

Eco-friendly shrimp farming with 'biofloc'

NAGAPATTINAM, February 5, 2014 - *It is a beneficial bacterial colony-based culture that keeps diseases at bay*



High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE)-lined shrimp ponds dot the landscape of Mahendrapalli, a small village on the banks of Pazhayar about 18 km from Kollidam.

Here, Suryakumar Boriah, is silently working on an eco-friendly, disease resistant shrimp farming called biofloc on his vast farm.

Biofloc is a beneficial bacterial colony-based culture that keeps other bacterial diseases at bay, making it an ecologically sustainable symbiotic system.

Biofloc shrimp farming differs from traditional plankton-based shrimp culture that often keeps farmers on tenterhooks due to the threat of disease outbreak.

Owning the only one-of-its-kind farm in the State, Mr.Suryakumar is one of the very few farmers in the country practising biofloc since 2011.

Zero-water exchange

The zero-water exchange of biofloc makes it eco-friendly. "pH and nitrogen levels in water are the biggest concern in shrimp culture," says Mr.Suryakumar. The bioflocs keep the pH levels steady and feed on the nitrogen produced by the shrimps. "In conventional farming, nitrogen is flushed out through water exchange every 25-30 days to keep animals stress-free and disease-free. The bioflocs use up the nitrogen and convert it into proteins, for the shrimps," says Mr. Suryakumar. This cuts down artificial probiotics for the animals.

Traditionally, water exchange is often a contention between local land users and shrimp farms.

"The tightly HDP-lined ponds insulate the animals from diseases," says Govindaraj, manager of Suryakumar's farm. It costs about Rs.14 lakh per hectare for a biofloc pond, thrice as much as a traditional pond. But the capital investment is out-weighed by the benefits of the system. "There is no dry-out season, and the ponds are crop ready anytime. The HDP linings are intact for five years," says Mr. Govindaraj. Biofloc cuts down on fish meal as shrimp feed. According to Mr.Suryakumar, the eventual goal is to bring down food conversion ratio to 800 gm of fishmeal to produce 1 kg of shrimp (FCR 0.8:1). Production per unit area is high in biofloc system. Production per hectare in a conventional pond is 10-15 tonnes, while a biofloc pond gives out 20-30 tonnes.

The stocking density of animals in HDP-lined biofloc pond is twice the density of an ordinary shrimp pond.

Farmers yet to reap benefit of harvest

CUDDALORE, February 5, 2014 - Despite a near-bumper harvest of paddy in Cuddalore districts for the just-concluded harvest season, farmers are a worried lot as there are no takers for the commodity.

Paddy bags are piling up at the market committee yards and direct procurement centres (DPCs). In the past few days there is a drastic fall in the price of paddy from Rs. 1,200 for a 62-kg bag to Rs. 850.

Such unremunerative price has put the farmers in a crisis as they are unable to meet expenses incurred on wages, fertilizers, pesticides, weedicides, etc.

Three reasons have been attributed to the market condition: abundant supply, major orientation towards raising a single BPT variety (a fine variety) and non-availability of trucks. Hence, paddy market has turned out to be a buyers' market and traders are virtually "making hay while the sun shines." Vice-president of Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association K.V. Kannan told *The Hindu* that last year when BPT variety was raised on lesser acreage, it fetched good price.

Hence, this year majority of farmers went for the BPT variety, causing a surfeit of the foodgrain. Having become aware of the influx of paddy, traders were quoting lesser prices than last season.

"Traders are citing the non-availability of trucks as a reason for non-clearance of stocks. Earlier, trucks were free to carry paddy in excess of the stipulated limit. But, rules are being strictly enforced now, making trucks go scarce," Mr Kannan said.

President of the Kollidam-Keelanai Paasana Vivayasyigal Sangam P.Vinayagamoorthy told this correspondent that opening of 147 DPCs in the district had not eased the situation. Inherent weakness in DPCs is that many of these centres go without procurement officers. DPCs procure fine variety of paddy at Rs. 1,415 per quintal and coarse variety at Rs. 1,350 per quintal.

Farmers who have brought their produce to the DPCs are waiting for the past eight days for clearance of stocks. "Only when paddy is bought, farmers can get money to pay the wages and repay bank loans," Mr. Vinayagamoorthy said.

Farmers have said that "unless the State government intervenes to help them sell their produce, they would irretrievably fall into debt trap."

Paddy bags are piling up at the market committee yards and direct procurement centres.

Send team of Ministers to Manmohan, Cauvery water-starved farmers tell CM

KARUR, February 5, 2014 - *Nearly 2,500 cusecs needed to save standing crops in Karur, Tiruchi districts*

Farmers at the head of the Cauvery delta in Karur district have called upon Chief Minister Jayalalitha to depute a delegation of Ministers to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and urge him to reason with Karnataka and release water to save standing crops.

Knowing full well that the level in the Mettur dam was dismal and it was impossible for the State to meet their demand for continued release of 2,500 cusecs, the farmers are keeping their fingers crossed in the absence of early summer showers.

Though the farmers served by the 17 irrigation channels on either side of the Cauvery river in Karur and Tiruchi districts have enjoyed a traditional right to calibrated water use when the Mettur dam is closed for delta irrigation through the decades, the present situation is pretty bleak for sustained release of water in the Cauvery to save standing banana, paddy, sugar cane, betel vine and other floriculture crops that depend solely on Cauvery water for irrigation.

The farmer leaders pitched in with their demands for at least 2,500 cusecs in the closure period but the PWD officials made it clear that any expectation of an increased discharge would be vain and misplaced taking into account the prevailing storage and climatic conditions.

The Stanley Reservoir downed the main shutters on January 28, after witnessing continuously receding levels since its opening for samba irrigation on August 3 last.

A piquant situation prevails in the current year as the farmers do realise that they might not, after all, get the rightful share of non-Mettur season discharge they normally got in previous seasons.

“In this situation we would like Ms. Jayalalithaa to dispatch a ministerial team to meet Dr. Manmohan Singh, explain the stark reality in person and ask him to impress on Karnataka to release the balance 26 tmc ft water the upper riparian State must have released,” says Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Nala Sangam president A.V. Gopaladesikan.

Echoing his views, deputy secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association Kavandampatti R. Subramanian says that the Chief Minister could also write to the Prime Minister drawing his attention to the plight of the head delta farmers who have been forced to suffer a continuous bad patch in the recent times.

“We need 2,500 cusecs to save standing crops, for drinking water requirements and to recharge the plummeting groundwater table,” he noted.

