

## “Paddy crop on over 19,700 acres withering”

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*17 irrigation channels in Cumbum Valley closed*



*YEARNING For water:A paddy field in Cumbum Valley in Theni district.—  
PHOTO: G. KARTHIKEYAN*

CUMBUM, February 15, 2014 - With the closure of all the 17 irrigation channels in Cumbum Valley, paddy crop on 14,707 acres in the valley and 5,000 acres irrigated by Thanthai Periyar Channel has

started withering.

“Farmers harvested 10.14 tonnes per hectare, the highest in the State, during the last season. But, we may harvest only half the quantity now. The production loss is estimated at 80,000 tonnes,” say members of Cumbum Farmers Association.

The worst-affected are farmers in Gudalur and Cumbum blocks, where the crop is 80 days old. One wetting with the release of 25 cusecs of water for five days will suffice to protect the crop on 2,000 acres, they say.

### **Loss**

In other areas, the crop is 35 to 60 days old. It requires water for 45 to 60 days. The farmers will lose Rs.25,000 to Rs.35,000 per acre, they add.

They say PWD officials refuse to release Periyar dam water for irrigation.

The level in the dam stood at 111 feet, and water can be released till it reaches 104 feet. The officials want water to meet the drinking water needs of 65 lakh people living in Madurai, seven municipalities, 736 town panchayats and over 2,000 panchayats in five southern districts till June.

Poor planning, lethargic attitude of the government, violation of government orders, excessive political intervention in releasing water and illegal tapping in the Periyar river are the reasons for the present situation, the valley farmers say.

The PWD had drawn water from Periyar dam to improve Vaigai dam storage level, expecting rain in October and November, but there was no rain.

They released water from Vaigai to irrigate the first crop in Madurai district in June, instead of September as done normally, says progressive farmer A. Abbas.

Illegal tapping is also rampant in Periyar river. Kerala is drawing a lot of water from leading supply channel of Periyar river. But Tamil Nadu did not prevent it. Over 25,000 oil pumps are used to draw water illegally from the Periyar river between Gudalur and PC Patti to save perennial and cash crops, allege farmers.

“We are tired of staging protests demanding water, as the government has failed to understand the situation,” says H. Sowber Ai, secretary, Periyar Irrigation Farmers Association, Uthamapalayam.

“Now the paddy crop is at milking stage in Uthamapalayam,” he noted.

# Officials pitch in with spray to save standing paddy crop

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*Farmers encouraged to spray PPFM by spending Rs.200 an acre*



*Keeping hopes alive: A farmer spraying Pink Pigmented Facultative Methylothrop (PPFM) on the crop at Mudhunal in Ramanathapuram on Friday. — Photo: L. BALACHANDAR*

RAMANATHAPURAM, February 15, 2014 - The Agriculture Department and Krishi Vigyan Kendra of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (KVK-TNAU) have stepped in to help farmers, who were struggling to

save standing paddy crop by buying water.

After 'The Hindu' reported the plight of the farmers fighting hard to save the crop at the terminal stage in Erumaipatti, Naranamangalam and Mudhunal in Ramanathapuram block, officials of the department and the KVK have come to the rescue of the farmers.

Farmers in these areas had managed to bring up the crop for the first 60 days, using water from nearby waterbodies, but found it difficult after the water level in the irrigation tanks went low. While a section of them hired diesel engines for Rs.200 an hour to pump water, others left the crop to wither away.

As the tanks went dry and the crop, cultivated on about 100 acres in Erumaipatti and Naranamangalam areas and about 70 acres in Mudhunal were at the terminal stage, the farmers became desperate and hired water tankers paying Rs.1,200 for 6,000 litres of water. Reacting to the report, R. Ramasamy Pandian, Assistant Director of the Agriculture Department (Ramanathapuram block), visited the areas and coordinated with the KVK to spray Pink Pigmented Facultative Methylothrop (PPFM) bacteria to mitigate drought and save the crop.

The KVK sprayed the PPFM on about 15 acres at Erumaipatti and Naranamangalam and about 10 acres in Mudhunal, free of cost, demonstrating the efficacy of the spray to mitigate drought even as the farmers substituted it with life-saving irrigation, R. Durai Singh, Programme Coordinator, KVK-TNAU, said here on Friday. The farmers were encouraged to spray the PPFM, by spending about Rs.200 an acre, he said.

