

## **Neera production to enhance revenue of coconut farmers**

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has lauded the efforts of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) in developing a technology for neera production. Inaugurating the neera plant at the College of Agriculture (CoA), Padannakkad, the Chief Minister said neera production was bound to enhance the profits of coconut farmers in the State and the KAU's contribution would be remembered as a milestone in developing farmer-friendly technology. Mr. Chandy lauded the research achievements of the KAU. He said the KAU was an important institution and hence its requirements would be considered with a positive attitude. The Chief Minister also inaugurated the new farm office, postgraduate block and women's hostel annexe. Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan, in his presidential address, said that a Centre of Excellence in Organic Agriculture would be established at Nileswaram as part of the centenary celebrations of the Nileswaram agricultural farm, attached to the CoA. The Minister promised full financial support for the new centre, which would be the epicentre of activities to make Kasaragod the first fully organic district in the State. KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran highlighted the fact that the KAU was the first institution to develop a quality technology for neera production. The technology developed by the KAU was handed over to the Government in 2012, based on which special sanction was accorded for neera research. The first ever neera drink was produced by the KAU, which was released by the Chief Minister in November 2013. The new plant can produce 100 litres of neera per hour. The Vice-Chancellor also stressed the university's commitment to food safety and food security.

## **'Accelerating growth of agricultural production is must to achieve GDP'**

Increasing the pace of growth of agricultural production is necessary to achieve the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) target of eight per cent during the

12{+t}{+h}Five Year Plan, P. Balaram former Director, Indian Institute of Science, has said at the 35{+t}{+h}convocation of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University here on Tuesday.It is also necessary to meet the rising demand for food, increase income of those dependent on agriculture to ensure inclusiveness. The future presents itself with unlimited possibilities but also strong signals of uncertainty associated with issues such as climate change, acceptability of biotechnology, loss of biodiversity, etc.One of the issues in Indian agriculture is the declining profitability of most of the agricultural crops and enterprises. The real prices of agricultural commodities are not increasing in tune with the increasing costs of critical inputs such as labour, fertilisers and others that have been mainly responsible for the declining profitability in agriculture.Another issue is the abundance of net sown area in India being divided into economically non-viable, small and scattered land holdings. Indian traditional inheritance laws have predominantly influenced the division of agricultural area into small fragments. The share of small and marginal holdings accounts for 82.54 per cent of the total operational holdings in India.The next challenge is the shortage of quality seeds. Concerted efforts are needed not only for the production of good quality seeds but also to ensure distribution among farmers. The other challenges are inefficiency in irrigation, lack of mechanisation, soil erosion, soil health, inefficiency in agricultural marketing system among others.Robert S. Zeigler, director general, International Rice Research Institute, Manila, the Philippines, who was conferred Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science spoke about the partnership the Institute had with the TNAU – the five year MoU to promote research, training and exchange of information and technology on rice and its farming systems and value chains.C. Adinarayana Reddy, Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University, USA, said the question of how to adequately feed the fast growing human population is one of the most important challenges of the 21{+s}{+t}century. The current world population is a little over seven billion and about one billion people suffer from food deprivation. The world population had been projected to increase by nine billion by 2050.To meet the

demand, world food production had to increase by 70 per cent. Traditional approach to increasing food production through high inputs of nitrogen and phosphate fertilisers and pesticides are not sustainable because of growing costs. Vice Chancellor K. Ramasamy said in his welcome address that the strength of the University was in strong base in research activities. The scientists were always in the frontline in executing viable research projects to evaluate and evolve crop varieties and technologies. Tamil Nadu Governor K. Rosaiah, State Agriculture Minister S.S. Krishnamoorthy and others were present at the convocation, in which 133 doctoral degrees, 323 post graduate degrees and 1,065 undergraduate degrees were awarded.

### **Provide relief to farmers in uniform manner: BJP**

The BJP has asked officials to distribute relief to farmers throughout the district in a uniform manner. Seed subsidy should benefit the farmers. “The subsidy of Rs. 10 a kg of seed is not provided directly to farmers. They are being provided with fertilizers to the value of the subsidy. This practice must end,” said K. Kalaiselvam, district president of BJP’s agriculture wing. The Agriculture Department that sells the paddy seeds as also private sellers must unfailingly provide receipts for the purchases made by farmers, he said. Farmers in Lower Bhavani Project ayacut were keen on the district administration prevailing upon the Public Works Department to ensure reach of water, released under even turn, in the entire ayacut area wetted by the canal and sub-canals. Farmers expect the Public Works Department to set right the Perumpallam anicut for cultivation of an ayacut area of 2,500 acres irrigated by the Nanjai-Uthukuli canal. Sugar cane mills must settle to cultivators and pay the State Administered Price of Rs. 300 a tonne unfailingly, Mr. Kalaiselvan said. He also emphasised on procurement of cow milk for Rs. 30 a litre and buffalo milk for Rs. 40 a litre. “We have planned a series of agitations if these demands are not addressed promptly.”

