

DATE:22.12.2014

# THE HINDU

## Branding banana to tap global market

*Banana fest zeroes in on brand name 'Tamil Nadu Banana'*



Bananas on display at the banana festival in Tiruchi. Photo: M. Srinath

The third edition of the banana festival that began here set an agenda to hit the world market under the brand of 'Tamil Nadu Banana' by galvanising all stakeholders, including the State and Central governments, progressive farmers and others.

Banana production was 101.9 million tonnes globally and India accounted for 24 per cent of the global production in 2012. Tamil Nadu is the leading producer of banana in the country accounting for 27 per cent of the total production of the country in 2010, according to a CII study titled 'Tamil Nadu Banana-From Bunches to Boxes' which was released here.

But, India exports only 0.1 per cent of its production, which is only around 0.3 per cent of the banana traded worldwide. "The State has witnessed success in tissue culture banana cultivation and will take all possible steps to boost production and export," said S.S. Krishnamoorthy, Minister for Agriculture.

The State government had issued orders to establish cold storage facility in 10 places to preserve fruits and vegetable products. An integrated market with cold storage facility would come up at Kallikudi near Tiruchi at a cost of Rs.65 crore. It would have about 1,000 shops and the construction work would begin shortly, he said.

K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, said one more banana research centre should be established in the northern region of Tamil Nadu.

- *Banana production was 101.9 million tonnes globally and India accounted for 24%*
- *Tamil Nadu is leading producer of banana in India*
- *State to set up cold storage facility in 10 places*

### **New rice variety from Madurai soon**

The Agricultural College and Research Institute (ACRI) here has developed a new rice variety, MDU-6, which holds a lot of promise to farmers with regard to crop duration, yield and quality.

This variety, which was subject to intensive research and field trials over a period of 10 years, is all set for release during the Pongal celebrations to be organised by the government.

C. Chinnusamy, Dean, and C. Vanniarajan, Head, Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics, told *The Hindu* on Friday that a new variety would come from the ACRI stable after a gap of nearly two decades.

“MDU-6 was put to several onsite trials and tested on farmers’ fields. The multi-location trials were very satisfactory and the data compiled was submitted to the screening committee of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University,” the Dean said.

The university screening committee too endorsed the ACRI’s new variety and sent it to the State Variety Screening Committee recommending its release. Formalities for its introduction have been completed and it will hit the field in January.

Dr. Vanniarajan said that trials were held in 120 locations and MDU-6 would be suitable for variety rice, including pongal.

“It will need a short duration of 110 days and the yield will be 10 per cent more than other varieties. MDU-6 will be a slender, good quality rice,” he added.

The last rice variety, MDU-5, was released by ACRI in 1996.

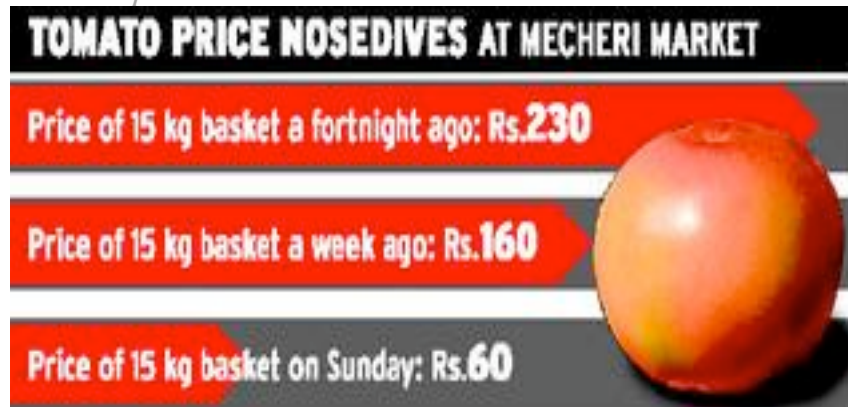
Dr. Chinnusamy said that the institution extensively focussed on research and release of new varieties in agriculture and horticulture crops.

Early this year, it had released a black gram variety, MDU-1, which possesses good battering quality and is suitable for idli preparation.

***“The yield of MDU-6 will be 10 per cent more than other varieties”***

## Price crash hits tomato farmers

*Bulk arrival and poor trader turnout cited as reasons*



Continuous bulk arrival and poor turnout of traders has led to steep fall in the price of tomato in Mecheri, a major tomato wholesale market.

The price of tomato has crashed by Rs. 170 for a 15 kg basket in the last one fortnight alone causing much anxiety to both the farmers and the traders.

The 15 kg basket which fetched a price of Rs. 230 at Mecheri market a fortnight ago nosedived to Rs. 160 last week and further crashed to Rs. 60 on Sunday.

Tomato is a major crop in the rain-fed areas surrounding Mecheri, Aranganur, Panapuram, Vellar, Mallkuntham, Koppampatti etc.

The crop is marketed in the Mecheri wholesale market, which attracts traders from various parts of Salem and neighbouring districts.

The current farm season has proved a big success particularly for the tomato farmers. Hence there has been bulk arrival of tomato in the Mecheri market for the past one fortnight. The poor turnout of traders is the major cause for the steep fall in the price of tomato, says Thangavelu, a farmer.

Meanwhile, tomato price registered a downfall in the Thevur market too.

Thanks to the good season, tomato arrived in bulk from Thalavadi area in Dharmapuri district in Thevur weekly market on Saturday.

However, the farmers were in for a shock when a kg of tomato fetched a meagre Rs.10, compared to Rs. 30 last week.

This was mainly due to heavy arrival from Thalavadi, traders say.

### **Department to improve water availability inside forests**

The Forest Department will soon take up measures to create water sources inside forests.

In the last few months, there have been many instances in which elephant herds have strayed into villages and damaged crops in Ambur, Pernambut and Tirupattur forest ranges.

Officials of the Forest Department in Vellore said that the poor availability of water in forests was one of the main reasons for elephants to come out of forests and enter human habitations.

“We will soon take up measures to set up water sources inside forests. We will sink a bore well and construct a tank, particularly in Sarangal forest area that has been seeing regular movement of elephant herd,” K. Selvaraj, District Forest Officer, Vellore said.

This way, water will be available for all animals such as deer, he added. The Forest Department personnel would continue to monitor the movement of the elephants, after a herd trampled a 55-year-old man to death on Friday in Sarangal.

Officials said that villagers have been asked to stay alert and not try to chase the animals away by throwing stones, bursting crackers or by attacking through any other means.

### **Procurement of paddy and maize in Shivamogga begins today**

*Farmers to first take samples of produce for testing*

The procurement of paddy and maize for 2014-15 at the minimum support price (MSP) will commence in the district from December 22.

In the first phase, the paddy procurement centres will be opened at Shivamogga, Shikaripur, Shiralakoppa and Sagar and maize procurement centres at Shivamogga, Shikaripur and Shiralakoppa.

The fine variety paddy will be purchased at Rs. 1,400 a quintal and coarse variety paddy at Rs. 1,360 a quintal.

The government has fixed Rs. 1,100 a quintal as MSP for maize. Deputy Commissioner V.P. Ikkeri has said that the farmers should first bring samples of paddy and maize grown by them to procurement centres. After testing the samples, the officials at the procurement centre would fix a date for them to bring the produce.