As the farmers could not judiciously use the water from tankers, the KVK helped them with mini mobile sprinklers. By letting out the water from the tankers, the farmers could irrigate only about 20 cents in an acre, but by using the mobile sprinklers they could use one tanker of water for the entire one-acre area, Mr. Durai Singh told 'The Hindu.'

R. Balasundaramurthy, a progressive farmer in Mudhunal, said farmers who had cultivated paddy crop on about 70 acres in the area could save it only on 10 acres.

## Regulate sinking of borewells, say farmers

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SALEM, February 15, 2014 - Representatives of farmers' bodies have made an appeal to the State Government to streamline sinking of new borewells and channelise use of existing borewells.

“It should be done without delay to protect the groundwater table that is fast depleting,” C. Vaiyapuri, State president of the United Farmers Association of Tamil Nadu, said. He said that the government should give licences for borewell operators, monitor the number of the borewells drilled by them and the depth of the same. According to him, this will also help check sinking of borewells near water bodies by taking the government’s directions for a ride. “Borewell operators should be allowed to sink only for drinking water purposes. If farmers want to sink borewells, the government should make it mandatory for them to install drip irrigation for the fields. Installing drip irrigation will reduce the water required for irrigation and increase area of cultivation by up to 10 times more,” he suggested. “Sinking of borewells was seen as a viable alternative compared to digging open wells. But drastic rise in the number of borewell drilling units over the years saw sinking of borewells go up manifold,” R. Murugesan (62), a farmer in Sankagiri, said. “This resulted in a steady depletion in the groundwater table. Last year, borewell manufacturing units in Tiruchengode, Namakkal district, started manufacturing drillers that could drill as deep as 2,000 feet. “While this capacity of drillers was seen as a leap for the industry, this only shows that the water level has depleted further,” M. Sukumar (56), a farmer of Rasipuram, added. The farmers also made an appeal to the State Government to allot more funds to increase the area under drip irrigation.

***‘Borewell operators should be allowed to sink wells only for drinking water purposes’***

## Here’s double bonanza for paddy farmers

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*Abitha, a student of Ph.D at the IISc, has devised a technique, ‘Algiculture’, to grow paddy along with an oil-producing algae, which helps farmers earn additional income*

HYDERABAD, February 15, 2014 - Good news for paddy farmers! They can now doubly benefit by growing an additional crop without incurring additional cost, apart from

contributing to the nation’s fuel needs.

A student of Ph.D at the Indian Institute of Sciences (IISc), Bangalore, has devised a technique to grow paddy along with an oil-producing algae, which helps farmers earn additional income.

### **No additional land**

Termed ‘Algiculture’, it is a sustainable method of algae cultivation in paddy fields. The interesting part is that it requires no additional land, water or nutrients.

“Algiculture has the potential to benefit farming, especially in semi-arid regions, by offering an opportunity to farmers to attempt multiple-cropping and simultaneous generation of algal bio-fuel that provides green energy,” says Abitha, the student.

While paddy grows to be harvested, the new method allows farmers to raise an additional 100 kg algae in a hectare.

In two months, it produces nearly six tonnes of algae that can be used as bio-fuel in a number of ways, as algae is looked upon as a source of renewable bio-fuel.

Abitha’s path-breaking project was the second runner-up at the innovation competition, ‘Power of Shunya: Challenge for Zero’, organised by DuPont. She teamed up with Vikas Gujral from Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad, to win the Rs. 2.5 lakh prize money.

In the new technique, algae rise as floating 'flocs' that are harvested every afternoon and sent for drying, oil extraction and cattle feed supplement. The dung is finally deposited in the paddy field for higher sustainability.

### **Pilot project**

Abitha has successfully completed a pilot project at Tumkur in Karnataka. Following its success, all farmers in the area are now keen to follow it, as it is not only financially beneficial but also enriches their land with nutrients.

### **Meeting fuel needs**

According to her, paddy is cultivated in 44 million hectares in the country, and even if 17 per cent of it is used for 'algiculture', India's fuel needs can be met with no additional energy input.

***Algiculture has the potential to benefit farming by offering an opportunity to farmers to attempt multiple-cropping and simultaneous generation of algal bio-fuel.***

## Use recycled water for agriculture: Gundurao

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HUBLI, February 15, 2014 - Minister for Food and Civil Supplies and district-in-charge Dinesh Gundurao has asked the officials of Hubli Dharwad Municipal Corporation to take steps to use recycled water from the sewage treatment plant for use in agriculture.