### **Farmers forced to sell cattle for a pittance**

Acute fodder shortage due to prevailing severe drought conditions is a matter of grave concern for the farmers across the district. The fodder shortage coupled with water scarcity, has forced farmers to sell their cattle for a pittance in the rural areas. The district administration should rise to the occasion and take steps on a war footing for the provision of fodder at subsidised rate”, demand the representatives of farmers’ associations. Periannan, a farmer of Pagalpatti, raised the issue of acute scarcity of fodder at the recent farmers’ grievances day meeting. He complained that the fodder supplied to the farmers through the seven fodder depots has been stopped abruptly. The continuous failure of the monsoon has disappointed farmers and authorities alike. A majority of the major and minor tanks have gone dry in the last few months in the district. “The district has been witnessing unprecedented drought and the worst hit are the cattle. The price of cattle fodder not only skyrocketed, it ran out of stock in the entire district”, says C. Vaiyapuri, president of the United Farmers Association.

### **Shortage of hay**

The acute shortage of hay was felt in Thalaivasal, Attur, Vazhapadi, Mecheri areas. “The farmers have no other option but to sell the cattle, not only to make their ends meet but also to avoid loss of animals due to starvation,” says Mr. Vaiyapuri. The district administration should take steps on a war footing for fetching hay and supply to the farmers. Steps should also be taken for the establishment of supply chain of cattle feed such as groundnut cake to the members of the milk cooperative societies, he says besides pleading for close coordination between the officials of departments of agriculture, animal husbandry and revenue in providing solace to the affected farmers. A. Ganesh, president of Thumbal panchayat, urged the government to accord priority in fetching and supplying adequate fodder to the farmers. Meanwhile, official sources said that the State Government allotted Rs. 70 lakh at the rate of Rs. ten lakh to each of the seven fodder depots set up at Narasothipatti, Thalaivasal,

Konganapuram, Mecheri, Nangavalli, Pethanaickenpalayam and eshanchavadi for supplying hay stock to the farmers at subsidised rate. Hay was fetched at the rate of Rs. 10 per kg in the open market and from the other districts and supplied to the farmers at Rs. two per kg. A total of 1,237 tonnes of dry fodder was supplied to 14,643 farmers through these depots, the sources added. The District Collector K. Maharabushanam told the farmers' grievances day meeting that the district administration has already approached the State Government for getting adequate stock of dry fodder.

### **Palmyra cultivation to be promoted**

Palm fruit seeds being dibbled at vacant places coming under the Attur Forest Division. The Attur Forest Division has taken steps to promote Palmyra cultivation by planting 20,000 seeds in the forest areas. The jellylike edible seed of the palmyra fruit, popularly called as 'nungu,' is considered a natural coolant as it is rich in minerals. The fronds and trunk of the tree are used for roofing. Palm sugar, palm fruit, palm root, and the edible cake, obtained after removing the crown of the trees are directly consumed. It is known as 'karpaha veruksham' too as all parts of the tree is used for some purpose. In ancient times, the dried palm leaves were used to write. But the official tree of the State is facing extinction because of construction activities, non availability of manpower to extract fruits, and increase in usage in brick kilns as firewood. Hence as a measure to preserve the tree, the Attur Forest Division officials collected fruits and dibbled 20,000 seeds in the forest area. K. Dhanapal, District Forest Officer, Attur Forest Division, told *The Hindu* that the seeds are dibbled along the forest boundaries at vacant places. Forest guards are entrusted with the task. They are asked to do it while patrolling. There is no need to water the seeds at regular intervals. A tree is capable of growing up to 100 feet in 10 years. A tree can last 100 years.

## **Cane institute asks farmers to cultivate new varieties**

The Sugarcane Breeding Institute (SBI), Coimbatore, has urged farmers in the State to cultivate three new tropical sugarcane varieties introduced by it recently to increase production. Inaugurating the 45<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Sugarcane Research and Development Workers of Tamil Nadu & Puducherry, organised by the SBI and Kothari Sugars and Chemicals Limited here, N.Vijayan Nair, Director, SRI, Coimbatore, said that the varieties such as Co0403, Co06027, and Co06030 would be highly suitable for Tamil Nadu. They had been tested in different locations of the country including Tamil Nadu. The trial cultivation of them had given high yield than some of the earlier varieties. Though the institute had distributed seeds of newly notified varieties to a group of farmers, there was a need to grow nurseries in large numbers to improve their popularity among farmers. Hence, sugarcane factories should take steps to raise nurseries with the help of farmers in their cover areas. The sugar industry should take a lead role in popularising the varieties, he said. Emphasising the need for adapting modern technologies, Mr. Nair said farmers should come out of their age-old traditional practices. If they followed new methods, prescribed by the research agencies and institutes, they could improve productivity with less water and efficient pest management. M. Silvester, president, (Operations), Kothari Sugars and Chemicals Limited, said that Rangarajan Committee's recommendation of sharing 70 per cent of the total revenue from sugar, molasses, and other related products as cane payment was a forward step that could save the sinking sugar industry. Since the major sugar producing neighbouring States had already adopted this policy, it was high time the Tamil Nadu government too announce a similar policy. With this arrangement, farmers would be assured of Fair and Remunerative Prices (FRP) fixed by the Central government. It would also guarantee a minimum return to them, he said. It was essential to introduce mechanisation in all activities right from soil preparation to harvest in order to reduce the dependence of labour and cost. The entire farming practices were needed to be modified to suit mechanisation, Mr. Silvester said. N. Prabhakar, president,

