input technology agriculture — ironically known as the Green Revolution — was falling on its face in Asia, in particular in India, with falling crop yields, degraded soils, dried aquifers, vanishing bio-diversity, excessive nitrate load in ground water making it no more potable, and so on.

**No soil, no water**



It should be noted that several civilisations collapsed when the soil was abused (*see table*). There is a parallel here with Punjab's experience, as the cradle of the Green Revolution.

Following three decades of severe “extractive agriculture”, vast stretches of Punjab soils have degraded beyond redemption, the main culprit being unbridled use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and water, continuous monoculture of rice and wheat, leading to severe depletion of soil carbon, the bedrock of soil productivity, leading to low nutrient and water-holding capacities.

The Roman civilisation collapsed when its north African soils desertified due to exhaustion following excessive soil exploitation; this was done in order to grow grains to feed the large Roman army.

In fact, it was not a Green Revolution that took place in Punjab, but a “greed revolution”.

How have Indian planners, starting from budget allocation, looked at management of Indian soil resources?

The most recent example of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sanchayee Yojana of ₹ 1,000 crore in the latest Budget speaks volumes. The money is exclusively for irrigation in rainfed areas.

In India, policymakers spend colossal sums of money on “water conservation” and “water management”.

This allocation of ₹ 1,000 crore for irrigation is one such example. Rarely does one come across projects which talk of “soil and water management” within one framework. Either it is soil or it is water.

But without soil, there simply is no water. Look at the basic electro-chemical reaction.

Of all the soil particles, the clay fraction, carrying an excess negative charge, less than 0.2 Angstrom in size (one Angstrom equals one thousandth of a millimeter) is the most dynamic and, and, the most lively (almost like a soul as I have explained before).

A water molecule (H<sub>2</sub>O) has a hydrogen atom (positively charged atom) bonded to an oxygen atom (negatively charged atom), and, when rainwater falls on the soil after condensation of the water vapour, this hydrogen atom is electrically attracted to the clay surface, neutralising the negative charge, and this hydrogen atom, in turn, is bonded to an oxygen atom, with a negative charge, and thus, a chain of water molecules is built around the clay particle.

If there was no soil all the condensed water molecules will simply wash themselves into the sea. And, to be sure, water simply cannot exist in outer space, except as vapour.

### **Immense diversity**

How will the budgeted ₹ 1,000 crore be utilised? Will it be allocated based on soil type, or, just as a flat support to farmers irrespective of the soil characteristics?

The enormity of the problem can be appreciated given that India has thousands of soil series, and, even a tiny state like Kerala has 82 soil series. And each with specific characteristics. Water holding capacity is a very important characteristic.

Rainfed areas have different kinds of soils, like laterite, with low water holding capacity, and, its water requirement will be so very different from that of a clayey soil in eastern India with high water holding capacity.

In other words, to intelligently spend the ₹ 1,000 crore for irrigation, one also needs to know what type of soil one deals with, or else, it will be a waste of public money.

This is why “scientists” and “planners” should have soil and water management projects within one frame, not just a soil or water management project, exclusively.

The next is the ₹ 100 crore provision for “mobile soil testing laboratories”. The science of “soil testing” has made enormous strides, but in India, including in “research” institutions, the testing procedure is still rooted in classical and outdated “text book” knowledge.

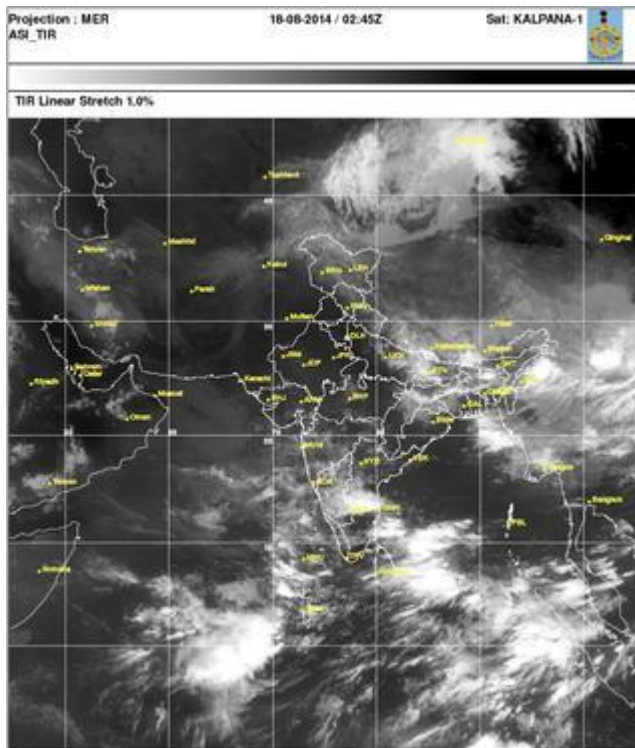
Laboratory “test values” are extrapolated on a hectare/acre basis and a mistake at any stage, from sampling to chemical analysis, can inflate the mistake by a hundred to thousand fold, leading to very wrong fertiliser recommendations. Without doubt, this has contributed to the degradation of Indian soils.

Intelligent soil management is the core of sustainable agriculture. Because history has shown what happens without sustainability.

*The writer is a senior fellow of The Humboldt Foundation*

(This article was published on August 17, 2014)

[Heavy rains building over East, Northeast, South India](#)



### THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG 18:

Convective (rain-driving) clouds are moving east to east Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Gangetic West Bengal along the Himalayan foothills and adjoining plains.