Farmers should bring paddy in 75-kg bags and maize in 50-kg bags. They should furnish a copy of the computerised Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crop attested by the tahsildar concerned, bank passbook and a cancelled bank cheque leaf, he said.

- *Rs. 1,400 a quintal fixed as MSP for fine variety paddy and Rs. 1,100 for coarse variety*
- *Farmers have to carry paddy in 75-kg bags and maize in 50-kg bags to procurement centres*

### **MPEDA, RGCA to train students in aqua cultivation**



RGCA all India coordinator Jaideep Kumar explaining the scientific methods in fish farming at MPEDA tanks at Maanikonda village in Krishna district.— Photo: V. Raju

Students who are pursuing fisheries and aquaculture courses in Tamil Nadu would be sent to Andhra Pradesh for learning better cultivating practices.

Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and officials of Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture (RGCA), a research and development (R&D) wing of MPEDA, were providing training on different aspects for students, researchers and farmers of the neighbouring states on various fish, shrimp and crab cultivating methods. A team of officials, students, scientists, farmers and entrepreneurs from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha and other States visited fish ponds and hatchery being raised by RGCA at Maanikonda village in Krishna district. They interacted with the researchers and farmers at Vijayawada and the surrounding villages.

RGCA all India coordinator Jaideep Kumar, Assistant Project Managers B. Appala Naidu and D.V.S.N. Raju, who accompanied the team, explained the scientists on research being conducted on Genetically Improved Farm Tilapia fish (GIFT) in the ponds.

MPEDA Deputy Director (Aquaculture) S. Kandan said that Government of Andhra Pradesh has issued a GO, approving permission to the farmers



for cultivating Tilapia fish in the State. MPEDA is giving training on farming the genetically improved fish variety, which was having great demand in the international market, said Dr. Kandan.

Additional Director of Fisheries, Government of Tamil Nadu, S. Noorjahan Beevisaid that already a few batches of students and farmers visited the fish and shrimp ponds in Andhra Pradesh. More students who were pursuing the related courses would be sent to A.P. for training.

Centre for Ocean Research Scientist R. Vijayan of Satyabhama University, Chennai, who visited the hatchery, said the farmers are following best practices and are maintaining hygienic conditions in ponds for achieving good production in A.P.

“We inquired about the process of collecting eggs, developing seed in hatchery, density of fish in the tanks at different stages, feed supply, growth, production and other details from the MPEDA officials,” said Mr. Vijayan.

*A team of officials, students, scientists, farmers and entrepreneurs from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha and other States visits fish ponds and hatchery at Maanikonda village in Krishna district.*

### **Price fall spells doom for Saurashtra cotton farmers**

*Hit by mounting input costs, they want Centre to increase minimum support price*



Farmers busy picking cotton at a farm on the outskirts of Ahmedabad.—  
Photo : Vijay Soneji

Whenever an animal dies in her village, Deuben Chavda can count on it for survival. Its flesh, bones and fat — some consumed, rest cured and sold — can keep her family of eight afloat. The two quintals of cotton, painstakingly harvested on her three-acre land, has only heaped distress

on her. The cost of cultivation being so high, she has had to mortgage her jewellery. For the past two years, cotton has been lying unsold in her house for want of better prices.

“If the government fixes the minimum support price [MSP] at Rs. 1,000, we can at least recover the labour cost,” says the Dalit farmer’s son Laljibhai Chavda from Jorawar village in Surendranagar, one of Saurashtra’s cotton-growing districts.

Farmers from the cotton-growing Saurashtra region of Gujarat have been on an agitation for nearly two months for raising the minimum support price from Rs. 810 per 20 kg. Nearly 700 medium and large farmers (owning over eight and 24 acres, respectively), mostly from the Patel community, at Rampara village in Surendranagar, are on the brink of huge losses.

About 9,000 acres in Rampara is under cotton cultivation. The total harvest this season has been about 1.26 lakh quintals. However, only 40 per cent of this stock has been sold.

“Those in dire need of money had to sell off, but everyone is waiting for the price to rise. Over the past two years, input costs rose by nearly 30 per cent, but cotton prices dropped. In 2012, the price was Rs. 1,050 per 20 kg. We have high hopes from the government. If the Centre increases the minimum support price to Rs. 1,000 or Rs. 1,100, we will get some relief. At least we can break even,” says Ghanashyam Chavda, an award-winning farmer owning 25 acres.

The cultivators bore a total input cost, which includes expense on labour, power, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, of Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 60,000 per acre. The production per acre has been about 70 “man” (unit of weight in Gujarat. 1 “man” = 20 kg) or 1,400 kg an acre. At the current minimum support price, they can barely make Rs. 6,000 from one acre.

Cotton farmer Narsinh Chavda reminded Prime Minister Narendra Modi of his promises. “Last year, when the then Gujarat Chief Minister addressed a meeting in Surendranagar, he said the minimum support price should be Rs. 1,300. At that time, the Congress was in power,” Mr. Chavda says. “Mr. Modi said the MSP cannot go below Rs. 1,000. If the Centre wishes, it is possible.”

The cost of the fertilizer diammonium phosphate has shot up from Rs. 300 to Rs. 1,200 for one sack of 50 kg in two years. A litre of monocrotophos, a pesticide used by farmers, rose to Rs. 600 now from

Rs. 200 in 2011. Labour wages, seeds, power and fertilizers have seen similar steep hikes.

“Expenses are mounting and prices are falling,” says Jyotsna Jhajeria, a cotton farmer.

The Gujarat government recently announced a farm relief package of Rs. 1,100 crore to waive half of the power bills and interest on agriculture loans. However, farmers ascribe little value to it.

“At the most, a farmer will get a benefit of Rs. 5,000 from the package. We have 100 per cent drip irrigation in Rampara. We do not get Narmada water here, so using power to pump water is out of question. Our primary concern is the low price of cotton. The government must address that,” Ghanashyam Chavda says.

The Congress and the RSS-affiliated farmers’ body Bharatiya Kisan Sangh intensified the demand for an increase in the minimum support price by staging rallies in parts of Gujarat, including Ahmedabad.

### **Self-immolation**

In this backdrop, the death of Arvind Nagani this week, a 21-year-old farmer’s son, who immolated himself in the yard of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee in Vinchhiya, Rajkot district, has put pressure on the Anandiben Patel government.

Moved by the long-standing plight of cotton farmers, Nagani scribbled in a book, “Cotton prices should be increased. Hitler has become the PM.” The book was recovered by the police from the yard where he ended his life.

A pall of gloom looms over Nagani’s Dharai village in Surendranagar. “I have lost everything. My son sacrificed his life. It should not go waste,” his father, Bhupad Nagani, says.

### **This farmer reaps a bumper harvest without fertilizer and pesticides**

*Chitrashekar Parashivappagol has won Krishi Pandit Award*

cultivation by producing more than 60 tonnes of cane per acre using drip irrigation technology and avoiding fertilizer and pesticides.

Chitrashekar Parashivappagol, who was honoured with the Krishi Pandit award by the State government a couple of years ago for achieving record production of red gram on his agriculture fields at Tadateganur and Farhatabad villages in Kalaburagi taluk, has proved that optimum production of sugarcane is possible by practicing organic farming.