South Indian Sugarcane and Sugar Technologists' Association, Chennai, and A.Sankaralingam, Additional Director of Sugar, Government of Tamil Nadu, spoke.

### **'Declare Tiruchi district as drought-hit'**

Farmers representatives of the district have urged the State government to declare Tiruchi district as drought hit and sanction compensation for crop losses, including horticulture crops. The farmers also demanded immediate and liberal sanction of crop loans by cooperative societies and banks as farmers have been facing a crisis owing to the drought conditions over the past three years. Raising the issue at the Farmers Grievances meeting here on Tuesday, Ayilai Sivasuriyan, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, affiliated to the Communist Party of India, and C.Masilamani, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, affiliated to the CPI (Marxist), criticised the reported statement of the Revenue Minister asserting that there was no drought in the State. "Farmers in Tiruchi district have been adversely affected due to the drought condition and do not have money to raise the samba crop now even though water has been released in the canals," said Mr.Sivasuriyan. R.Subramanian, deputy secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, said farmers in the district have been severely affected owing to the drought conditions over the past three years. The entire state should be declared drought hit and all bank and cooperative crop loans should be waived. P.Ayyakannu, State vice president, Bharathiya Kisan Sangam, said the drought was unprecedented and urged the government to sanction compensation for the damages to banana, coconut, mango, sugarcane, kora grass and paddy growers. All crop loans should be waived and banks should suspend distraint proceedings against defaulting farmers, he demanded. He and Mr.Subramanian urged the State government to take steps to get Tamil Nadu's due share of water in the Cauvery from Karnataka as per the final award of the Cauvery Disputes Tribunal. The current storage at the Mettur reservoir would not be enough to sustain the samba crop fully and many farmers entertained

apprehensions over the possibility of inadequate supply, Mr.Ayyakannu said.As water has been released in the canals, the district authorities should ensure adequate supply of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and sanction of crop loans, said A.Nagarajan of the Congress Farmers Wing. P.Viswanathan, president, Tamizhaga Eri and Attru Pasana Vivasayigal Sangam, urged the government to increase the procurement price of cotton and maize to Rs.7,500 and Rs.2,000 a quintal respectively.A section of farmers led by Mr.Ayyakannu complained that the Kothari Sugars Limited was not paying the State Advised Price (SAP) for sugarcane. K.Tharpagaraj, District Revenue Officer, who was in the chair, pointed out that the District Collector has already issued stern warning in this regard and made it clear that sugar mills have to pay the SAP or face action. He advised the company representatives to adhere to the directive.

**‘Take steps to protect standing crops’**

G.H. Tippareddy, MLA, has said that the district administration has been urged to take steps to ensure that the standing crops in the taluk are not destroyed owing to diseases.Speaking after offering ‘bagina’ to Dyamavvankere in Dyamavvan Halli village in Chitradurga taluk here on Tuesday, he said that the farmers in the taluk were facing drinking water shortage a few weeks ago.However, the ground water table had gone up owing to the good rainfall in the last few weeks and it had helped the crops.“After facing a drought situation last year, the farmers are now scared that diseases may destroy their crops. The issue has been discussed with Deputy Commissioner V.P. Ikkeri,” he added.The people in Dyamavvan Halli, Kallahalli and surrounding villages grow good quality onion which is transported to other States. Tanks such as Sanikere, Rani Kere, Akka Tangi Honda, Chandravalli Kere and Mallapur kere had received ample water and the borewells in the surrounding areas had been recharged, he added.



### **Paddy fields flooded after breach in TLBC**

Farmers in the tail-end areas of the Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal (TLBC), who were waiting for the last one month for water to reach their land for taking up paddy transplantation, suffered a blow on Tuesday as the canal breached in the 68th-mile stretch near Maski town. According to reports, a 'bhonga' (hole) developed in the canal's 68th-mile stretch where an aqueduct has been built, in the early hours of Tuesday. This eventually led to a breach in the embankment a few hours later. When officials from the Sirwar division of the Irrigation Central Zone, Munirabad, reached the spot, water gushing from the canal had flooded the paddy fields nearby. Efforts made to plug the breach using sandbags went in vain. The officials then initiated measures including reducing the rate at which water was being released into the TLBC from the Tungabhadra reservoir by 1,000 cusecs, increasing the quantum of water being released into the distributaries and sub-canal in the upper reaches of the TLBC, and diverting water to the escape canal at 60th mile point. Mallikarjun Gunge, Chief Engineer, Irrigation Central Zone, visited the spot by 1 p.m. The work on repairing the embankment began in the evening. Chamarasa Malipatil, State president of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, who visited the spot, told *The Hindu*, "It is unfortunate that the embankment has been damaged even after the renovation of the entire canal by spending around Rs. 1,500 crore. A huge breach had occurred at the same spot in 2001. The fact that the concrete wall constructed to plug the breach did not last for 14 years says a lot about the quality of the work done in 2001." The stopping of the water in the canal is expected to further delay paddy transplantation in over 2.5 lakh acres of land in the tail-end areas.