Dairy farmers protest, pour milk on road

KARUR, February 5, 2014 - Dairy farmers in Velliyanai region of Karur district poured milk on the road in support of their demand for increase in the procurement price of milk by Aavin and adequate compensation for the animals that died of foot and mouth disease. The protesters emptied their vessels of milk at Koravapatti on the Karur-Esanatham Road on Tuesday and called upon the State government to increase milk procurement price. The former councillor belonging to DMK, Selvam, led the protest. They claimed that farmers associated with private dairies were getting Rs. 29 a litre for cow's milk while Aavin paid them much less.

Increase MNREGS wages: farm workers

PUDUKOTTAI, February 5, 2014 - Agricultural labourers owing allegiance to district wing of All India Agricultural Labourers Sangam staged agitation at six centres.

They demanded the number of days of work given under MNREGS should be increased to 150 from 100 and wages to Rs. 300.

House site pattas

They also demanded sanctioning of house site pattas for those living on porampoke lands and construction of free houses for those owning pattas.

They raised slogans urging the state government to declare Pudukottai as drought-hit zone.

The cadre staged the demonstration in front of the Revenue Divisional Officer's office, led by D. Latchathipathy, president of the Pudukottai wing of the Sangam.

The cadre organised the stir at Karambakudi, Alangudi, Iluppur, Gandarvakottai and Avudaiyarkovil.

Seven places

In Thanjavur, the members of the Sangam staged demonstrations at seven places led by K. Pakkirisamy, Thanjavur district secretary of the association. Agitations were also held at Kumbakonam, Papanasam, Peravurani, Pattukottai, and Orathanadu.

Relief sought for farmers

RAMANATHAPURAM, February 5, 2014 - Members of the Tamil Nadu Farmers Association staged a demonstration here on Monday seeking to declare the district drought-hit and demanding compensation to the affected farmers and farm workers.

Addressing the demonstration, M. Sivaji, CITU district secretary, said paddy crops cultivated on more than one lakh hectares in the district had totally withered and the government should give a compensation of Rs.20,000 per acre.

Both southwest and northeast monsoons had failed for the second successive year in the district. The district also could not get its share of water from Vaigai dam for the past two years, seriously affecting the farmers and cattle, he said.

The government should also compensate the farm workers, who were rendered jobless following crop failure and distribute fodder at subsidised rates, he said.

S. Murugesan, taluk secretary of the association, led the demonstration here, while district vice-president Mohamed Ali led the demonstration at Tiruvadana.

Farmers with cows air demands strikingly

SALEM, February 5, 2014 - *Stop milk supply to Aavin and stage demonstrations in Salem district*



Policemen trying to pacify farmers who blocked the National Highway along with their cattle at Thaneer Thotti near the Omalur toll plazain Salem district on Tuesday.— PHOTO:E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

Farmers, who have extended their support to the strike call given by the Tamil Nadu Milk Producers' Welfare Association (TNMPWA), stopped supply of milk to Aavin from Tuesday morning. However, Aavin officials said that the impact, if any, would be felt only after a couple of days, depending upon the intensity of the strike.

The agitation was announced to urge the government to increase the procurement price of cow's milk from Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 a litre and buffalo's milk from Rs. 28 to Rs. 40.

Representatives of the association and farmers staged demonstrations with their animals at five places in Salem district. There were tense moments when farmers tried to block the Bangalore-Kanyakumari National Highway-7 at Kotagoundampatti near the toll plaza in Omalur. The farmers and a dozen cows were stopped by the police. Earlier, the police tried to remove the demonstrators from the spot. But they were let off immediately as other farmers opposed the police move. Later, the farmers were allowed to stage the demonstration and disperse.

C. Periannan, district president of TNMPWA, said that it was unfair for the government not to increase the procurement price of milk, while prices of other essential commodities were increasing steadily. The demonstrators also sought control over the price hike of fodder and other essential feed for animals.

They also demanded a compensation of Rs. 25,000 per cow to those farmers who lost their animals to the foot-and-mouth disease.

Our Special Correspondent from **Erode** adds:

Farmers belonging to TNMPWA blocked the road at Nasiyanur along with their cows demanding higher procurement price for milk. They dispersed after the police intervened. They said that they would continue the mode of agitation at some other place in the district every day until the government gave an assurance on their demands.

According to K. Ramasamy Gounder, president of the district unit of the association, nearly one-tenth of the milk consumed in the State was produced in Erode district.

“Farmers stand to lose a lot in stopping milk supply to Aavin. But, there was no other alternative for us to convey our plight. The scarcity will be felt acutely in the coming days when more number of farmers will stop supplying milk to Aavin,” Mr. Ramasamy said.

According to Animal Husbandry Department sources, most of the 3.7 lakh heads of cattle in the district were milch animals. About 750 primary milk cooperative societies supply milk to the Feeder Balancing Dairy directly, and through the chilling plants at Sankarandampalayam, Sathyamangalam and Thalavadi.

Farmers reasoned that taking into consideration the 50 to 100 per cent rise in the cost of animal feed in the last few years, and 50 per cent increase in labour costs, the enhancement in the procurement cost of milk by Rs. 3 was meagre.

Representatives of milk cooperative societies said that yield from animals that had been cured of foot-and-mouth disease had gone down by 50 per cent. They also lost their capacity to reproduce, and hence, the existing procurement price would cause tremendous loss to the farmers.

Supply not affected in Krishnagiri

Our Staff Reporter from **Krishnagiri** adds: According to official sources, milk supply to 496 Milk Producers' Cooperative Societies in Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri district coming under the Dharmapuri District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union in Krishnagiri was not affected. The supply has increased by 76 litres on Tuesday than that of the milk supplied on Monday.

Stress on farmers' participation in tackling man-animal conflict

KALPETTA, February 5, 2014 - WORKSHOP ON MAN, ANIMAL CONFLICT HELD

Active participation of farmers living on forest fringes in tackling man-animal conflict was stressed at a workshop held at Sulthan Bathery in Wayanad district recently. Presenting a paper on the increasing man-animal conflict in the district at the workshop, organised jointly by the Grama Jyothi Farmers' Club under the Kalloor branch of the Kerala Gramin Bank and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, P.S. Easa, Director, Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi, said many a time the officials concerned implemented projects without considering the participation of the farming community. K. Surendra Varma, Assistant Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, was the moderator.

Walkout over fall in rubber prices

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, February 5, 2014 - The Opposition walked out of the Assembly on Tuesday accusing the government of doing nothing to protect rubber farmers from a deep fall in the prices of the commodity.