Mr. Parashivappagol has been cultivating sugarcane on 10 acres at Tadateganur and Farhatabad villages for the past three years and he has been successful in increasing the yield in every year. He owns 25 acres of land.

If the yield was around 40 tonnes per acre in the first year, it was 50 tonnes in the second year and over 60 tonnes in the third year.

Mr. Parashivappagol has also set new standards in utilising leftovers after the harvest. The dried leaves of sugarcane is shredded into small pieces using a mechanised thrasher and mixed with the soil by ploughing the soil.

“This is not only a good natural manure to enhance the fertility of the soil, but also helps retain moisture in the soil. It also prevents the growth of weeds and reduce the cost of cultivation,” he said.

“I do not use chemical fertilizer and the vermi-compost prepared in my field is used to enrich the soil. In the past three years, the sugarcane crop did not face any major pest problem and there are new organic pesticides available in the market to fight the pest and viral attack on the crop.”

Mr. Parashivappagol does not use chemical fertilizer or pesticides in the cultivation of red gram, Bengal gram, jowar, and wheat too.

“I use chemical fertilizer only for the cultivation of banana,” he says. Mechanisation has helped him reduce the dependence on agricultural labourers and Mr. Parashivappagol manages his entire agriculture operations with just three people.

### **Strengthened bunds improve kole land paddy farming**

Strengthened bunds have reportedly improved paddy farming in some areas of Thrissur-Ponnani kole land. “The strengthening of the 11.5 km Nooradithodu has given a boost to pancha farming,” K. A. Jayanandan, secretary Kole Development Samithy was quoted as saying.

Farmers did not face troubles of waterlogging this year, except in areas such as Mangadathazhathu.

Fallow land in Moochikkal Padavu and Mannankadavu were made cultivable this season.

Much of the work, including strengthening of bunds, has been carried out using the first instalment of Rs. 123.52 crore for kole land development sanctioned on July 19 by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) from the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund. A sum of Rs.53.46 crore has been sanctioned from the Rashtriya

Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), taking the total allocation to Rs. 176.98 crore.

The total allocation for the kole package over three years will be Rs. 429 crore (Rs. 300 crore from RIDF, Rs. 114 crore from RKVY and Rs. 15 crore from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research).

Last month, District Collector and Kole Development Agency Special Officer M. S. Jaya had stated that projects for Rs. 7.13 crores had been implemented for kole land development using funds from different sources, including the Rajiv Gandhi Krishi Vikas Yojana and the National Food Security Mission.

She claimed to have solved to some extent waterlogging in Annakara and Parappur by excavating rocks and deepening a 900-metre stretch from Pulloot bridge to Kumbili bridge on Mllassery canal.

A sum of Rs. 1.31 crores was spent on this.

The agency spent Rs. 2.50 crore for deepening the Peramangalam canal, widening the Enamakal canal and constructing a bund at Kottachal.

The efforts led to water from Chimmini dam being diverted along Peramangalam canal to paddy fields far away.

A Rs. 3.31-crore project was implemented for strengthening areas in the Irinjalakuda M. M. Canal that caved in.

The agency also worked on diversion of excess water from the Muriyad paddy fields along M. M. Canal to the Canoly canal.

Kole wetland covers an area of 13,632 hectares in Thrissur and Malappuram districts. It accounts for about 40 per cent of the State's rice production. It extends from the Chalakudy River in the south to the Bharathappuzha in the north. It acts as a natural drainage system for Thrissur city and district.

The kole wet land is a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance. Ramsar sites incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands.

***Farmers did not face troubles of waterlogging this year, except in areas such as Mangadathazhathu.***

### **Agriculture, irrigation should be prioritised: Vadde**



Former Minister Vadde Sobhanadreeswara Rao on Sunday demanded that the government prioritise irrigation and agriculture while drawing grand plans for the development of the State.

“In addition to remunerative prices, the government should give incentives to farmers to motivate them to keep up with the vocation, as ensuring food security is impossible without promoting agriculture, however difficult it might be,” he said.

Delivering the M.L. Swamy Endowment Lecture organised by city-based NGO Friends on Same Wavelength (FOSWL) here, Mr. Rao said nearly 70 per cent of the population were dependent on agriculture for their living and their plight had been worsening as governments gave undue priority to industrialization. Even banks appeared to be neglecting agriculture.

Seasonal adversities and the lack of good prices for their produce forced farmers to kill themselves but the governments have paid little attention to the sad state of affairs. Mr. Rao expressed regret that the recommendations of National Commission on Farmers headed by agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan were not implemented in letter and spirit.

### Onattukara to become second tuber hub

<b>FARM INITIATIVE</b>		
<p><b>Biodiversity Board has taken up project to create gene bank</b></p>	<p><b>13</b> species of tuber crops cultivated in Onattukara identified</p>	
	<p>Board prepares list of <b>29</b> tuber crops that can be introduced</p>	<p><b>Pilot project was implemented at Edavaka in Wayanad</b></p>
<p><b>Panchayat-level committee to provide training to farmers</b></p>	<p><b>Bid to revive local dietary and health traditions</b></p>	

The Onattukara region in Alappuzha district is set to become the second hub of tuber crop cultivation in the State after Edavaka in Wayanad.

The Kerala State Biodiversity Board has taken up a project to preserve and enhance the diversity of tuber crops in the region and create a gene bank.

## **Participatory project**

Farmers in Thazhakara, Mannar, Chennithala, Mavelikara, Thekkekara, and Chettikulangara grama panchayats, and Mavelikara municipality will be involved in the participatory project.

The KSBB has identified 13 species of tuber crops including two varieties of Greater Yam (Kaachil), eight varieties of Colocasia (chembu) and three other tuber species cultivated by farmers in Onattukara.

KSBB member secretary K.P. Laladhas said a list of 29 tubers that could be introduced in the Onattukara region had been prepared.

“The farmers will be encouraged to plant these species also.” The KSBB has collected the seeds from other parts of the State.

The panchayat- level Biodiversity Management Committees will identify the farmers for the project and provide training.

It was in 2013 that the KSBB selected Edavaka grama panchayat in Wayanad for the first phase of the project to conserve the diversity of tuber crops.

As many as 60 varieties of tubers recorded in the Panchayat Biodiversity Register are cultivated in public land, schools and homestead farms in Edavaka. The success of the pilot project at Edavaka has encouraged the Kerala State Biodiversity Board to replicate the model in the Onattukara region.

“A resilient crop, tubers can withstand extreme climatic conditions and offer a rich source of affordable, tasty and nutritious food,” said Dr. Laladhas.

“Over the years, many of the tubers have dropped off the common man’s menu for various reasons and very few farmers today cultivate them. By encouraging people to include tubers in their menu, the project also seeks to revive local dietary and health traditions.”

The establishment of a gene bank for tubers is a major objective of the project. Dr. Laladhas said the project would be extended to more districts in the coming years.

## **Monitor paddy exports, Minister to officials**

*Minister directs officials to ensure that paddy procurement centres function for 120 days in a year. Of the 234 procurement centres set up so far, only 26 are operational. Mr. Rao called for steps to get the remaining centres working.*

Irrigation Minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao on Sunday instructed Civil Supplies Department officials to monitor paddy export from Krishna district. He also directed Joint Collector J. Murali to locate the places where paddy was being sent.