### **Centre for popularising floriculture comes up in Shimoga**

In order to provide technical training to farmers engaged in floriculture and help them market their produce, the Department of Horticulture has established the Centre for Excellence in Floriculture under the Rastriya Krushi Vikas

Yojana (RKVY) in the city. The Centre, established at a cost of Rs. 2 crore, is spread across eight acres of land at the farm of the department in Vidya Nagar. It has a greenhouse, a polyhouse, a pre-cooling chamber and a well-equipped laboratory. The Centre has been established to motivate more number of farmers to take up floriculture. Technical training for farmers on planting of saplings, pest management, pruning and harvesting will be provided at the Centre. Guidance on post-harvest technologies, including preservation and packaging of flowers, will be provided at the Centre. A nursery of floriculture crops will come up at the proposed Centre. More than 20 varieties of floriculture plants, including gerbera, carnation and primrose, will be cultivated. Farmers interested in taking up floriculture can purchase saplings from the nursery. Small and marginal farmers engaged in floriculture, who are facing difficulty in marketing their produce, will be helped to explore new markets. A flower auctioning centre will come up soon. Experts from the Centre will visit floriculture plots and provide necessary information to farmers. Deputy Director of Department of Horticulture M. Vishwanath told *The Hindu* that six floriculture graduates would be appointed as technical experts at the Centre.

### **Cusat to host national seminar on fisheries**

A national seminar on “re-engineering marine fishing industry for second Blue Revolution” will be held here on August 30 and 31 under the aegis of fisheries organisations, including the School of Industrial Fisheries, CUSAT, and Federation of Indian Fishery Industries. Fisheries sector leaders from Gujarat to West Bengal will participate in the two-day seminar, which will be inaugurated by State Fisheries Minister K. Babu at 9.30 a.m. at the auditorium of the Lake Side campus of the School of Fisheries, CUSAT, on Fine Arts Avenue.

### **Training for dairy farmers**

The Dairy Training Centre at Naduvattam, near Beypore, will conduct a training programme in dairy farming for farmers from Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, and Malappuram districts from August 30 to September 4. Those interested may report at the centre at 10 a.m. on the first day of the programme with documents to prove their identity. Details can be had from the centre at Ph: 0495-2414579.

### **Patronising students for organic farming**

A student farm group of Goodwill English School with Amarambalam panchayat president N.M. Basheer at Pookkottumpadam on Tuesday. A vegetable seed distribution programme to student groups undertaken by the Amarambalam grama panchayat began at Goodwill English School, Pookkottumpadam, on Tuesday. Panchayat president N.M. Basheer inaugurated the programme. The occasion also marked the launch of Goodwill Junior Red Cross Farm Group. Agricultural Officer Liju Abraham inaugurated the group by handing over seed packets to school leader Mohammed Shiyaz. The seed distribution was part of an Agriculture Department scheme meant to promote organic farming and the use of organic vegetables by patronising student groups. Eleven schools in the panchayat were given seed packets. Mr. Abraham visited Goodwill School's group farming area and offered instructions to students on strengthening vegetable farming.

### **Quiz winners**

School manager M. Abdul Nazar gave away the prizes to the winners of a quiz competition conducted by Amarambalam Krishibhavan on the Farmers Day. P.P. Henna and Anshid Salman won the quiz. Goodwill Charitable Trust chairman M. Kunhimohammed presided over the function. School principal P.K. Bindu, vice principal Jamshida Fiyaz, Junior Red Cross office-bearers Shanil Salam, Sreelakshmi, Mehana, and Ameena Thasnim, faculty members K.P. Jishma, T. Chandra, and P. Abdul Salam spoke. CBSE Junior Red Cross

district nodal officer C. Sreeraj proposed a vote of thanks.

### **Water level at Mettur**

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 108.33 feet on Tuesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 6,370 cusecs and the discharge 17,000 cusecs.