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and Finance Minister K.M. Mani defended the charge saying that the government would immediately start procuring rubber directly from the farmers to address the prevailing distress situation in the rubber market, with the price of one kg of the commodity reigning at a low level of Rs.142, down from Rs.248 a year ago. Mr. Chandy told the House that top officials of the Rubber Board, National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India, State Marketing Federation and Rubber Marketing Federation would sit with him later in the evening to plan how best to organise the rubber procurement programme.

Mr. Mani said it should not worry anyone that the Budget for the year had given an allocation of only Rs.10 crore for rubber procurement. "Whatever be the amount, I assure you, the Finance Department will release the entire funds required," he said.

K. Suresh Kurup of the CPI(M), who brought up the issue in the House by seeking the permission of the Speaker to move an adjournment motion to discuss the falling trend in rubber prices, said the State should seek Rs.100 crore from the national fund for market intervention to stabilise the prices of agricultural commodities.

Mr. Suresh Kurup said the Centre had been allowing rubber imports to the country 'indiscriminately,' keeping the import duty on the commodity low, thereby causing a steady fall in the prices in the domestic market.

The Chief Minister told the House that he had personally raised the issue at a meeting with the Union Minister for Commerce and Industries Anand Sharma in New Delhi last week.

"Now the situation is that, both in the matter of the quantity of rubber to be imported and the timing of the imports, the Centre will take decisions only after consulting the Rubber Board also," Mr. Chandy said.

Mr. Mani expressed his dismay over the Union government's tendency to take decisions impacting the rubber farmers without consulting the rubber-growing States. Leader of the Opposition V.S. Achuthanandan, announcing the walkout, said that the year 2013 had witnessed the largest quantity of rubber imports since 2009 and accused the Centre of pursuing "anti-people policies" to favour tyre manufacturers.

Cotton yarn prices up because of cotton cost, says SIMA

COIMBATORE, February 5, 2014 - Cotton yarn prices have increased recently because of the hike in prices of cotton, according to the Southern India Mills' Association (SIMA).

Its chairman T. Rajkumar has said in a press release here that the price of cotton was Rs. 47,500 a candy in September 2013, Rs. 39,000 in December 2013 and Rs. 43,000 now.

The price of cotton yarn was Rs. 260 a kg last September, Rs. 241 a kg in December and Rs. 256 a kg now.

Tamil Nadu produced just five lakh bales of cotton a year as against the annual requirement of 120 lakh bales.

The remaining quantity is sourced from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Textile mills transport cotton from these States by trucks and the freight costs have shot up recently.

It has gone up by Rs. 10,000 for a truck load of 100 bales during the last two months.

Labour cost has increased by Rs. 20 a day in the recent months.

Hence, yarn prices have also gone up.

The mills have passed on only the increase in cotton prices, he said.

District Collectors told to ensure fair price for minor forest produce

BHUBANESWAR, February 5, 2014 - *'Guidelines of Tribal Affairs Ministry should be scrupulously followed'*

The State government has asked all District Collectors to ensure fair price to gatherers of minor forest produce .

The Department of Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste, issuing direction to all Collectors in this regard, stated that Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs guidelines should be scrupulously implemented for success of Forest Right Act 2006.

According to guideline issued for the State, the forest right holders or their cooperatives should be allowed full freedom to sell such minor forest produce or non-timber forest produce to anyone or to undertake individual or collective processing, value addition, marketing, for livelihood within and outside forest area by using locally appropriate means of transport.

"The State government should exempt movement of all MFP or NTFPs from the purview of State government and for this purpose, the transit rules should be amended suitably. Even a transit permit from Gram Sabha should not be required," the guideline says.

It says imposition of any fee or charges or royalties of the processing, value addition, marketing of forest produces collected individually or collectively by the cooperatives of right holders would also be ultra vires of the Act

The MoTA maintained that the State Government need to play the facilitator role in not only transferring unhindered absolute rights over MFP or NTFP to forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes-and other traditional forest dwellers but also in getting them remunerative price for the MFP/NTFP collected and processed by them.

The guideline, which elucidated the objectives of FRA Act further, was issued after the ministry received petitions that the FRA, 2006 was not being complied with in letter and spirit and tribal communities were not getting the benefits of ownership of MFP/NTFP, which included all non- timber forest produce of plant origin including bamboo, brushwood, shrubs, cane, tussar, cocoons, honey, wax, tendu on tendu leaves, medicinal plants and herbs and tubes.

☑ ***State should play the facilitator role in rights transfer and ensuring fair price: Union Ministry***

☑ ***Department of Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste issues direction to Collectors***

Court directive to ensure food safety

KOCHI, February 5, 2014 - A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Tuesday directed the State government and the Commissioner of Food Safety to continue with random inspection of hotels and restaurants to ensure that hygienic and safe food was served to the public.

The Bench comprising Chief Justice Manjula Chellur and Justice A.M. Shaffique asked them to keep strict vigil and not to stop the inspection.

The court also asked the Association of Hotel and Restaurants to address the problems raised by the public and conduct periodic seminars and meetings to have self-introspection and to do their best to give safe and hygienic food to the public.

The directives were issued by the Bench while disposing of a writ petition filed by High Court lawyer Basil Attipetty seeking a directive to eateries in the State to sell food in accordance with the standards stipulated in the Food Safety and Standards Act and Rules.

In an action taken report, the government said officials of the Food Commissionerate had intensified the inspection across the State to see that the eateries supplied hygienic food. The Commissioner of Food Safety had issued certain guidelines for hotels, bakeries, fast food units, drinking water suppliers, and drinking water tanker lorries. That apart, a special drive had been conducted to ensure quality of drinking water and vegetables. In a special drive conducted during the Onam season, two tanker lorries suspected to be carrying coconut oil adulterant were confiscated and licence of the consignee firm suspended. The report said the absence of scientific slaughterhouses had been a major concern, especially since the State was a major consumer of non-vegetarian foods. The government was taking steps to establish scientific slaughterhouses in the State.

As deadline expires, 12,000 food businesses yet to register in Coimbatore

COIMBATORE, February 5, 2014 - More than 12,000 food business operators in the district are either yet to obtain licence or registration under the Food Safety and Standards Act as of Tuesday, the deadline set by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The central government agency had warned of stringent legal action, including imprisonment, against food business firms operating without licence or registration beyond the February 4 deadline. However, sources in Tamil Nadu Food Safety and Drug Administration Department (Food Safety Wing), told *The Hindu* here that only 9,796 of the nearly 22,000 big and small food businesses operating in Coimbatore district had obtained licences/registrations by Tuesday. Apart from this, the applications of 420 companies were being processed.