Addressing a review meeting on paddy procurement here, Mr. Rao said 19.77 lakh tonnes were exported by 65 companies from the Kakinada port in 2013-14, and 13.71 lakh tonnes up to October 10 this year. It is imperative that the movement of paddy should be tracked to ensure that the levy requirements are fulfilled, he said.

The Minister directed officials to ensure that paddy procurement centres functioned for 120 days in a year and take necessary steps to prevent diversion of stocks en route the designated warehouses. Stringent action will be taken against those buying paddy at prices less than the minimum support price, he warned.

Of the 234 procurement centres set up so far, only 26 are operational. Mr. Rao called for steps to get the remaining centres working.

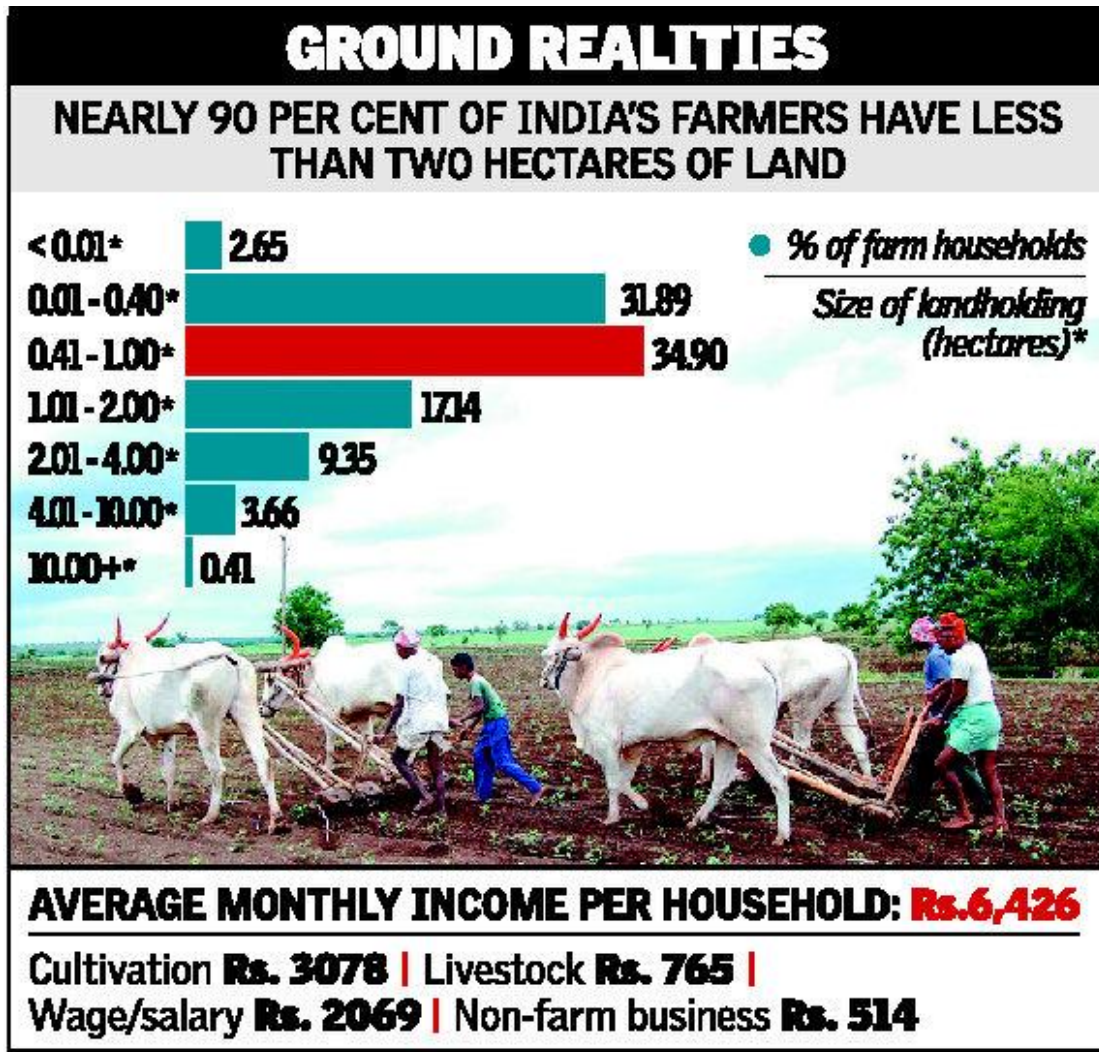
### **Cotton**

The Minister said Krishna district stood first in the State in purchase of cotton, with 12 lakh quintals fetching Rs. 480 crore. The Sirpur Paper Mills Limited cleared its dues to Subabul farmers amounting to Rs 1.50 crore, while the government has worked out a new policy that helps them fetch better returns on their crops.

Machilipatnam MP Konakalla Narayana, Consumers Affairs, Food and Civil Supplies Commissioner B. Rajasekhar, Joint Director of Marketing K. Srinivasa Rao and Police Commissioner A.B. Venkateswara Rao were present.



## More than 50% of farm households in debt



Source: NSSO (2014)

### NSSO survey across 35000 family units

Nearly 90 per cent of India's farmers have less than two hectares of land, according to the most extensive survey of farm households to date conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). The survey says the average farm household makes less than Rs. 6,500 a month from all sources of income.

The NSSO released the findings from its 70th Situation of Agricultural Households in India on Saturday. The new survey was for the agricultural year 2012-13 and covered 35,000 households. For this survey, the NSSO defined an agricultural household as one in which at least one member was self-employed in agriculture (even if part-time) and which produced at least Rs 3,000 worth of agricultural produce in a year.

By this definition, 58 per cent of rural households are agricultural households. "While some of the rest could be doing non-farm work, a

significant number work exclusively as agricultural labourers, which the NSSO did not count,” an official from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation explained, asking not to be quoted as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Over half of all agricultural households are in debt; and 42 per cent of them owe money to banks and 26 per cent owe moneylenders. Over 40 per cent of agricultural households have Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) job cards, showing that even those households not classified as ‘labourers’ utilise the scheme.

One in three farm households has less than 0.4 hectares of land and less than 0.5 per cent are large farmers, having over 10 hectares of land. Large farmers are often absentee landlords, the data indicates; 54 per cent of farmers with over 10 hectares possess land in other states.

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe farm households were over-represented among the poorest classes with the smallest land holdings, the data showed. Large farmers were almost exclusively OBC or forward caste.

While wheat is the most commonly grown crop in the first half of the year, paddy growing dominates the second half, the data shows. In both seasons, however, sugarcane is the most profitable crop, giving its cultivator an average of over Rs 80,000 per season.

Private traders dominate the procurement space, and few farmers have enough information about Minimum Support Prices or report getting the MSP for their produce, the data shows.

### **The train that brings cheer to migrant labour**

*A major work of paddy harvesting is done by the migrant workers in the Krishna district. A major work of paddy harvesting, done manually, is done by the migrant workers in the Krishna district, where farmers are still facing scarcity of sufficient agriculture workers.*

Every November and December when paddy harvesting operations are normally in full swing in Krishna district, the passenger train that plies between Visakhapatnam and Machilipatnam speaks volumes about seasonal migration of workforce from India’s two poorest districts.