He was inspecting the ongoing work on the sewage treatment plant which is being constructed at a cost of Rs. 29.5 core near Gabbur village on the outskirts of Hubli on Thursday.

He asked the officials to ensure that the recycled water was utilised for different purposes. The State government would take appropriate action on the controversy over converting the playground at Deshpande Nagar in Hubli into a recreation club based on the Deputy Commissioner's report, he said.

## Egg rate

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NAMAKKAL, February 15, 2014 - The National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) egg rate was Rs. 3.10 on Friday.

## Water level

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The water level in Periyar dam stood at 110.80 feet on Friday with an inflow of 97 cusecs and a discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 34.37 feet with an inflow of nine cusecs and a discharge of 40 cusecs.

The combined storage in Periyar credit was 911 mcft. There was no rainfall recorded during the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Friday.

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 51.05 feet on Friday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 135 cusecs and the discharge 600 cusecs.

# At 263.20 million tonnes this year, foodgrain production touches a record high

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NEW DELHI, February 15, 2014 - As per the second advance estimate put out by Union Agriculture Ministry on Friday, 263.20 million tonnes of foodgrain has been produced this year, 3.91 million tonnes more than the 259.29 million tonnes produced in 2011-12, making it the highest ever foodgrain production the country has seen.

In addition, some parts of the country received rain on Thursday, which augurs well "at this stage" for the standing wheat crop, agriculture experts told *The Hindu*.

Record production of rice, wheat, oilseeds and cotton has contributed to the overall rise in foodgrain output this crop year (2013-14). Last year's production, hit by delayed onset of monsoon, was 257.13 million tonnes.

The second advance estimate put out by Union Agriculture Ministry on Friday shows rice output at 106.19 million tonnes, as against 105.24 million tonnes produced in 2012-13, and wheat at 95.60 million tonnes compared to 93.51 million tonnes last year.

With a new thrust on pulses production through adoption of "pulses villages," the output this year has gone up to 19.77 million tonnes compared to 18.34 million tonnes last year.

Coarse cereal production too increased by 1.5 million tonnes to 41.64 million tonnes.

The total oilseeds production this year is expected to be 329.83 lakh tonnes as against 309.43 lakh tonnes last year. Production of rapeseed and mustard is likely to be an all-time high at 82.51 lakh tonnes, compared to 80.29 lakh tonnes last year.

Sugarcane output is expected to be 3459.23 lakh tonnes as compared to 3412.00 lakh tonnes last year.

Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar recently said that the sector was presently "at its best" with a growth rate of 4.6 per cent during the second quarter of last year. He said farmers had laid the foundation for the rollout of the government's ambitious food security programme to provide subsidised foodgrains to 67 per cent of the population.

***Rain augurs well for standing wheat crop: experts***

## Move to popularise rearing of Bargur cattle

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ERODE, February 15, 2014 - In the wake of the recent exhibition of Bargur cattle, organised by the Veterinary Department in the district recently, scientists have recommended popularisation of this breed by showcasing higher income-generation possibilities.

The indigenous breed, reared on the Bargur hills, find their own food, and do not require sheds. Owing to the low cost of rearing, cost of production per litre of milk and meat is lower than that of exotic breeds.

Also, the feed conversion ratio to milk and meat is superior, said A. Kirubakaran, Assistant Professor, Veterinary University Training and Research Centre, Erode. Superior productivity, and higher disease resistance capacity are the other advantages, he added, saying that no genetic abnormality has been identified till date among this breed of cattle.

The native breed was highly adaptable to our environment compared to exotic breeds.

While native breeds do not face any problems up to seventh calving, the exotic breeds start developing complications after their third calving, Mr. Kirubakaran said.

Termed 'Semmarai' in Tamil since the horn, eyes, and muzzle are light red in colour, this breed of cattle, with typical brown colour and white patches, survive under zero-input conditions.