A total of 220 firms had applied for licences in January and another 55 in February so far. A total of 200 applications for registration were given from January till now. Firms with annual turnover below Rs. 12 lakh will require registration and those above have to obtain licences. The officials said that the main reason behind this low numbers was that many businesses were hoping that this deadline would again be extended this year. The FSSAI had extended the deadline twice since the Food Safety Act was notified on August 5, 2011. However, the FSSAI had warned that no further extensions would be given.

The official said that any enforcement drive by the Food Safety Wing could be taken up only after orders from the Food Safety Commissioner. The Food Safety Act mandated all food business ranging from roadside eateries and canteens to star-category hotels and restaurants to either register or obtain licence. It provided for imposing a fine of up to Rs. 5 lakh besides imprisonment for up to six months on food businesses operating without licences.

NABARD releases State focus paper

CHENNAI, February 5, 2014 - The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) has pegged the State's Potential Linked Credit Plans (PLP) for 2014-15 at Rs. 1,24,563 crore, marking a growth of 21 per cent over its 2013-14 target. About 63 per cent or Rs. 78,789 crore is meant for the agriculture sector.

Participating in the State-level credit seminar 2014-15 held on Tuesday, Nabard chief general manager, Lalitha Venkatesan said the estimates for 2014- 2015 were updated taking into account new programmes, policy measures announced, emerging credit needs and the increase in the scale of finance and unit costs.

Principal secretary (finance) K. Shanmugam released a focus paper and said due to the deficit rainfall in the State for the second consecutive year, it was a Herculean task to achieve four per cent growth in agriculture for 2013-14.

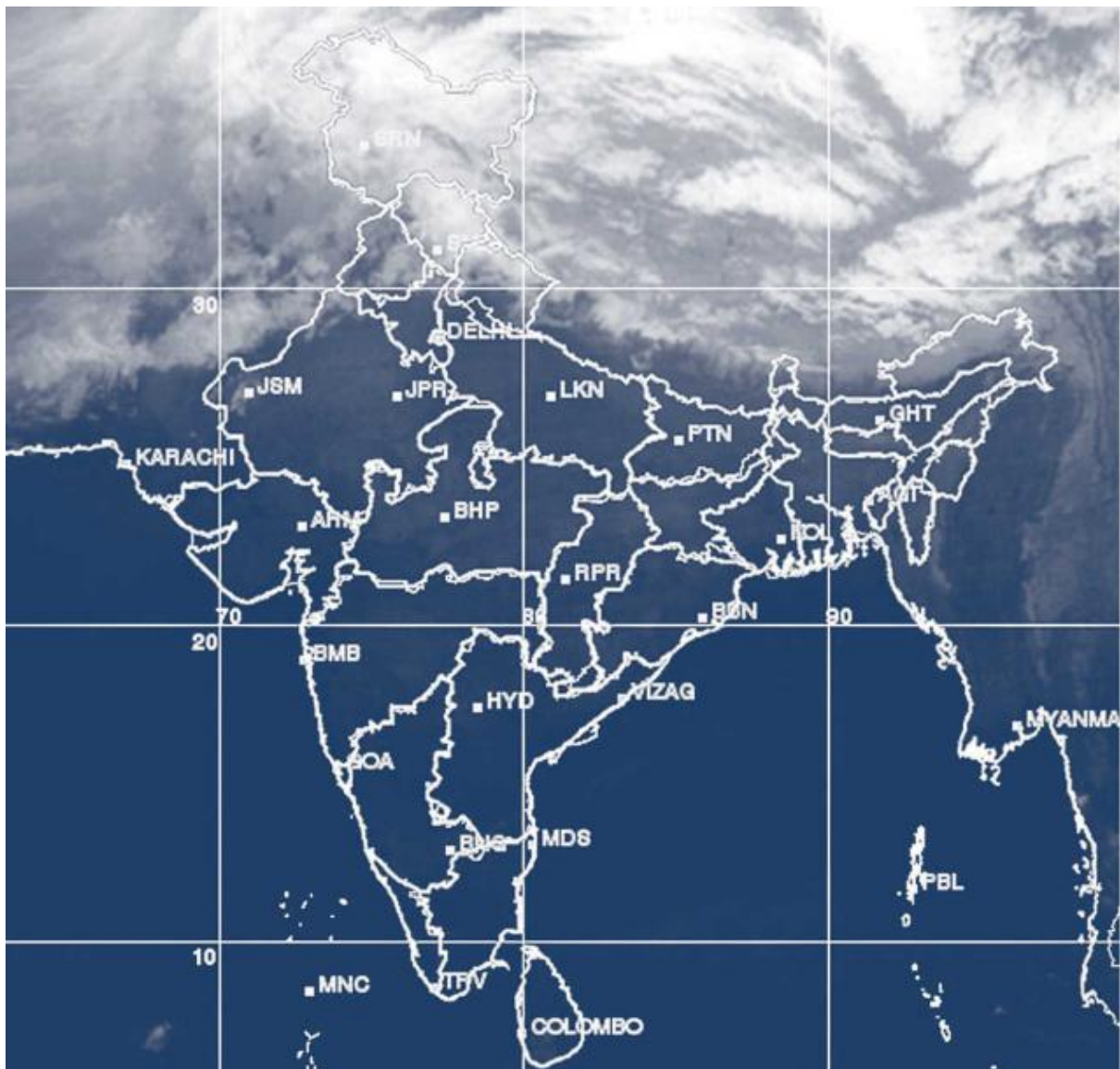
Besides, the focus paper analysed the infrastructure planning required, the investments that need to be made and the credit potential or policy initiatives required for realising higher growth in the agriculture and rural sectors in the State. It also highlighted the critical projects that need to be taken up on a priority basis and integrated with the State plan, Ms. Venkatesan said.

☐ **Tamil Nadu's PLP has been pegged at**

Rs. 1,24,563 crore

☐ **Agricultural growth seen as difficult due to deficit rainfall**

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on February 04.

Water level



The water level in **Periyar dam** stood at 111.10 feet (permissible level is 136 feet) on Tuesday with no inflow and a discharge of 105 cusecs. The water level in Vaigai dam was 35.17 feet (full level is 71 feet) with an inflow of 21 cusecs and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 993 mcft. There was no rainfall recorded during the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday in the region, PWD officials here said.