### **Farmers, Traders Unhappy with Onions Inclusion in EC Act**

Farmers and traders are concerned over the government decision to bring onion under the Essential Commodities Act (ECA) sans declaration of minimum support price (MSP) and concessions on rail freight. "To protect the interest of farmers, the government should have declared MSP for onion as soon as it was included under the Essential Commodities Act," Lasalgaon Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Chairman Nanasaheb Patil told reporters here over the weekend. He pointed out that onion cannot be brought under the Act as this law prohibits storage of any commodity. The vegetable does not qualify to be under the ECA since onion is a commodity that has to be stored for off-season sales and there is no harvest during March through September. "If onion storage is restricted, it will be very difficult to supply the commodity during the seven months of off-season, resulting in soaring prices," Patil said. Both in terms of area and yield, Maharashtra is the largest onion producing state followed by Karnataka. Under the Act, the Centre should also provide concessions on rail freight, he said. However, the government has not declared any such concessions and instead increased the rail freight by 6 per cent, Patil maintained. Further, Patil said, as per the Act the government can procure the commodity, if necessary, at any cost from farmers, which will hurt them as they are hardly making any profit. "The farmers'

profitability is already hit due to uncertain weather conditions and higher input costs like fertiliser, weedicides, fungicides, plant nutrients among others. So, if the government asks for onion supply at any cost, how will we manage?" onion grower BS Jadhav asked. If the government does not take any action, he said, farmers will be forced to stop growing onions. Meanwhile, scrapping of APMCs is also a cause of worry for farmers as it will push them to sell their produce directly to consumers or any market they want without being tied down to the traditional middlemen at the designated farm markets. "We also want to support it. However, the government should set up an alternative process for distribution. Moreover, onions supplied to APMCs are in bulk and we will not be able to take such huge quantity to district markets and sell directly. It is not practical. Scrapping the APMCs will create a mess," said another onion grower Sachin Pardeshi. Besides, APMCs also keep records and set benchmark prices, he added. Onion trader Sandeep Gaikwad also picked holes in the government policy of fixing the minimum export price (MEP) for the produce, saying this is not justified as exports generate huge foreign exchange and have gone up 300 per cent since the last decade. He pointed out that onion prices have no role in inflation as the bulb's weightage in food inflation is paltry 0.18 per cent.

### **'Neera to Raise Coconut Farmers' Earnings'**

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy appreciated the efforts of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) in developing a foolproof technology for producing Neera. Inaugurating the Neera plant set up at the College of Agriculture (CoA) at Padannakkad, the Chief Minister said that Neera production is bound to increase coconut farmers' earnings and KAU's contribution in this regard will always be remembered as a milestone in farmer-friendly technology development. Congratulating KAU Vice-Chancellor and the scientists for their achievement, Oommen Chandy lauded KAU's various achievements. He said that the government views KAU as an important institution in the state and hence, all its requirements will be considered in a positive manner. The CM

also inaugurated the new farm office, PG Block and Ladies Hostel annexe on the occasion. Agriculture Minister K P Mohanan, in his presidential address, said that a centre of excellence in Organic agriculture will be established at Nileswaram as a part of the centenary celebrations of Nileswaram agricultural farm which is attached to CoA. The minister promised full financial backing for the new centre, which will spearhead activities aimed at making Kasargod the first fully organic district in the state. KAU VC P Rajendran highlighted the fact that the university is the first institution to develop a quality ensured technology for Neera production. The VC also stressed that the university is committed towards ensuring food safety and food security.

### **Rain No Dampener on Veggie Prices**

Chennaiites should thank the weather gods this time as the rains have left vegetable prices untouched. “These rains are not torrential. And the rainfall has worked in favour of crops. As a result, the supply has increased,” said Soundarajan a vegetable wholesale market adviser at the Koyambedu market. Another vegetable vendor from Pasumai Pazhamudir Cholai, KK Nagar, said that the rains had nothing to do with vegetable prices and that it was the supply that governed the rates. He said that the prices had dropped by ₹10 per kilogram on an average since the previous month. However, not all the vegetables have seen a reduction in price, as different vegetables are delivered from different places, observed Soundarrajan. “Onions, for instance, usually arrive from Bengaluru and Andhra. The supply was not good enough and their price had skyrocketed a few weeks ago. Now, things are normal,” he added. On the brighter side, there is a drop in vegetable prices by Rs 10 to Rs 15 when compared to the previous month. Vasanthi, a homemaker, said that although

there wasn't a substantial drop in the rates, the prices had begun to fall. She added that she had begun including onions and tomatoes, which saw the biggest price rise for many months, in their menu. Smaller restaurants that had excluded onions from their menu since the price rise last month, have started to include them.

### **Price Points**

Onions: Rs 30 to Rs 25

Tomato: Rs 40

Brinjal: Rs 15 to 20

Lady's finger: Rs 15 to Rs 15

Cabbage: Rs 10 to Rs 15

Carrot: Rs 25-Rs 40



### **Coonoor tea auction turnover down 23%**

The cumulative turnover at the auction of Coonoor Tea Trade Association in the first seven months has fallen by 23.26 per cent over the same period last year. This happened because the volume sold came down by 17 lakh kg despite every kg fetching Rs. 18 less compared to last year, reveals our analysis. Till July end, 30 auctions had been conducted when 3.26 crore kg was sold against 3.43 crore kg last year. On an average, every kg fetched Rs. 77.59 against Rs.96.10 last year. Overall, the turnover crashed to Rs. 252.94 crore from

Rs.329.62 crore, marking a decline of Rs.76.68 crore (23.26 per cent) compared to the same period of 2013. At this rate, the overall earnings in 2014 will be down by a quarter of 2013, auction sources apprehend.