The compartments of the daily train would be completely occupied by the agriculture workers including women belonging to Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts in Northern Andhra Pradesh region. On Saturday night alone, nearly a hundred families returned to their homes after

spending nearly 40 days working in the paddy fields in a stretch of Eastern Krishna district.

“A couple earns Rs. 550 and two kilograms of rice per day to complete the task of crop cutting in the given extent of land. The daily wage offered by the Krishna district is lucrative,” a Mestri who hails from Bobbili area in Vizianagaram district told *The Hindu*. Many women and men workers accompanied by their siblings who interacted with *The Hindu* at the Machilipatnam railway station did not want to reveal their names.

The train, the cheapest mode of transportation to reach Krishna district, carries thousands of migrant families every year, bring cheers on the faces of the Krishna farmers. However, the bus fare between Visakhapatnam and Machilipatnam is six times higher than the train fare. Many workers change their children’s attire to make them look older in order to get work and better wages.

A major work of paddy harvesting, done manually, is done by the migrant workers in the Krishna district, where farmers are still facing scarcity of sufficient agriculture workers. In Srikakulam district, the extent of land under paddy cultivation is falling, forcing thousands of workers to migrate to other districts in search of jobs in winter season.

“We cannot expect kharif season without the migrant workers from Northern Andhra Pradesh districts as they known for offering good physical labour for their survival”, a farmer S. Rajasekhar of Kautaram in Krishna district.

### **Does it pay to be a farmer in India?**



The average farm household makes Rs 6,426 per month.



*What the data shows on farm incomes, and whether farmers can make ends meet*

How profitable is farming? The answer to this most fundamental question about Indian agriculture can be found in the National Sample Survey Office's [new survey](#) of India's agricultural households.

The average farm household makes Rs 6,426 per month. Where does this money come from? Farm households do a mix of jobs, the data shows.

How much exactly does growing a crop earn a household? The chart below shows the value of the harvested crop for a household that predominantly grows that crop, over a six-month agricultural season. Sugarcane is by far the most profitable crop to grow, while paddy (or wheat in the first half of the year) brings a household around Rs 30,000 for a six month season.

Who are most farmers selling their crops to? First of all, over half of wheat and rice grown is not sold at all, and is purely for the farm household's consumption. Of what is sold, the vast majority is sold to the private trader, and not the state-run mandi or procurement agency. Among those who sell to the procurement agency, a minority report having got the Minimum Support Price for their produce.

Farmers often talk about the high – and rising – costs of inputs, including water, seeds and pesticides. So how does the output they earn compare with the inputs they put into the land?

Input costs work out to nearly 30 per cent of the total output an average farm household gets from a crop.

Among inputs, fertilizers are the most expensive, followed by labour.

Does this income get the family through the month? For this, I compared income and consumption expenditure for farm households by the size of their landholdings.

As you can see, a farm household needs to have at least 1 hectare of land to make ends meet every month. But given that over 65 per cent of households have less than one hectare of land, this means that two out of three farm households are simply not able to make ends meet.

Unsurprisingly, what this translates into is debt. Over half of all agricultural households are indebted, and these are not small debts; the average loan amount outstanding for a farm household in India today is Rs. 47,000. For marginal farmers, making under Rs 4,000 per month,

which doesn't even cover their consumption, loans of over Rs 30,000 must be extremely heavy burdens.

The southern states stand out for their level of indebtedness.

Who are farmers borrowing from? Marginal farmers rely chiefly on moneylenders, while those with bigger landholdings go to banks, the data shows.

### **Lima, a new low for climate action**



“The failure of Lima lies in not arriving at a level playing field for a new deal.” Picture shows (from left to right) President Barack Obama, Australia's Prime Minister Tony Abbott, Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper, China's President Xi Jinping, India's Narendra Modi, Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

*A climate deal cannot be achieved by endless squabbling, but by accepting responsibility and acting decisively*

After nearly a fortnight of prolonged talks, some of it acrimonious, there was little that made anyone happy — except perhaps the developed world which was not called on to make any more clear-cut mitigation or financial commitments — in the [Lima Call for Climate Action](#).

Twenty-two years after the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and five assessment reports of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) — the last report of the IPCC perhaps being the most conclusive on human impacts on climate change — the world is still waiting for decisive action. As the



Lima talks were going nowhere, the Peruvian Environment Minister and president of the Conference of the Parties (COP), Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, was called on to lead the consultations a day before the conference ended. Earlier, he had made a strong emotional appeal for consensus which received sustained applause from countries which had gathered there to further a new treaty in Paris and decide the scope of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC)s. After nearly 10 days of negotiations — which the European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, Miguel Arias Cañete, described as “exceedingly slow” — the seven-page text which emerged on December 18 was pulled out after protests, and Mr. Vidal called for a new text.

### **No matter for celebration**

In the first week, the process of going through the text and making additions was finally accepted by the two co-chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). With countries making many additions, the text almost reached 60 pages. But in the lean seven-page version that was later revised more than once, most of the additions were left out. Mr. Vidal later apologised for introducing a new brief text on December 12 without consultation, which angered developing country blocks. After a flurry of revisions, the final text or the Lima Call for Climate Action which was agreed upon seemed to be more the result of a need for some bare consensus to get ahead, and was low on commitment and ambition. The final text only “underscores” its commitment to reaching an ambitious agreement in 2015 that reflects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, “in light of different national circumstances”. It also “urges” developed countries to provide and mobilise enhanced financial support to developing countries for ambitious mitigation and adaptation actions.

There was much jubilation over the Green Climate Fund (GCF) crossing the \$10 billion mark, but this is hardly a matter for celebration since the original target was to reach \$100 billion by 2020. Countries have pledged various amounts for four years and GCF will disburse funds for projects from 2015. The developed countries were reluctant to commit to a year-on-year financial road map or mitigation actions to cut emissions. A lack of transparency and equity, apart from deep divisions between developed and developing countries was reflected in the final text.

### **A ‘Sputnik’ moment**

As U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry’s impassioned speech for a climate deal clearly indicated, the onus was on all countries to curb emissions. “We have to remember that today more than half of global emissions — more than half — are coming from developing nations. So it is imperative that they act too,” he said while addressing the press in his brief stopover in Lima. The whole principle of polluter pays and historical responsibilities has been diluted over the years and developing countries now face a double burden, that of reducing their pollution and, since there is inadequate financial flows from the developed world, also raising funds to pay for climate actions. The new deal, which will be negotiated in Paris, is unlikely to have a strong base to ensure any binding commitments from the developed countries post 2020.

The failure of Lima lies precisely in not arriving at a level playing field for a new deal. It is left to each country to come up with what it can do in its own capacity, which will not even be subject to scrutiny of any sort. As climate adaptation expert Dr. Salimul Huq pointed out, we need to ask: “Are the targets of each country adequate and are there enough funds?”