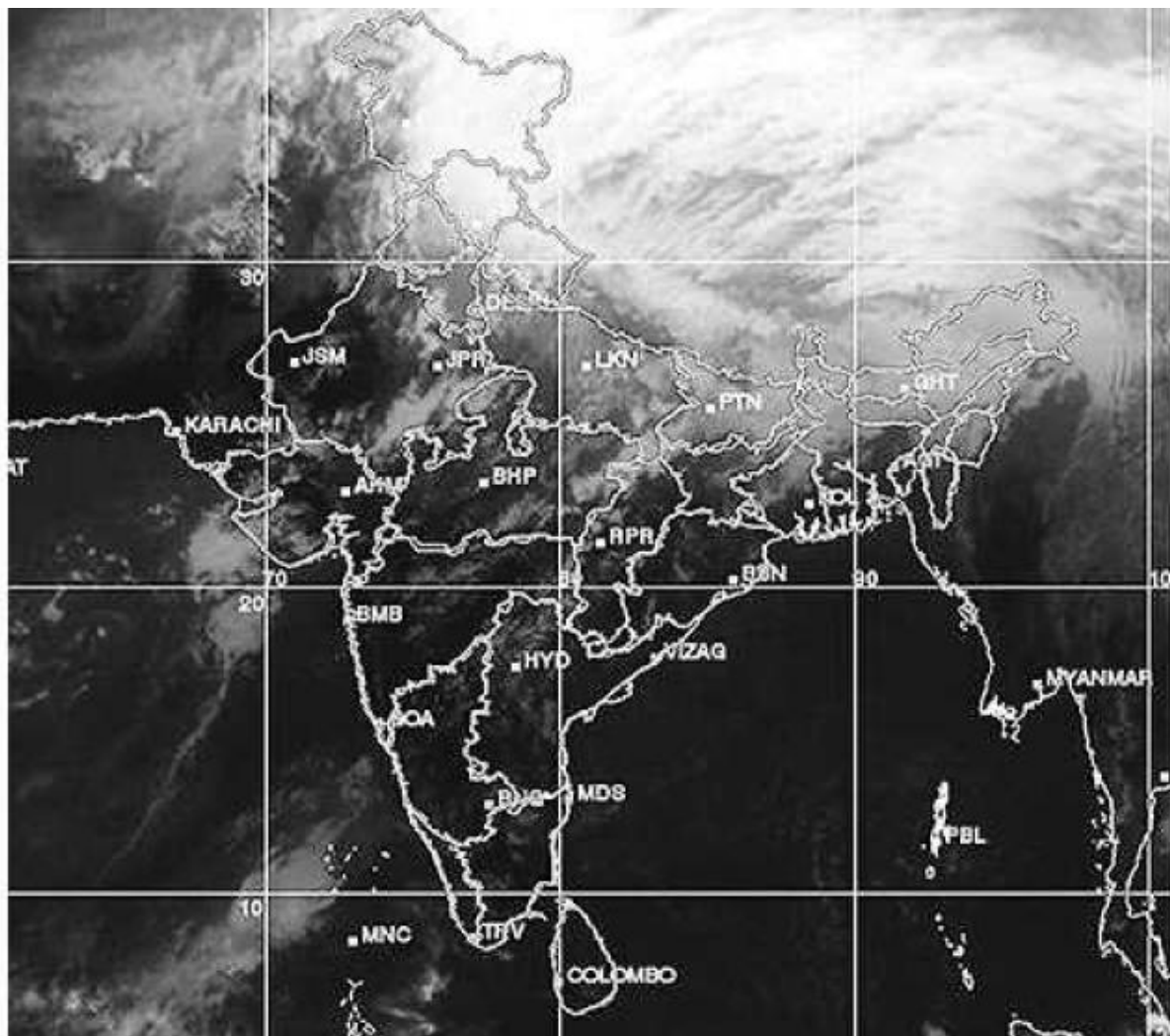
The dung of the native breed contain more microbes and acts as natural fertilizer to soil. The milk-yielding capacity of the Bargur breed may not be as much as the yield of exotic breeds, but farmers on the hills have traditionally been rearing the cattle in large numbers as there was no need for them to spend on fodder, Regional Joint Director of Animal Husbandry Department P. Jayaraman said. The hooves of this breed were naturally strong and did not require horseshoes, he said.

Despite its compact size, Bargur ox is sought after for drawing carts and ploughing fields. Farmers buy this cattle breed in large numbers at the annual shandy in Pudupalayam in Anthiyur block, Mr. Jayaraman said.

Popularisation of the Bargur cattle is expected to be a natural course as the State Animal Husbandry Minister T.K.M. Chinnaiah has assured to explore scope for starting a research centre for the indigenous breed.

## Weather

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INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on February 14.