### **India must increase milk production to 7.8 mt: NDDB**

The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) has said India must increase the average incremental milk production from 4 million tonnes (mt) in the last 10 years to 7.8 mt in the next 8 years to meet the growing demand. India's estimated demand for milk is expected to be about 155 mt by 2016-17 and 200 mt in 2021-22, said NDDB Chairman T Nanda Kumar at a two-day seminar-cum-workshop on 'Convergence of Productivity Enhancement Activities to Meet Future Demand of Milk & Milk Products' that concluded here on Tuesday. He said the ongoing National Dairy Plan (NDP) is a scientifically planned multi-state initiative to increase productivity of milch animals. The first phase of NDP is focussing on 14 major milk producing States, which account for more than 90 per cent of the country's milk production, over 87 per cent of the breedable cattle and buffalo population and 98 per cent of the country's fodder resources.

### **FCI sells 1.54 lakh tonnes of wheat on Nspot**

The Food Corporation of India has sold 1.54 lakh tonnes of wheat between August 7 and 21 to millers across 26 States through the NCDEX Spot Exchange. The price ranged between Rs. 1,500 and Rs.1,836 a quintal in the



three e-auctions conducted so far. The auction follows a successful pilot of seven e-auctions on the Nspot platform conducted by the FCI to sell 17 lakh tonnes of wheat last year. FCI plans to sell 10 million tonnes wheat to millers this year using the online trading platform. The platform has allowed FCI to meet the twin objectives of transparent and efficient sales of wheat to the private mills and reduce its own economic cost, said Nspot in a release on Tuesday. Nspot is working closely with various State governments, PSUs and corporates to establish electronic marketplaces. With over 15,000 market participants, Nspot is playing a role in transforming the fragmented agricultural spot markets into a single national marketplace.

### **Coconut oil expected to cool down after festivals; copra prices still worrying**

The Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA) is expecting a downward trend in coconut oil prices, after the commodity touched record prices, in Tamil Nadu and Kerala within a couple of months. This is because of the dwindling demand for edible copra and raw coconuts from Pakistan as well as shifting of consumer preference to other oils. The neighbouring country is taking bulk quantity of edible copra and raw nuts especially from Tamil Nadu markets, Thalath Mahmood, Director, COMA, said. He pointed out that the present local demand in Kerala was due to Onam and this will come down after the festival. “The market is ruling steady this week with prices ruling at Rs. 16,500 a quintal in Kerala and Rs. 15,800 in Tamil Nadu. However, there was a drop of Rs. 100/quintal in both States in the last two days,” he said. Copra shortage, he said, is a main worry for traders with prices quoting at Rs. 11,500 a quintal in Kerala and Rs. 11,200 in Tamil Nadu. According to him, copra prices are also expected to come down by November-December. Bharat Khona, former Board

Member of COMA, was also of the view that the speculative trend in the market started reeling down due to the absence of an upcountry demand. This is evident from the rates of loose oil market in Tamil Nadu which stood at Rs. 2,320 for 15-kg pack from Rs.2,500 last week, he said.

### **North-West may stay variously wet into first week of September**

North-West India will witness a sustained showery regime into the first week of September as a battery of western disturbances from across the border interacts with an active monsoon system to its south. The US Climate Prediction Centre sees heavy rain for Mumbai-south and east Gujarat, adjoining west Madhya Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana the first week of September. The western disturbances will interact with the rain-bearing system in these areas to bring showers into parts of North-West during this period. Only Jammu and Kashmir is seen sitting out. This would keep at bay the seasonal anti-cyclone that normally announces its advent over the North-West to ring in the withdrawal of the monsoon starting from here from September 1. This has invited the focus of monsoon watchers here for signs of an extended monsoon this year in line with a pattern that has been evident during the past few years.

### **Buzz in bay**

The withdrawal of monsoon had been delayed during these years, with rains continuing to hold in many parts of the north and central parts well into mid-September. Meanwhile, the current week, which is the last of August, would see a low-pressure area brewing fresh in the west-central Bay of Bengal drive heavy rain into adjoining peninsular India and into Mumbai-Gujarat. Entire Andhra Pradesh, parts of north Tamil Nadu, Vidarbha, Marathwada, Madhya Maharashtra, Konkan-Goa, coastal Karnataka and adjoining north Kerala may receive moderate to heavy rain during this phase. On Tuesday, an India Met Department update said that the monsoon was vigorous over north interior

Karnataka and active over coastal Karnataka, Madhya Maharashtra and Marathwada. Madhya Pradesh to the north and parts of interior peninsula to the south are forecast to receive indifferent rain, according to this forecast.