The global response is limp, even as the world suffers one extreme climate event after another. During the climate talks, typhoon Hagupit was another harsh reminder of what the Philippines has to undergo year after year. As always, the debate has been hijacked by some of the rich and powerful, who are now not only seeking to shrug off their responsibilities but pass it on to the developing world. Even mitigation efforts in the developing countries cannot take place without finance, as Lidy Nacpil of Jubilee South Asia Pacific pointed out. With U.S. President Barack Obama making climate change a priority, the U.S. seemed to be keen, for once, on moving ahead and achieving a new agreement next year. As a senior negotiator remarked, this is a “Sputnik moment” for the U.S.; it cannot let China take the global lead in climate change.

### **Optimistic position**

India and other developing countries, while making strong points at first, could not leverage their collective position to demand stronger commitments. On the final text, the Indian position was one of optimism. Minister of State for Environment and Forests Prakash Javadekar had said that India was committed to protecting the interests of the poor. Even

though the final agreement in Lima was against that spirit, he expressed happiness that it had addressed the concerns of developing countries and that the efforts of some countries to rewrite the UNFCCC have not fructified. It gives enough space for the developing world to grow and take appropriate nationally determined steps, he added.

According to the agreement in Lima, the UNFCCC will publish on its website the INDCs as communicated, and prepare by November 1, 2015, a synthesis report on the aggregate effect of the INDCs communicated by countries by October 1, 2015. This would form the basis for the new treaty in Paris. While there is a brief mention of loss and damage in the text, the idea was to link it with adaptation which was opposed by developing countries. The climate summit in Warsaw agreed to create a separate mechanism for loss and damage and groups like the Alliance of Small Island States want this to be anchored in the 2015 agreement, distinct from adaptation.

In the background of the climate talks in Lima were issues related to the killing of environmental activists who are demanding rights in the Amazon, apart from the destruction of forests and easy concessions for mining and oil exploration. A new climate deal has to take the future of the planet into consideration. This cannot be achieved by endless squabbling but by accepting responsibility and acting decisively. Lima marks a new low for climate action and while the multilateral process has been kept alive, there needs to be a real and immediate momentum for change on the ground.

## Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

### Tomorrow's Forecast

#### Monday, Dec 22

Max

27°



Partly Cloudy

Sunrise: 06:26

Sunset: 05:47

Barometer: 1013

#### Tuesday, Dec 23

Max

30°

Min

23°

### Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday  
Dec 24



30° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday  
Dec 25



26° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Friday  
Dec 26



24° | 22°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday  
Dec 27



23° | 21°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday  
Dec 28

25° | 22°

Partly Cloudy



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## **It all depends on when and what you eat**

*When you eat is as important as what you eat. Here's why you should mind the clock*

Your grandma told you so, and now researchers say she was right. Eat on time. All the diets in the world won't help if you don't time your meals. Dieticians across the world agree that timing is possibly the most underrated fitness strategy to maximise fat burn and stay healthy.

A recent study conducted in Spain concluded that the time of the day you eat large meals is a big factor in how many kilos you shed. In the research, conducted over 20 weeks, researchers monitored 420 overweight participants, by splitting them into two groups: early-eaters and lateeaters. After keeping all factors same, the groups were evaluated based on their day's biggest meal: lunch. Those who ate their lunch later in the day dropped the kilos at a slower rate than those who ate earlier in the day.

## **Breakfast like a king**

Health experts recommend digging into your breakfast within an hour of waking up. Dietician Mehar Panjwani reiterates the importance of starting the day with a hearty breakfast, saying this will also keep your stress hormones in check. "Your body's metabolic needs differ at different times of the day. Polishing off the day's biggest meal earlier, increases the chances of burning off calories rather than letting them translate into extra kilos through the day," she says. Besides, she adds, a good breakfast calms down your stress hormone — cortisol — which is at its peak when you wake up.



### **Stick to a schedule**

Dr Jagmeet Madan, nutritionist and President, Indian Dietetic Association (Mumbai Chapter), says consistently eating on time helps the body utilise nutrients better. "When you spread your intake of nutrients throughout the day, you can maintain your energy levels and avoid hunger pangs."

Panjwani says breaking up your meals into six to eight parts, instead of three, works better as it boosts your Basal Metabolic Rate (the energy your body expends while at rest). "Irregular meals, on the other hand, causes a spike in BMR, leading to weight gain and obesity, making you more prone to diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and blood pressure issues," says Panjwani. Also, including protein in your meals earlier, helps control your hunger pangs the rest of the day.

### **Fruits are not desserts**

Munching on a fruit after a meal is a common practice, but it doesn't bode well for your body. When fruits get mixed up with other foods and have to wait to get processed, they rot and ferment in the gut. This often causes indigestion, bloating and heartburn.

Madan recommends eating fruits early in the morning, on an empty stomach. "In the night, as you sleep, your body enters the fasting mode, putting it into an acidic state. Fruits, being alkaline, work best in the morning. Intake of fruits prior to a meal also create a better gut environment for digestion. If you must eat fruits later, it's always better to have them in between meals or before them, else their nutrients get lost with other foods." As fruits contain energy-rich simple sugars, it's best to avoid them at night as they'll keep you awake.

### **Your system needs rest**

As the day ends, your body is also winding down and thus, finds it hard to break down the calories. The golden rule for dinner is to have it three hours before bedtime. The closer your meal is to your bedtime, the more your quality of sleep suffers. It also prevents the release of melatonin (which maintains the body's circadian rhythm) and growth hormones.

Madan says, "When you stuff yourself in the latter half of the day, you push too many nutrients into your body — mostly carbs — raising your blood sugar and insulin levels.

Eating late also impedes the body's hormonal secretions, which in turn favours conversion of sugar into fat, predisposing you to diabetes and other health issues over time."

Panjwani says, "Our bodies have an innate timing system called the Circadian Rhythm. It regulates the metabolism and chemical and hormonal production telling us when we are supposed to wake up, sleep, etc. This internal clock plays a big role in our weight loss or gain. That's why eating late at night triggers weight gain," she says. Those suffering from night eating syndrome (a disorder that causes people to eat excessively just before bedtime), consume around 25-50 per cent of their daily calorie intake at this time, she adds. "Such eaters suffer from depression, low self-esteem and obesity," she adds.

### **Your food time-table**

**Morning:** Within 10 minutes of waking up, have two glasses of lukewarm water. For breakfast around 15-30 minutes later, have large portions of fresh fruits along with complex carbs such as multigrain bread or oats.

**Mid-morning:** Two hours later, have a glass of lemon juice, coconut water, fruit or vegetable juice.

**Lunch:** Two-three hours later, have large portions of salad, a small portion of brown rice or a couple of rotis, with little sabzi, dal and some protein (cereals, pulses or lean meat).

**Evening snack:** Two-three hours later, snack on green tea and roasted khakra, idli or dosa

**Dinner:** Two-three hours later, have a soup, salad, some complex carbs and protein.

## **Wild blueberries negate high-fat diet risks**

*The adverse effects of a high-fat diet - high blood pressure and nutrition derived inflammation - can be reduced by eating bilberries, a study says.*

For the first time, bilberries, also known as wild blueberries were shown to have beneficial effects on both blood pressure and nutrition-derived inflammatory responses.

"Bilberries reduce the development of systemic inflammation and prevent the progression of chronic hypertension, thus supporting their potential role in alleviating the adverse health effects associated with developing obesity," said the researchers from University of Eastern Finland.