# Weather

Chennai - INDIA






Today's Weather

**Saturday, Feb 15**  
 Clear  
 Max 29° | Min 23°  
 Rain: 0  
 Humidity: 70  
 Wind: normal  
 Sunrise: 06:32  
 Sunset: 06:14  
 Barometer: 1010

Tomorrow's Forecast

 **Sunday, Feb 16**  
 Sunny  
 Max 30° | Min 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday Feb 17	Tuesday Feb 18	Wednesday Feb 19	Thursday Feb 20	Friday Feb 21
				
31°   21° Partly Cloudy	31°   21° Partly Cloudy	26°   24° Overcast	25°   24° Cloudy	25°   23° Cloudy

THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Compensation funds released for farmers

NOIDA: The Noida Authority has provided Rs 243.52 crore to the [Gautam Budh Nagar](#) district administration towards distributing extra compensation for land acquired from farmers. The amount had been sanctioned in a board meeting held last November.

The sum granted is in accordance with the [Allahabad High Court](#) order (Oct 2011) that had directed a 64.7% additional compensation to farmers whose land had been acquired between March 2002-09.

## Early British farmers preferred dairy foods

LONDON: Archaeologists and chemists tracing ancient [British diets](#) have found that more than 99% of the earliest farmer's [cooking pots](#) lacked sea food residues.

Studies of old rubbish dumps and dirty dishes have revealed that, 6,000 years ago, ancient Britons gave up their passion for fish to begin a love affair with milk. The change by

ancestors from hunter-gathers to [farmers](#) is one of the most intensively researched aspects of archaeology.

Now a large-scale investigation of British archaeological sites dating from around 4,600BC to 1,400AD by the University of Bristol and Cardiff University has examined millions of fragments of bone and analysed over 1,000 cooking pots.

Viewed together the findings show that early British hunters feasted on venison and wild boar and ate large quantities of sea food, including seals and shellfish.

With the introduction of domestic animals some 6,000 years ago they quickly gave up wild food and fishing was largely abandoned, and people adopted a new diet based around dairy.

Authors said: "Amazingly, it was another 4,000 years before sea food remains appeared in pots again, during the Iron Age, and it was only with the arrival of the Vikings that fish became a significant part of our diet."

The team, led by Professor Richard Evershed of the University of Bristol's School of Chemistry, developed new techniques in an effort to identify fish oils in the pots.

Other clues to ancient diets lie within human bones themselves, explored by the Cardiff group led by Dr Jacqui Mulville.

The sea passes on a unique chemical signature to the skeletons of those eating seafood while the early fisher folk possessed this signature it was lacking in the later farmers.

Lead author of the study Dr Lucy Cramp said: "The absence of lipid residues of marine foods in hundreds of cooking pots is really significant. It certainly stacks up with the skeletal isotope evidence to provide a clear picture that seafood was of little importance in the diets of the Neolithic farmers of the region".

## THE HINDU Business Line

### North by west

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Heading for greener pasture Harvesters and combines from Patiala in Punjab are seen heading towards Somnath in Gujarat to harvest the wheat crop in the State. Wheat harvesting is set to begin in Gujarat in a couple of weeks. These harvesters owned by farmers and individuals are rented out during the harvesting period. Kamal Narang



# Marine farmers urged to take up rearing of special fish

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**Kochi, February 14:** The Marine Products Exports Development Authority (MPEDA) has taken steps to encourage fish farmers to take up farming of a special fish variety Nile Tilapia that could fetch better returns.

Nile Tilapia is fast growing and weighs 300-350 gm in four months. The production cost of this variety is low compared with other species of fish and it commands an average price of Rs. 150-200 a kg.

Tilapia is the second most important group of farmed fish after carp and widely grown of any farmed fish. It is

farmed in at least 85 countries with most imports coming from Asia and Latin America. According to the National Fisheries Institute, tilapia now ranks fourth on its top 10 list of the most consumed fish and seafood in the US.

M Shaji, Deputy Director, Regional Centre (Aqua Culture), MPEDA, said that Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture, the R&D wing of MPEDA, is producing quality infants of Nile Tilapia at its project in Vijayawada by adopting technology from World Fish Centre, Malaysia. The Kerala Fisheries Department has recently issued an order facilitating permission for farming of Nile Tilapia.

Kerala could look forward in rearing this special fish variety, as it would generate an annual revenue of Rs. 700 crore from 12,000 hectare farms, he claimed.

According to him, Andhra Pradesh had over the last three years succeeded in tilapia culture adopting the methods developed by World Fish Centre. This can be emulated in Kerala, he said adding that select areas in the State especially in Ernakulam and Alappuzha had already started farming Nile tilapia by procuring seeds from RGCA.