### **Rain outlook**

Rain outlook for the next three days suggested possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall variously over Konkan-Goa, coastal Karnataka, north interior Karnataka, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Telangana, and coastal Andhra Pradesh.

## **Business Standard**

### **After WTO, India skips signing Asean services trade pact**

India has bucked another trade pact. On Tuesday it put off the free trade agreement that was to be signed with the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in services and investment. The move came even as the country was already facing sharp criticism in the international trade arena for scuttling the World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) Trade Facilitation Agreement. Minister of state (independent charge) for commerce and industry Nirmala Sitharaman was supposed to be here for three days of consultation with the Asean economic ministers. On the agenda was the signing of the trade agreement in services, as well as investment. The signing ceremony was to happen at the end of the second day at the Asean economic ministers meeting here. The stage was set, and so was the audience, including media, from all the 10 Asean countries, to witness the signing of the agreement that was long due. However, at the very last moment, Sitharaman cancelled her trip and decided not to attend the meeting. According to Ravi Capoor, joint secretary in the commerce department, the minister was not able to come due to "domestic compulsions", since she had to be present on August 28 for the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, a financial-inclusion scheme through which the government intends to provide every household with a bank account and

insurance cover. Sitharaman has been made incharge of this scheme. Capoor added the Philippines Parliament had not yet ratified the deal. Asean comprises Singapore, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia. Sitharaman on Tuesday posted on microblogging site Twitter: "PM to launch Mega Scheme for financial Inclusion - an ambitious scheme - at least one bank account/family... Unfortunately, had to cancel attending Myanmar AEM meet." However, it is learnt the National Democratic Alliance government, which came to power in May, did not want to take a chance by signing the trade pact so early in office. The deal was negotiated and agreed upon in December 2012 under the United Progressive Alliance government regime. As a result, the government did not want to sign the deal in haste before analysing the pros and cons, officials told Business Standard. India and Asean already have a free trade agreement (FTA) in goods that got implemented from January 2010. This, too, has not been ratified by all Asean members. India had come under scathing attack over the deal for not being able to increase its exports, while imports from most of the Asean member states like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia kept rising. Once signed, the FTA will automatically get converted into a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (Cepa), encompassing trade in goods, services and investment. Since the talks began, the Philippines and Indonesia were apprehensive of India eating away their jobs market. Under the services deal, India had been pushing for more leeway in Mode 4, which refers to the movement of professionals in trade parlance. Besides, another problem is that while countries like Thailand and Malaysia are ready to give greater access to their services market to India, they are not keen to give the same leverage to other Asean members. According to officials in the commerce & industry ministry, India was able to gain significantly in services trade when it established a trade agreement with Malaysia separately compared with what it got under the larger Asean agreement. Under the goods FTA, Asean member countries and India had decided to lift import tariffs on more than 80 per cent of traded products by 2016. The FTA collectively covers a market of nearly 1.8

billion people and proposes to gradually slash tariffs for over 4,000 product lines.

### **Pepper mart likely to be hot**

As the global stock of pepper is shrinking, especially in Vietnam, the prices are likely to be strong for the rest of the current year. Although the Indian market has seen a fall in prices for the last couple of weeks, the global market remains strong now as Brazil, Indonesia and Vietnam are quoting higher tags. The local farm gate price was dropped to Rs 700/Kg from Rs 750. This is because of the lower stock in Vietnam, world's largest exporter, rather steady crop in Brazil and lower output from Indonesia. India had seen a steep rise in imports during last couple of months, from Sri Lanka and major local markets were flooded with cheaper Sri Lankan pepper. This is the main reason for the fall in prices in major domestic markets. Local traders, especially of Delhi and Mumbai, had taken the advantage of concessional duty (12%) import from Sri Lanka and imported roughly 600 tones. Brazil, where harvesting is active now offers \$10,000 tones, is the fancy destination of buyers from Europe. It is estimated that the crop in Brazil is in a range of 30,000 -32,000 tones in this season. According to leading exporters Indonesia is having a lower crop this time, ranging from 15,000 -22,000 tones. So Indonesia quotes higher price of \$10,400 -10,500/tonne. For White pepper Indonesian offer is US 14,000/tonne. According to the latest export data of Vietnam Pepper Association (VPA) the country had shipped 120,662 tones during January – July period of this year. This indicates a smaller stock there and according to estimates the available stock would be 15,000 -20,000 tones. The fresh crop season begins only by next January. So Vietnam quotes higher tags, ranging from \$10,200 -10,250/tonne. India which has exported roughly 1000 tones of Indian origin pepper during April – July period now offers US 12,500/tonne. So the global market parameters negate a serious fall in prices in both black and white pepper marts. Market is likely to move stronger as supply is limited for the rest of the year. Experts told Business Standard that demand will also be slow as a major chunk of European and US buyers had stocked pepper. Meanwhile, Vietnam

Pepper exports reached 120,662 tones, comprising of 109, 099 tones of Black pepper and 11,563 tones of White pepper in April – July period. According to local exporters India's export in the same period comes close to 10,000 tones during the period. Spices Board does not release the official data on exports as India's position is weak in the world market. Moreover, India is importing pepper in bulk from origins like Vietnam and Sri Lanka. It is interesting to note that other producing countries like India (8021 tones), Indonesia (2854 tones) and Malaysia (1303 tones) have become regular buyers of Vietnam. Singapore has emerged as a major trading Hub (12,861 tones) and their imports stood more than the combined imports of Netherlands ( 7251 mts) and Germany (3746 mts) during January –July period. The United States has been the biggest importer with 24,481 tones, which is 20.2% of Vietnam's total export.