The beneficial health effects of bilberries are thought to be explained by a component called polyphenols, especially anthocyanins, the levels of which are significantly higher in bilberries than in commercially cultivated blueberries.

The study focused on the health effects of bilberries on mice that were fed high-fat diet for a period of three months.

Some of the mice were fed either five percent or 10 percent of freeze-dried bilberries in the diet.

Bilberries diminished the pro-inflammatory effects of the high-fat diet, indicated by an altered cytokine protein profile and a reduced relative prevalence of inflammation supporting T-cells.

Bilberries also prevented elevated blood pressure caused by the high-fat diet, the findings showed.

The study was published in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

## Recipe: Indianized vegetable hakka noodles

Chinese cuisine is one of the commonly available ones at most multi-cuisine restaurants. And not just that, we do have vendors on streets garnering 'Indianized' Chinese cuisine. Here's a quick recipe to vegetable hakka noodles with an Indian touch!

### Ingredients:

2 cups boiled noodles  
2 tbsp oil  
1/4 cup finely chopped spring onions  
1/2 cup Red onions julienne cuts  
2 tsp finely chopped garlic  
Chilli powder  
1/2 cup thinly sliced carrots  
1/4 cup shredded cabbage  
1/2 cup thinly sliced capsicum  
1 tsp soya sauce  
1 tsp red chilli sauce  
Salt to taste  
Black pepper powder

### Method:

- Heat the oil in a pan or kadhai, add the spring onions, red onions, garlic and red chilli powder and saute on a high flame for a minute.
- Add the carrots, cabbage, capsicum and saute on a high flame for 1 to 2 minutes.
- Add the noodles, soya sauce, red chilli sauce and salt, mix well and toss on a high flame for 1 to 2 minutes.
- Add the black pepper powder, mix well and toss on a high flame for another 2 minutes.
- Sprinkle spring onions and toss well.

Serve immediately.

## **Recipe: Creamy white beans**

*White beans cooked with chorizo and spinach.*

**Preparation time:** 10 mins

**Cooking time:** 30 mins

**Serves:** 2

### **Ingredients :**

Onion 1, halved and sliced

Olive oil

Chorizo 50g.chopped into chunks

Chicken stock 200ml

Cooked white beans 200g

Spinach 100g

Cream 50ml

Salt to taste

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Crusty bread to serve

### **Method:**

-Clean the spinach. Wash well in running water and drain.

-Cook the onion in 1 tbsp of oil until softened then add the chorizo and fry for a few minutes until it starts to give out its oil.

-Add the chicken stock and simmer for a minute then add the beans and cook for 2-3 minutes until the spinach is wilted. Add the cream and cook for 2-3 minutes.

-Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with crusty bread.



## Recipe: Kashmiri dum aloo

*This veg delight is a hit with almost everyone.*

**Ingredients:** 900 gm potatoes, three-fourth cup of water, salt to taste, ghee or oil for deep frying, one cup ghee, one large onion (finely chopped), four tbsp tomato puree, 140 ml curd, four tbsp hot water, one green pepper (sliced, seeds removed), one tsp garam masala powder, four cloves, four bay leaves, six black peppercorns, four green cardamoms, one brown cardamom, one cinnamon stick.

**Paste:** One large onion (chopped), garlic, two tbsp ginger, black peppercorns, one tsp poppy seeds, one tbsp coriander seeds, one tsp cumin seeds, two dry red chillies, one tsp turmeric powder, ground mace, ground nutmeg.

**Method:** Scrape the potatoes, prick all over with a fork and soak in the water with salt for a couple of hours. Dry the potatoes on a cloth and heat the ghee/oil. Deep fry the potatoes until it becomes golden brown. Drain and set aside. Heat the ghee in a flameproof pan and fry onions with all the spices. Grind the paste ingredients to a fairly smooth paste and stir into the onions. Cook for about 10 minutes, stir in the tomato puree, curd and salt. Add the potatoes and hot water and stir over low heat for five minutes. Sprinkle the dum aloo with pepper and garam masala and cook for few minutes. Your dish is ready.

## Classic salad dressings recipe

*Here are some salad dressing recipes that will lift your salad in no time.*

**The classic vinaigrette:** Take two tablespoons of balsamic vinegar and whisk in two teaspoons of mustard. Add a pinch of kosher salt and pepper to taste. Mix half a cup of olive oil and pour all over your salad!

**Garlic vinaigrette:** Peel half a bulb of garlic and drizzle it with olive oil on a tray. Wrap it with an aluminum foil and roast it in the oven till it is tender. Let it cool down and then gently crush them. Blend it with the vinaigrette (above mentioned) you made and add some parmesan to finish it off.

**Spicy honey-mustard:** Mix two teaspoons of honey with two teaspoons of mustard. Add two tablespoons of lime juice and a pinch of lemon zest and kosher salt to taste. Add some olive oil and finish it off with chopped thyme. If you want it to be spicier, you can add chili flakes or chopped jalapeno.

**Creamy Italian:** Mix a little less than half a cup of mayonnaise with two tablespoons of balsamic vinegar. Add two tablespoons of olive oil and sour cream. Add a clove of garlic (crushed), kosher salt and oregano to taste and mix it all in a blender. Add a spoon of finely chopped parsley.

**Mediterranean:** Make a Mediterranean salad dressing with half a cup of feta cheese (crumbled). Mix this with the classic vinaigrette (shown above). Add chopped parsley, dried oregano and one diced tomato (as much as you want).

# DECCAN Chronicle

## **Delays in mango flowers worry farmers**

**VIJAYAWADA:** The delay in flowering of mango trees in Krishna district may adversely impact the production and also prices in the coming season.

While the flowering season started almost a month ago, most trees are still devoid of flowers. Mango flowering usually starts from the middle of November, but this year, most trees, especially the popular Banginapalli variety, have not flowered.

While the weather has been conducive for flowering this season, the unexpected delay may pose challenges for mango farmers.

The Krishna district horticulture department officials have identified the problem and visited the fields with scientists. There are nearly 50,000 hectares of mango fields in Krishna district's 18 mandals that produce around 3 lakh tons of mangoes.

Surprisingly, the weather has been good this year with no rains, but the delay in flowering may lead to delay in production, said V. Rama Rao from Ravicherla village.

Assistant director of Krishna district horticulture department N. Sujatha said that they had identified the problem. The department has suggested that the farmers spray "Multi-K" variety of nutrients and supply one quota of water for the fields.

## Lambasingi freezing at zero degree celsius

**Visakhapatnam:** Lambasingi, a hill-track village of the Eastern Ghats located at a height of above 1,000 metre in Chintapalli mandal of Vizag agency, registered a temperature of 0°C on Sunday, a record for the season.

Chintapalli witnessed the lowest temperature of 3°C, which was officially recorded at the local agriculture research station, and it has been a practice to calculate the temperature of the hill-track village by deducting 2-30C from the temperature of the mandal headquarters.

The area is referred to as Andhra Kashmir by sightseers as temperatures dip as low as 0°C during December–January. Lambasingi is colder than Adilabad and Arogyavaram, which record the lowest temperatures. However, the Met officials cannot confirm the same officially as they do not have an observatory in the area.