The water level in the **Mettur dam** stood at 51.7 feet on Tuesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 355 cusecs and the discharge 500 cusecs.

Water level in the **Papanasam dam** on Tuesday stood at 78.15 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 293.63 cusecs and 1,129.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The level of **Manimuthar dam** stood at 82.42 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 26 cusecs and 165 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari - The water level in **Pechipparai dam** stood at 17.25 feet, 49.40 feet in Perunchani, 8.27 feet in Chittar I, 8.36 feet in Chittar II, 4.20 feet in Poigai and 54.12 feet in Mamabazhathuraiyaru.

hindustantimes

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Feb 5

Max 29° | Min 20°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 94

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:34

Sunset: 06:11

Barometer: 1011

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Feb 6

Max 30° | Min 21°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday

Feb 7



31° | 21°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday

Feb 8



24° | 21°

Overcast

Sunday

Feb 9



24° | 21°

Overcast

Monday

Feb 10



24° | 20°

Overcast

Tuesday

Feb 11



24° | 20°

Overcast

Govt will procure rubber from farmers, says Chandy

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Chief minister Oommen Chandy told the assembly on Tuesday that the government would intervene in the market to arrest the falling prices of rubber.

Replying to a notice seeking leave for an adjournment motion by K Suresh Kurup, Chandy said the government had decided to procure rubber to give necessary support to farmers. "We have also taken up the matter with the Centre. Union commerce minister Anand Sarma has agreed to look into the matter despite revising the import tax on rubber from 20% of the value or Rs 20/kg to 20% of the value or Rs 30/kg," he said.

Finance minister K M Mani said the government had set aside Rs 10 crore as initial sum for rubber procurement and it was ready to make available funds required to procure rubber from the market.

Domestic rubber prices had hit a three-year low of Rs 142/kg for sheet rubber and Rs 139/kg for block rubber after tyre makers trimmed their purchases from the local market due to higher imports of low-priced rubber.

Chandy said the prices in the state were, however, better by Rs 7/kg for sheet rubber and Rs 19/kg for block rubber when compared to the international market.

Former finance minister T M Thomas Isaac said the hike in import tax of rubber was too insufficient as quantitative restrictions had already been done away with by imposing the Asean agreement. He said the only possible way out was to procure rubber directly from cooperative societies and farmers.

The opposition, however, walked out of the assembly expressing its dissatisfaction with the government assurance.



Fall in Rubber Price Fuels Unrest in House

Steep fall in prices of natural rubber figured continuously in the Assembly on Tuesday, eventually leading to a walkout of Opposition members and Kerala Congress leader and Finance Minister K M Mani reiterating in unequivocal terms that the Centre's rubber import policy should be corrected and his party would not hesitate to launch agitations on this score while even staying in power.

Mani said that the State Government was of the view that rubber imports into the country should be resorted to only after discussions with Kerala, which accounts for 90 per cent of the total production in the country, and other producer states.

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said that the Centre had given an assurance that the State would be consulted through the Rubber Board on two critical areas - quantity as well as timing of rubber imports in future.

Batting for the cause of rubber growers, Chandy also promised adequate measures to launch rubber procurement at the earliest.

K Suresh Kurup (CPM), who had given notice for an adjournment motion on the topic, asked why the State and Central Governments were remaining unmoved when around 12 lakh rubber growers in the state were in dire straits for quite some time, owing to the plummeting price of the produce.

“Rubber plays an important role in the economy of the state. 98 per cent of rubber growers are owning less than two hectares of land and heavily dependent on the income from it. When the fact remains that the Centre and the state had induced farmers over the years to opt for rubber cultivation by abandoning other crops, the governments has a responsibility to protect them while a crisis has gripped the sector,” he said.

“The Centre’s announcement of hiking the import duty of rubber to Rs 30/kilo recently was after allowing tyre companies to beef up their inventory through unrestricted imports and domestic procurement at low rates,” he charged.

Suresh Kurup, supported by Raju Abraham (CPM) and Mullakara Ratnakaran (CPI), also insisted that rubber procurement should be direct from small growers and should not end up in lifting stocks from traders.

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said the government is keen to take up rubber procurement within a couple of days.

“Rubber price is linked to international prices,” he said, pointing out that the price of sheet rubber on Monday in the domestic market was `142/kilo, whereas the international price stood at `135. The Opposition was not convinced and found fault with the signing of the ASEAN Trade Pact, which according to them, had allowed flooding of various produces including Rubber into India, thereby fomenting the crisis .

“The strategy of the government would be to intervene in the market and stock the procured produce in godowns for an appropriate time, so that the price firms up,” he said.

Finance Minister K M Mani also promised that releasing of money over and above `10 cr earmarked for rubber procurement will not be a problem. Unsatisfied with the explanation and disallowing the motion, Opposition leader V S Achuthanandan led the walkout. “The government is not concerned about the lives of the people and only keen on indulging in corruption. And Mani is shedding tears to fool the people,” he charged.

THE HINDU Business Line

Export demand lends flavour to cardamom

Kochi, February 4: Export orders coupled with improved domestic demand have pushed up cardamom prices at last week auctions. For the first time after three months, the individual auction average price crossed Rs. 600 a kg.

If the dry weather conditions, which have been prevailing for over a month, if continue, it would result in a break in the harvesting with the completion of the current round of picking. Thus, there will be a lean season of 3-4 months i.e., until the arrival of the next crop. Such a scenario is emerging after a few years, growers claimed.

At the same time, exporters have good orders but there is a shortage of the exportable variety capsules, they said. An estimated 60 tonnes of cardamom were bought by them last week. In the international market, India is the only supplier of good variety cardamom. Guatemala is the other source. Even though it has a good crop, availability of a comparatively good variety is limited. Hence, chances for orders coming to India are better, they said.



Next harvest in Guatemala is in September-October, traders said. Upcountry buyers are also actively looking at the prevailing weather conditions. The likely gap between the current crop and the next crop would pave the way for a bullish sentiment in the market.

At the same time, the crop this season has been very good. During April 1-January 31, a total of 19,276 tonnes of cardamom were traded at auctions against 12,449 tonnes in the same period a year ago. As a result, the weighted auction average fell to Rs. 600 a kg against about Rs. 775 at this time of previous season. The weighted average price as on February 2 was Rs. 593.27 (Rs. 773.35). At the Sunday auction the arrivals stood at 91 tonnes and the entire quantity was sold. The maximum price stood at Rs. 891 and the minimum at Rs. 408 a kg. The auction average increased to Rs. 626 a kg, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *Business Line*.

Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): AGEB 765-775; AGB 610-615; AGS 565-575 and AGS -1: 545-555.

N. India buyers boost tea prices at Coonoor sale

Coonoor, February 4: The prolonged snowfall in Russia and rest of the CIS as also the US limited exporters' operation at Sale number 5 of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association.

"Temperature has once again drifted to minus 24 degrees Celsius with snow piling over 30 centimetres on roads obstructing traffic mobility. Residents are unable to get Coonoor tea in neighbourhood grocery shops. We are told to wait for a fortnight more," Pragya Jain, patron of Nilgiri tea at Maryland in the US told *Business Line* .

There were only selective purchases for Russia at Rs. 57-80 a kg and at Rs. 59-72 for the rest of the CIS.

Most shippers to Pakistan were also silent contending adequate availability with their importers. Some bought for Rs. 65-81.

Overall, 82 per cent of the 11.51 lakh kg was sold with prices rising Rs. 1/kg over the previous week.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped CTC market when RJ Tea Corporation bought it for Rs. 205.

Among orthodox teas, Kodanad topped at Rs. 300 a kg.

Growers' body demands ban on rubber imports

Kochi, February 4: With natural rubber prices dropping to Rs. 140 levels in last few sessions, the Indian Rubber Growers Association has demanded suspension of rubber imports through all channels for one year. It also asked the authorities concerned to redefine the policy on import related exports.

Siby J Monippally, President of the Association, alleged that importers, who brought the commodity through duty free channel, delay their export commitments unreasonably to an extent of three years, affecting the balance in the industry.

It pointed out in the representation that 2.70 lakh tonnes of rubber have been imported till now. About 65 per cent of the imports were through duty-free channel (Duty Exemption Entitlement Certificate). The imports are against a projected deficit 70,000 tonnes.

If the trend continues, three lakh tonnes of rubber could be imported by the end of the current fiscal. This artificially created a glut in the market.

In Gujarat, it's growers turn to shed tears over onion now

Ahmedabad, February 4: When wholesale prices of onion touched Rs. 50 a kg in October, growers in Gujarat went the whole hog to plant the bulb during the current season. As a result, the area under onion increased by over 400 per cent to 74,000 hectares this year against 14,000 hectares last year.

The end result: Onions are giving sleepless nights to growers with prices dropping to Rs. 250 a quintal, mainly in the State's Rajkot district.

Prices plummet

Dejected by the fall in prices, onion farmers dumped tonnes of onion on the streets of Kotada Sangani taluk in Rajkot district on Monday.

Prices had zoomed a record Rs. 4,905/quintal on October 22, 2013, at the Gondal Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Yard, 100 km from Rajkot, with the arrival of tonnes.

On February 2, prices dropped to Rs. 255 with 760.4 tonnes being offered for sale.

"Farmers are unable to recover even sowing costs from the sale of onion. Therefore, farmers from Kotada Sangani threw onions on the road as a mark of protest against such low prices," said Chandu Vaghasia, Director of Gondal APMC. "Arrivals continue to be high. And due to bumper crop expectation this year, farmers fear prices will remain low," said Vaghasia.

Losses

According to Vaghasia, for every acre of onion sown, it costs around Rs. 80,000-one lakh. At such low price levels, farmers are getting only around Rs. 40,000 an acre, thereby incurring huge losses. "We demand support price for onion at Rs. 200-250 for a *maund* of 20 kg. We will formally submit a memorandum to the State Government in this regard," he said.

Higher freight charges lift sugar

Mumbai, February 4: Sentiments in the sugar market ruled positive on Tuesday. Prices at the Vashi market increased by Rs. 5-10 a quintal on hike in freight charges by Rs. 8-10 due to shortage of trucks. On the futures market, prices jumped by more than Rs. 20 on the expectations that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs will consider sops for export of raw sugar. This also led Naka and mill tender rates higher. Arrivals at Vashi market were around 56-57 truckloads (of 100 bags each) while local dispatches were 55-56 loads. On Monday, 15-16 mills offered tenders and sold 48,000-50,000 bags at Rs. 2,510-2,600 (Rs. 2,510-2,600) for S-grade and Rs. 2,660-2,800 (Rs. 2,660-2,800) for M-grade. Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs. 2,682-2,800 (Rs. 2,682-2,800) and M-grade was Rs. 2,802-2,966 (Rs. 2,802-2,956). Naka delivery rates were: S-grade Rs. 2,630-2,690 (Rs. 2,630-2,690) and M-grade Rs. 2,750-2,860 (Rs. 2,750-2,860). Our Correspondent

Despite slack offtake, refiners hike palmolein price

Mumbai, February 4: REFINERS HIKE PALMOLEIN PRICE

Groundnut and palmolein prices increased by Rs. 10 and Rs. 2 for 10 kg each on Tuesday, tracking a rise in the Saurashtra market. Local refineries also increased the rates for imported oils by Rs. 3/10 kg. In Rajkot, groundnut oil gained Rs. 30 on higher demand. Higher arrivals of new crops in producing areas pulled down rapeseed oil by Rs. 12, soyabean refined oil by Rs. 5 and cotton oil by Rs. 1. Sunflower oil ruled steady. Sources said that despite the start of the new month, demand from retailers and stockists was lower than expected keeping the volume low. Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs. 585, super palmolein at Rs.605, super deluxe palmolein at Rs. 625 and soyabean refined oil at Rs. 655. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs.583, soyabean refined oil at Rs. 650 and sunflower refined oil at Rs. 665. Allana quoted palmolein at Rs. 582, soyabean refined oil at Rs. 650 and sunflower refined oil at Rs. 670. Our Correspondent

Stockists' buying heats up groundnut oil

Rajkot, February 4: GROUNDNUT OIL UP ON STOCKISTS' BUYS

Demand for groundnut oil from stockists and brands has increased as prices have dropped sharply. Groundnut oil loose was traded higher by Rs. 10 at Rs. 735-740 for 10 kg, *telia* tin was up Rs. 15 to Rs. 1,150-51 for 15 kg. Groundnut oil new tin was traded flat at Rs. 1,335-1,340 for 15 kg. Washed cottonseed oil was quoted at Rs. 582-585 for 10 kg, while cotton oil new tin remained unchanged at Rs. 1,070-1,080 for 15 kg. Our Correspondent

Pepper continues to rule hot as pipelines go empty

Kochi, February 4: PEPPER CONTINUES TO RULE HOT

Pepper prices continued to scale new highs on Tuesday on strong demand amid tight supply. More buying interest was seen and demand outstripped the supply. Arrivals surged on Tuesday but the demand was higher, they said. A total of 67 tonnes of pepper were traded at Rs. 524-540 a kg. Rajkumari pepper fetched Rs. 540 while High Range material was sold at Rs. 530-535. Pepper from the plains were sold at Rs. 524-527 because it contained high moisture and was of low bulk density, they said. Spot pepper prices moved up by Rs. 200 to Rs. 52,400 (ungarbled) and Rs. 54,400 (garbled) a quintal on strong demand amid tight supply. GK Nair

Turmeric up on quality

Erode, February 4: Turmeric prices increased in Erode markets on Tuesday as superfine quality arrived, while traders ignored the produce from Andhra Pradesh as they thought it was uncompetitive.