#### **Sugar remains under pressure in futures trade, sheds 0.26%**

Sugar prices fell by 0.26 per cent to Rs 3,057 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators trimmed positions amid higher supplies in the spot market. At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in October fell further by Rs 8, or 0.26 per cent, to Rs 3,057 per quintal with an open interest of 2,300 lots. September sugar shed Rs 5, or 0.16 per cent, to Rs 3,044 per quintal in 14,110 lots. Market analysts said higher supplies from millers kept pressure on sugar prices at futures trade.

#### **Cardamom gains 0.35% as demand picks up**

Cardamom prices traded higher 0.35 per cent to Rs 937 per kg in futures trading today as speculators enlarged positions amid pick-up in demand in the spot market against restricted arrivals from producing belts. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in October gained Rs 3.30, or 0.35 per cent to Rs 937 per kg in business turnover of 37 lots. The September contract edged up by 80 paise, or 0.08 per cent to Rs 949.70 per kg in 137 lots. Market analysts said speculators built-up fresh positions supported pick up in demand in the spot markets, mainly led to the rise in cardamom prices at futures trade.

### **Chana up 0.44% as demand rises**

Chana prices edged higher 0.44 per cent to Rs 2,958 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions, following a pick-up in demand in the spot markets. At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, chana for delivery in October rose Rs 13, or 0.44 per cent to Rs 2,958 per quintal with an open interest of 71,550 lots. The September contract gained Rs 8, or 0.28 per cent to Rs 2,871 per quintal in 1,35,670 lots. Analysts said fresh positions built-up by speculators on the back of a rise in demand in the spot market mainly helped chana prices to trade higher at futures trade.



### **Maharashtra Sugarcane Control Board gets green signal, CM's nod awaited**

Before the election code of conduct comes into force, the government of Maharashtra has given the green signal for formation of the Maharashtra Sugarcane Control Board. "The board has been approved by the committee of ministers and now awaits final approval from CM Prithviraj Chavan," said Harshavardhan Patil, minister for cooperation and parliamentary affairs.

The government hopes the measure will put a stop to farmer stirs, common in the state before the start of any crushing season. Already some farmer bodies have threatened to stop operations at the start of the October season unless they get a good price. The 15-member board, to be headed by the chief secretary, will comprise secretaries from ministries and representatives from sugar mills and farmer organisations, and will link cane prices to income of sugar factories, thus deciding cane payment in line with the recommendations of the Rangarajan Committee, the minister said on Monday. Rajgopal Devera, state secretary for cooperation, said once the CM gives his approval and the final notification comes (which will take around 10 days), the first meeting of the board will be held soon. The board is expected to meet at least three times a year. The cane board will decide the sugarcane price payable to farmers which shall be in addition to the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) decided by the

Centre on a revenue sharing basis. The sugarcane price shall be arrived at as a sum equal to 75% of the ex-mill value of sugar along with such by-products. The dues of sugarcane fixed by the board shall be paid in two steps. The first would be payment of FRP. The balance will be paid subsequent to publication of half yearly ex-mill prices and values, determined by the board. The board has come into existence after a Bill was passed in December last year at Nagpur. At present, the Centre issues an FRP which is the minimum price the factories have to pay cane growers. Under the new law, factories will be liable to pay the FRP as minimum price towards first installment as soon as cane is supplied during a season. Maharashtra has around 202 registered cooperative sugar factories and over 65 private factories. The state contributes 35.3% of the national sugar output followed by UP (23.7%). Maharashtra tops in sugar production as well as recovery.

## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

### **KVKs in Jharkhand should work for areas facing soil erosion: Govt**

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh today called upon Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVKs) in the state to work for rehabilitation of areas facing the threat of soil erosion due to coalmines. Singh, who laid the foundation stone of 24th KVK in the district, said all KVKs in the state should also develop a model to help improve livelihood of local public, an official statement said. The purpose of KVKs is to create awareness among farmers about agriculture practices and organise training programmes at local level, he added. With the opening of a new KVK in Ramgarh district, the Minister said that the state will have KVKs in all its 24 districts. Stating that rice is largely cultivated in Jharkhand and other eastern states, the Minister said KVKs should promote other crops especially vegetables and horticultural crops.