“Our scientists observed that the temperatures dipped to 3°C in Chintapalli on Sunday and the conditions are very cold here. We expect the temperatures to drop further due to chilly winds.

There has been a declining trend for some time and Chintapalli too may witness 0°C this year,” said Dr N. Venugopala Rao, assistant director, Regional Agricultural Research Station, Chintapalli.

Lambasingi had registered 2°C in December 2013, sub-zero temperatures in the 2012-winter season. Chintapalli also recorded 3-4°C in 2012.

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

## Coonor tea sales down 21% this calendar on slack export buying, ample supplies

### Coonor, December 21:

The cumulative turnover at the auctions of Coonor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) in the 11 months of this calendar has fallen by 20.65 per cent over the same period of 2013, reveals an analysis of market reports.

This happened because as much as a crore kg of tea could not be sold despite sacrificing about Rs. 18 a kg in average price. In the 11 months, 48 auctions had taken place when a volume of 5.40 crore kg was sold against 5.51 crore kg in the same period last year.

Due to adequate availability in the global market, exporters did not exert pressure here. Pakistan, a major buyer at Coonor auctions, refrained from purchasing in the last few months. Political troubles at West Asia

limited intakes from those regions. Collectively, the export demand was confined to plainer and low-price bracket teas throughout this calendar. In the absence of export pressure, domestic traders were in no mood to bid high. The high-priced better liquoring teas suffered frequent low bids. On an average, some 35 per cent of the offer remained unsold week after week because buyers refused to bid more to match producers' asking price. When producers lowered their asking price to liquidate unsold stocks, prices crashed to an average of Rs. 73.39 a kg from Rs.90.64 in 2013.

This led the overall turnover to fall to Rs. 396.31 crore from Rs. 499.43 crore. This loss of Rs. 103.12 crore marked a decline of 20.65 per cent.

### **Raw cashew imports soar as output tumbles**



#### **Kochi, December 21:**

Imports of Raw Cashew Nuts (RCN) has soared significantly so far during the current fiscal as the indigenous production of the raw material failed to keep pace with industry demand.

In fact, imports during the first eight months of the current financial year have surpassed the projected official production figures for 2014-15.

The total imports during April-November 2014 soared to 7,84,462 tonnes valued at Rs. 5,332.80 crore from 6,35,020 tonnes valued at Rs. 3,475.72 crore in the corresponding period last year.

Where as, the first official first advance estimate for the current financial year has put the production at 7,73,490 tonnes against the output of 7,36,560 tonnes in 2013-14.

Cashew industry is claimed to have a capacity to process over two million tonnes of raw cashew nuts for keeping factories running for over 200 days a year. Interestingly, despite being a major importer of the raw nuts, India has, probably for the first time, shipped out 14,152 tonnes valued at Rs. 122.34 crore during the period under review against 3,333 tonnes in the same period last year.

Much of the shipments of raw nuts were said to have been to Vietnam, where the Indian cashew processors have established processing

facilities. They are believed to be shipping out from the imported raw nut stocks to their units in Vietnam, trade sources said. The total area under cashew in the country has been on the rise and has increased to 10,27,200 hectares spread over 16 States from 10,07,695 hectares in the last fiscal, according to sources at the Directorate of Cashew and Cocoa Development Directorate under the Union Ministry of Agriculture.

Maharashtra continued to stay on top as the major producer with an estimated output of 2,48,010 tonnes from a total area of 1,86,200 ha in the current fiscal against 2,36,200 tonnes from 1,84,200 ha in 2013-14. Maharashtra is followed by Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Karnataka.

Even though the winter demand has raised the volume of exports in October and November, the total shipments during the first eight months of current fiscal continued stay far below the shipments during the same period in the previous financial year, Sasi Varma, Executive Director and Secretary, Cashew Export Promotion Council of India, told *BusinessLine*. He said the country has shipped out 78,825 tonnes of cashews in April-November 2014 valued at Rs.3,473.58 crore at an average unit value of Rs. 440.67 a kg.

Whereas, in the corresponding period last year it stood at 82,772 tonnes valued at Rs. 3,411.94 crore at the average unit value of Rs. 412.21 a kg.

“Despite the high kernel prices, overseas consumers have started buying it for the festival season. During winter, more quantities are sold in the domestic market also,” he said.

## Business Standard

### Fertiliser sales up, but urea sales down 7%

**P&K fertiliser volumes have grown to 13.3 mt in seven months of FY15 driven by relatively low opening inventory levels vis-a-vis previous years and low base effect**

While the overall **sales volume** of fertilisers improved by 3 per cent year-on-year (yoy) to 29.54 million tonne (mt) during the first seven months of FY15, driven mainly by the healthy 17 per cent growth in phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizers, imports, however, picked up during the second quarter of the fiscal. On the other hand, **urea sales** declined by 7 per cent during the same period to 16.2 mt.



A recent ICRA report shows that P&K fertiliser volumes have grown to 13.3 mt in the seven months of FY15 driven by relatively low opening inventory levels vis-a-vis previous years and low base effect. Nonetheless, imports picked up during the second quarter resulting in a 21 per cent jump in imported volumes of P&K fertilisers.

The sales growth was despite drought in northern and north-western crop belts of Haryana, Punjab, UP and east-MP and regions of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Monsoon remained largely normal, albeit delayed in most other parts of the country. On the other hand, urea sales declined by 7 per cent during seven months in FY15 to 16.24 mt.

However, ICRA Research notes that the urea sales volume was almost equivalent to volumes seen in the corresponding period during FY12-FY13, implying that FY14 was somewhat of an aberration and sales remain at normal levels. The shrinkage in urea sales volumes has also been on account of lower imports and limited utilisation of Nagarjuna Fertilisers & Chemicals Ltd. plants during Q2 FY15.

ICRA Research estimates that overall fertiliser sales volumes should witness a yoy growth of 3-7 per cent during FY15, with urea sales volumes expected to decline by 3-5per cent and P&K volumes expected to grow by 15-20per cent.

The report further highlights that global urea prices have remained relatively stable in recent months. Trading activity has remained muted and prices continue to remain subdued at \$ 325 per tonne (against average of \$ 385 per tonne during FY11-FY13). Due to the low coal prices, China is estimated to continue to dominate global urea markets on account of its substantial surplus production, although Chinese exports of urea have been significantly low during year-till-date calendar 2014.

"On the other hand, low energy prices is expected to lead to commissioning of new plants in regions with availability of low cost gas (such as the US, Middle East and Russia). Given these factors, urea prices are expected to continue to stay low in the medium term (with a floor at the \$ 300 per tonne level), barring occasional spikes," the report said. ICRA Research believes that there will be continuing pressure on global fertiliser prices and raw materials in the near term.

In terms of reforms, the government is working on a comprehensive fertiliser policy, which is expected to address several aspects of the fertiliser industry and usher in reforms in the sector, particularly on the urea pricing front, in the near-to-medium term. "Reforms in the fertiliser sector would determine the direction that the industry will move in the medium-to-long term. Measures to improve soil health and optimise nutrient consumption, thereby improving yields of various crops should be the underlying motif based on which the reform agenda needs to be worked out to ensure long-term food security of the country," the report said.