No trader from Erode bought stocks from Andhra Pradesh as prices ruled at Rs. 6,500 at Warangal, at a par with prices here, said RKV Ravishankar, President of Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Arrivals in markets such as Warangal, Nizamabad and Sangli were higher with 9,000 bags hitting Nizamabad. Sales, however, were lacklustre.

About 175 bags of new turmeric arrived for sale in Erode and demand was high. Traders quoted Rs.4,900-5,200 a quintal for the Number 8 finger variety and Rs. 6,600-6,800 for Mysore and Erode finger varieties. All the 175 bags were sold for their quality.

Overall, 3,700 bags arrived in Erode markets and 70 per cent was sold.

Ravishankar said that prices are likely to increase after February 15 as traders and exporters are expected to get good orders from North India and abroad.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard (new crop), the finger variety was sold at Rs.5,355-6,389 a quintal, the root variety at Rs. 4,766-6,346. (Old Crop) The finger variety was sold at Rs.4,758-6,699, the root variety at Rs. 4,399-6,634.

Salem hybrid: The finger variety fetched Rs. 6,027-7,684, the root variety Rs. 5,816-6,599. Of the 837 bags that arrived, 261 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety went for Rs. 5,723-6,769, the root variety Rs.5,461-6,554. Of the 353 bags on offer, 327 were picked up.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety sold at Rs. 5,577-6,849, the root variety Rs. 5,277-6,638. Of the 484 bags put up for sale, 480 were traded.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs.5,406-6,859 a quintal, the root variety Rs. 4,509-6,678 a quintal. All the 315 bags on the block got sold.

Dara wheat rules firm as demand for flour rises

Karnal, February 4: DARA WHEAT RULES FIRM

Dara wheat prices ruled unchanged, while flour increased marginally on the back of domestic buying on Tuesday. Following demand for flour, interest in dara wheat was firm, said Radhey Shyam, a trader. In the physical market, dara wheat sold at Rs. 1,620-25 a quintal. Around 1,000 bags of wheat arrived and stocks were directly offloaded at the mills. Mill delivery was at Rs. 1,620, while delivery at the chakki was at Rs. 1,625. An increase in demand pushed flour prices marginally up by Rs. 10 and sold at Rs. 1,860. Similarly, Chokar went up by Rs. 5 and sold at Rs. 1,470 a quintal. Our Correspondent

Kerala CM-traders meet buoys rubber

Kottayam, February 4: Spot rubber improved on Tuesday. According to reports, Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy will hold a meeting with the stake holders on Tuesday evening to discuss issues regarding procurement of rubber.

Following this, prices firmed up marginally on expectations of a positive move in the market. Sheet rubber inched up Rs. 142.50 (Rs. 142) a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board. The grade ended at Rs. 139.50 (Rs. 139), as quoted by the dealers. February futures firmed up to Rs. 144.66 (Rs. 142.48), March to Rs. 146.92 (Rs. 144.70), April to Rs. 149.90 (Rs.147.84) and May to Rs. 152.50 (Rs. 150.29) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) closed at Rs. 134.77 (Rs. 134.35) at Bangkok. February futures closed at ¥215 (Rs. 132.70) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates Rs. /kg: RSS-4: 142.50 (142); RSS-5: 140.50 (140); Ungraded: 138 (137); ISNR 20: 140 (139) and Latex 60%: 115.50 (115).

World's largest sandalwood auction today

Some 56 tonnes will go under the hammer at Marayoor; sales may fetch Rs. 7,000 a kg



Aromatic affair Some 8,500 acres of natural sandalwood forest have survived in the Marayoor- Kanthalloor belt in Kerala's Idukki district

Kochi, February 4: What was the legendary sandalwood poacher Veerappan's biggest regret? That he could not lay his hands on a log of the

famed Marayoor sandalwood!

That's a joke Kerala Forest officials would like to tell – to show how well they protected the Marayoor sandalwood forest while the bandit devastated sandalwood groves in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Despite the threats from Veerappan's gang and other sundry poachers, some 8,500 acres of natural sandalwood forest have survived in the Marayoor- Kanthalloor belt in the Marayoor Sandal Reserve Forest in the Western Ghats in Kerala's Idukki district.

"Marayoor's is said to be the largest natural sandalwood forest of the species *S antalum album* in a rain-shadow region," says P Dhanesh Kumar, divisional forest officer of south Wayanad, who had been the range officer of the Marayoor forest a few years ago. While Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, tired of the high cost of protecting the sandalwood forests, cut and warehoused the trees, Kerala nurtured the trees in Marayoor. Some 150 watchers and the Vana Samrakshana Samitis (voluntary forest protection forums) take care of the nearly 60,000 trees from poachers, fire and natural calamities.

"We do not chop sandal trees, we only collect those that are fallen dead or are felled by winds," MG Vinod Kumar, range officer of Marayoor, told *Business Line*. Every year, several tonnes of such wood are collected, stored at the Government sandalwood depot and auctioned off.

The Marayoor Sandalwood Auction is said to be the world's largest sandalwood sale at an auction. On February 5, more than 56 tonnes of sandalwood will go under the hammer. A large number of buyers – temples, sandalwood oil factories, ayurvedic drug makers and handicrafts manufacturers – will bid for the precious, fragrant and 'divine' wood at Marayoor on the Munnar-Udumalpet road.

Vinod Kumar recalled that at last year's auction 40 tonnes were sold fetching Rs. 33 crore to the government coffers. The average price was around Rs. 6,000 a kg. This year, the price is likely to increase to about Rs. 7,000. This year, for the first time, a large quantity of sap wood would also be auctioned.