They are also seen rising over Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Nagaland, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha in clear signs that the heavy rain belt is shifting in here.

### Causative troughs

The seasonal trough in the northwest continued to hug the foothills of Himalayas, while in the east, it extended into Bihar and onward towards Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland.

To the southwest of the country, the offshore trough ran down from south Maharashtra to Kerala.

Here, it is pumping up a fresh spell over peninsular India in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

A passing rain wave (a weak Madden-Julian Oscillation wave) across the Indian Ocean is seen as primarily engineering the latest rain wave over the South.

### **Uttarakhand scene**

While the rain fury over Uttarakhand is abating, it is about to show its ugly head over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya and foothills of West Bengal.

In the South, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and south interior Karnataka are bracing for heavy rain over the next couple of days.

The extended prediction also favours heavy rain over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, and Bihar.

### **Rains for South**

In the South, coastal Karnataka and Kerala will join south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to join the party.

The US Climate Prediction Centre sees a blob of heavy rain building over interior Maharashtra and adjoining north interior Karnataka and peaking by the weekend.

This would come about as fresh activity over southeast Arabian Sea (off Kerala-coastal Karnataka) feeds in moisture into the trough moving in from the Bay of Bengal.

India Met Department too has put out a watch for heavy rains threatening to hit interior and adjoining western Maharashtra during this phase.

(This article was published on August 18, 2014)

# Business Standard

Cardamom climbs by 2.3% on rising demand

Fresh positions created by speculators supported prices

August 18, 2014 Last Updated at 11:20 IST



Cardamom prices surged 2.35% to Rs 945.20 per kg in futures trade today as speculators created positions amid strong demand in the spot markets supported by festive season.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in far-month October shot up by Rs 21.70, or 2.35% to Rs 945.20 per kg in business turnover of 62 lots.

In a similar fashion, the spice for delivery in September contract gained Rs 13.80, or 1.48% to Rs 944 per kg in 243 lots.

Market analysts said fresh positions created by speculators driven by rising



demand in the spot markets in view of festive season mainly led to the rise in cardamom prices at futures trade.

### The Times of India

#### **Lack of rain hits sugarcane production in TN, fear of seed shortage increase**

TNN | Aug 17, 2014, 09.16 AM IST

COIMBATORE: The state will face a shortage of sugarcane seeds in the coming season as poor rainfall for the last three years has hit the crop hard, said a top official of Sugarcane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore. The area under sugarcane cultivation could dip below three lakh hectares in the next season (October to next September) in the state, senior officials said.

"The situation of sugarcane is alarming. There will be a serious shortage of seed. Seed shortage is going to be an issue next year," said N Vijayan Nair, director, Sugarcane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore.

The preliminary report of a survey carried out by the Institute in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka found that a majority of sugarcane growing areas in TN received below average rainfall, ranging from 30% to 50%, he said.

"Deficient rainfall has created a chronic drought-like situation. This has had a cascading effect on cane productivity and production," Nair said at a seminar on 'drought management and improving sugarcane productivity' organised by the Institute and the South India Sugar Mills' Association (SISMA), TN here on Saturday.

The area under sugarcane production has dropped after hitting a high in 2006-07, said Sandeep Saxena, agricultural production commissioner and principal

secretary, TN. The area under sugarcane touched a peak of 3.91 lakh hectares, productivity soared to 115 tons per hectare and production topped 450 lakh metric tonnes during the period, he said.

Sugar production has been witnessing a declining trend for the past three seasons, said Palani G Periasamy, president, SISMA, TN. The sugar production, which touched 18.88 lakh tonnes in 2012-13, is estimated to be about 13.1 lakh tonnes in 2013-14. The production is projected to be around 13 lakh tonnes for 2014-15. "Sugarcane cultivation is coming down every year in the state. There is a drop in the average sugarcane yield per acre over these years," Periasamy said.

## DECCAN Chronicle

**Neera is here, but not quite yet**



Picture for representational purpose (Photo: DC archives)

**Kochi:** The government move to popularise the health drink 'neera' is yet to succeed with the excise department going slow in granting licence and marking coconut palms for tapping. Of the 173 coconut producers federations that applied for licence, 156 are yet to get it. Even in the case of the 17 that got the licence, marking of palms by the excise department is progressing only at a snail's pace.

In the meantime, the neera point at Vytilla Mobility Hub, here, remained the only outlet for the public to have the drink in the state. Palakkad Coconut Producer Company Ltd supplies neera to the Hub outlet.

When contacted, Coconut Development Board chairman T.K. Jose told Deccan Chronicle that neera was being supplied to the Hub outlet through a continuous cold storage chain and only a limited quantity could be carried so. But the company has plans to bring out neera in bottles and pouches with shelf-life of three to four months in room temperature and upto one year in refrigerated conditions.

Mr Jose said that at least 10,000 litres of neera a day was required to get a plant going. In all 12 plants are to be launched for producing the drink across the state. The excise department, meanwhile, attributed the delay in marking the palms to staff shortage. This was happening in the state when neighbouring Karnataka has already started marketing neera.

K. Krishnankutty, a coconut farmer at Kuttiyadi in Kozhikode told DC that the farmers were an upset lot due to the lethargic manner in which the excise department was undertaking the palm marking job. "We fear that companies from outside state will take advantage of the situation," he said.