## Rubber meet to analyse, discuss woes of industry

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**Kottayam, February 14:** The first meeting of the 'India Rubber meet- 2014' to be held at Kochi during February 20-21 will go a long way in analysing various problems of the Indian rubber industry.

It has been a long felt need of all stakeholders in the Indian rubber industry to have a common platform to exchange their views and discuss all issues relating to both producing and consuming sections.

Over 50,000 products are now made out of rubber. Value-addition, consumption and marketing in rubber undergo many changes.

Product manufacturers, dealers and growers should be aware of the changes taking place which will have a direct bearing on development and upgradation.

Along with technological advancement, all sections should be posted with up-to-date information for their progress and development.

"Indian rubber: New horizons" will be the theme of the meet. Vikram Srikant Kirloskar, President of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, will inaugurate the meet.

Global economic scene, global rubber scenario, Chinese rubber sector, developments in artificial rubber, new trends in automobile and tyre industries are subjects which will be discussed and based on this, papers will be presented followed by panel discussions.

## Sugar continues to rally

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### **Mumbai, February 14:** SUGAR EXTENDS GAIN

Sugar prices extended their gains for the second day. Mills sold at Rs. 20-30 higher, lifting prices in the physical markets on Friday. Maharashtra mills sold one rake (about 27,000 bags) of small grade to buyers from the East. Arrivals at the Vashi market were around 58-60 truckloads (each 100 bags), while local dispatches were higher at 57-58 loads. On Thursday evening 18-20 mills offered tenders and sold 48,000-50,000 bags at Rs. 2,550-2,650 (Rs. 2,530- Rs. 2,630) for S-grade and Rs. 2,680-2,850 (Rs. 2,650-2,830) for M-grade. On National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, March-14 closed higher at Rs. 3 to Rs. 2,772 (Rs. 2,769) and April-14 at Rs. 2,810 (Rs. 2,809). Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs. 2,700-2,822 (Rs. 2,700-2,802) and M-grade was Rs. 2,812- 2,972 (Rs. 2,800-2,962). Our Correspondent

## Traders seek Rs. 171/kg for rubber

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**Kottayam, February 14:** Domestic rubber prices firmed up further on Friday. On the spot, prices gathered momentum in the absence of sellers as most traders were unwilling to sell below Rs. 171 a kg for RSS 4.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs. 150 (Rs. 148), according to traders. The grade finished firm at Rs. 149 (Rs. 147) and Rs. 146 (Rs. 144) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers.

February futures increased to Rs. 149.51 (Rs. 147.63), March to Rs. 152.95 (Rs. 150.91), April to Rs. 157.21 (Rs. 155.60), May to Rs. 159.99 (Rs. 158.20) and June to Rs. 161.90 (Rs. 160.30) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. February futures closed at ¥220.0 (Rs. 134.11) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

The spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4: 150(148) RSS-5: 148 (145.50) Ungraded: 146 (144) ISNR 20: 146 (145) and Latex 60%: 120.50 (119.50).

## Foodgrain output projected at new high

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**New Delhi, February 14:** The country is set to witness a new record in foodgrain output this year on higher acreages aided by well spread and timely monsoon. The latest estimates released by the Agriculture Ministry point to a record foodgrain production of 263.20 million tonnes, an increase of 2.36 per cent over last year's final output of 257.13 mt.

Higher soil moisture coupled with comfortable water levels in reservoirs had led to record planting of winter or rabi crops boosting record harvest prospects. The bumper foodgrain harvest is seen lifting farm sector growth rate to around 4.6 per cent this fiscal, more than double than last year's 1.9 per cent.

The production of rice, wheat, maize and pulses, such as tur and gram, are likely to rise to a new record this year. Rice production is pegged at 106.19 million tonnes, while output of wheat – a key winter crop that has been planted on a record acreage of 31.53 million hectares – is projected to touch 95.60 mt.

### **Record output**

Besides raising prospects for higher exports, the record output is also expected to aid the softening trend in inflation. Wholesale inflation eased to an eight-month low of 5.05 per

cent for January on decline in food prices, mainly vegetables. Retail inflation also touched a two-year low of 8.79 per cent in January.

The Government has forecast tur output to touch 3.34 mt, higher than last year's 3.02 mt. Production of gram or chana is projected to hit a new high of 9.79 mt against the previous high of 8.83 mt. The output of urad is projected to decline about 16 per cent to 1.59 mt, over last year's 1.90 mt, while that of moong is projected to reduce marginally to 1.28 mt against 1.19 mt.