If all the wood put up for auction is sold, it would be the largest-ever turnover. Among those taking part in the auction are the Guruvayur and Sabarimala temple authorities.

African farms beckon Asian investments, says Pawar

New Delhi, February 4: Africa, with huge tracts of uncultivated arable land, presents an opportunity for investments in the farm sector by Asian countries, including India, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said on Tuesday.

“Agricultural land in Asia is under pressure from increasing population and urbanisation. As such, there is an opportunity for responsible investment in agriculture by Asian countries in Africa,” Pawar said, addressing the Asia-Africa Agribusiness Forum organised by the Centre and industry body FICCI.

Investments

But investments in Africa should be according to norms laid down by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, he said.

“India is very clear that while investments in Africa must lead to agricultural growth, diversification and employment, it must not be at the loss of domestic food security,” Pawar said.

Land availability

Though Africa lags other continents in terms of productivity, its great competitive advantage is its 733 million hectares of arable land, accounting for 27.4 per cent of the world’s total arable land.

“Currently, only 183 million hectares are under cultivation in Sub-Saharan Africa and approximately 452 million hectares still remain uncultivated,” Pawar said.

Inaugurating the three-day event, President Pranab Mukherjee called upon investing firms and banks to forge strategic partnerships to meet the credit requirement of agribusiness and food processing sectors in Asian and African countries.

Unlocking the potential

“Access to agriculture markets and finance as well as greater public-private partnerships in agri business and food processing sectors in Asia and Africa are essential to unleash their potential. Major investments in infrastructure, such as irrigation, water conservation, roads, markets and cold chains are also called for,” Mukherjee said.

Growth push

A FICCI-PwC discussion paper on ‘Unlocking the Food Belts of Asia and Africa’, highlighting the growth potential, said that in Sub-Saharan Africa and most of the Asian countries, said the agro-based industry needed a major transformation to generate more job opportunities, revenues and food for the growing population.

Apart from the industrial transformation, farming techniques need improvement to offer good opportunities to a large number of small farmers, who in turn could pave their way out of poverty, it said.

Outlook turns bearish for chana on huge carryover stocks

Indore, February 4: BEARISH OUTLOOK FOR CHANA

Chana has been going through a bearish trend for the past few days on slack demand and higher arrivals. On Tuesday, chana (kanta) declined to Rs. 2,725-50 a quintal (Rs. 2,775-2,800), while chana (desi) declined to Rs. 2,500-2,600. Chana dal (average) was at Rs. 3,100-50 (Rs. 3,250-3,350), chana dal (medium) at Rs. 3,200-50 (Rs. 3,450-3,550), while chana dal

(bold) declined to Rs. 3,500-50 respectively. Dollar chana also firm at Rs. 4,000-4,500 on subdued demand. Our Correspondent

Business Standard

Guarseed recovers on low level buying



[Guarseed](#) prices recovered by Rs 105 to Rs 4,860 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their positions in line with firm spot markets trend.

Marketmen said buying at prevailing lower levels against restricted supplies and pick up in demand in physical markets mainly supported the uptrend.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, guarseed prices for March delivery improved by Rs 105, or 2.21 per cent, to Rs 4,860 per quintal, clocking an open interest of 13,746 lots.

The February contract added Rs 100, or 2.13 per cent, at Rs 4,790 per quintal, revealing an open interest of 13,406 lots.

Chana up 1% on good demand



[Chana](#) prices rose by 1.01 per cent to Rs 3,013 per quintal in futures trade today as traders enlarged their holdings on account of the good demand in the spot market.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, chana for April delivery rose by Rs 30, or 1.01 per cent, to Rs 3,013 per quintal, with an open interest for 72,810 lots.

The February contract added Rs 17, or 0.60 per cent, to Rs 2,832 per quintal, with an open interest of 52,310 lots.

Traders said speculators increasing their holdings on hopes of a rise in spot market demand due to marriage season, mainly pushed up chana prices.

They said enquiries by millers at lower levels against fall in supply from the producing regions of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh further supported the uptrend.

Coriander gains 1.13% on spot demand

Coriander prices rose by 1.13 per cent to Rs 8,173 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their positions supported by rising demand in the spot markets amid limited stocks on account of restricted arrivals from the major growing belts.



Sentiment improved further as the investors enlarged theirAt the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, coriander for February delivery gained Rs 91, or 1.13 per cent, to Rs 8,173 per quintal with an open interest of 27,900 lots.

The April contract was up Rs 37, or 0.42 per cent, to Rs 8,920 per quintal, with an open interest of 27,060 lots.

Market analysts said increased buying by speculators on pick up in spot market demand against restricted arrivals from producing belts mainly influenced coriander prices to rise in futures trade.

Potato gains marginally on spot demand



[Potato](#) prices edged higher by 0.63 per cent to Rs 1,060 per quintal in [futures market](#) today as speculators increased their positions amid a firming trend at spot markets on strong demand amid restricted arrivals.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato for delivery in March traded higher by Rs 6.70, or 0.63 per cent, to Rs 1,060 per quintal, with a business turnover of 43 lots.

The April contract inched up by Rs 6.60, or 0.60 per cent, to Rs 1,098.80 per quintal, with a trading volume of 10 lots.

Analysts said improved demand against less arrivals from producing regions mainly supported the upside in potato prices at futures trade.

Cardamom surges by 3% on high demand



[Cardamom](#) futures rose nearly 3% to Rs 841.50 per kg in futures trade today as speculators enlarged positions driven by rising demand in spot markets amid thin arrivals.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in March rose by Rs 24.50, or 2.99%, to Rs 841.50 per kg, with a business turnover of 926 lots.

The delivery in February also up by Rs 22.50, or 2.86%, to Rs 809.20 per kg, with a trading volume of 677 lots.

Market analysts said rising spot and exports demand against restricted arrivals from producing regions, mainly influenced cardamom [prices](#) at futures market.

Crude palm oil rises by 0.3% as demand picks up



[Crude palm oil prices](#) up by 0.35% to Rs 540.20 per 10 kg in futures trading after participants created speculative positions following rising demand in the spot markets.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), crude palm oil for delivery in March rose by Rs 1.90, or 0.35%, to Rs 540.20 per 10 kg in business turnover of 14 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in February up by Rs 1.60, or 0.29%, to Rs 535.30 per 10 kg in 12 lots.

Analysts said speculative positions built-up by participants following pick-up in spot demand mainly led to rise in crude palm oil prices at futures trade.