Production of oilseeds – mainly groundnut is set to double to 9.14 mt over last year's 4.69 mt. The output of rapeseed-mustard -- another key oilseed is also set to increase marginally to 8.25 mt over last year's 8.20 mt. However, soyabean output has seen a decline to 12.44 mt against last year's 14.66 mt, while castor seed production is also projected to decline to 1.64 mt against last year's 1.96 mt.

The rising foodgrain output in the recent years has helped India emerge as the largest exporter of rice, while wheat shipments have also gained momentum. With the Government announcing incentive for raw sugar exports this week, shipments of the sweetener are also expected to gain momentum.

## THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

### Organic Touch To CM'S Birthday Fete

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The exhibition aims to encourage production of indigenous trees like coconuts | Martin Louis

Several varieties of coconut, brinjal, beans and spinach grabbed many eyeballs at the Chennai Corporation's garden produce exhibition, which was inaugurated on Friday on the YMCA grounds.

The highlight of the event was the wide variety of fruits and vegetables that has been produced without the use of fertilizers or chemicals. According to officials, the exhibition will also be a platform for the Corporation's scheme to distribute over 66,000 coconut saplings to gardeners in the city, as part of Chief Minister J Jayalithaa's birthday celebrations.

The exhibition, which has been organised by the Park Department officials in association with the Tiruvallur Agriculture Department, will be inspected on Saturday and the exhibits will be selected for prizes, said officials.

While the inaugural day had only a few exhibits, the highlight was the different methods and fertilizers used by the gardeners.

Vijay Kumar, an official of the Agriculture Department, speaking to CE said that the aim of the exhibition was to encourage the production of indigenous varieties of trees like coconut. He said, "Trees like coconut are easy to plant and maintain and also are adaptable to garden environment. They are a feasible option for those having home gardens."

Venkatesh, a gardener who had exhibited his produce, said that there were some varieties of coconut that could be grown easily on a terrace. The exhibition's main aim is to propagate vegetable growing in gardens and planting of coconut trees to increase the green cover from the present five per cent to 25 per cent in the city.

"The exhibition on Saturday will have more products. We have tied up with organisations and cooperatives to create awareness about natural fertilizers and organic manure suitable for gardens" said Vijay Kumar.

## Business Standard

# Palm oil imports fall to lowest in 5 months

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India's [palm oil imports](#) in January fell to their lowest since September, data from the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) showed on Friday, largely due to a seasonal drop in demand for the tropical oil that solidifies in winter.

Lower purchases by the world's top buyer could put pressure on palm oil prices and dent a recovery from a more than 35 per cent slump seen over the two years ended 2012. The benchmark Malaysian rates rose a slight 9 percent last year.

Palm oil imports in January dropped 35.7 percent to 555,446 tonnes on month, the data showed, in line with expectations.

"Imports dropped in the peak winter month as the tropical oil has a low freezing point with higher processing costs," said Sandeep Bajoria, chief executive of Mumbai-based Sunvin Group.

Imports of crude palm oil fell by 51 per cent from a month ago to 337,418 tonnes, but imports of the refined variant rose 27 per cent to 208,231 tonnes.

The cost of importing refined palm oil was lower than that for the crude variant due to top producer Indonesia's duty structure, with the average price of refined palmolein at \$830 per tonne versus \$837 for crude palm oil, the SEA data showed.

Traders said imports of refined palm oil rose as most of the volumes were booked in early January, before India hiked its import duty on the product.

They also said a year ago, cheaper prices kept palm oil imports relatively higher at 893,313 tonnes.

Concerns of a duty hike and poor local supplies had pushed India's vegetable oil imports to

an 11-month high in December.

On January 9, India raised the duty on refined palm oil to protect the interests of local oilseeds farmers and refiners against cheaper imports from southeast Asian producing nations.

India buys palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, which together account for almost all of the world's palm oil supply.

Palm oil makes up 80 per cent of India's total vegetable oil imports. The country meets around 60 per cent of its annual vegetable oil needs, which average 17 million to 18 million tonnes, through overseas purchases.

India's January soyoil imports rose as demand firmed during the wedding season and local supplies dwindled due to damage to the soybean crop from rains at the start of harvest in October.

Soybeans are crushed to produce edible oils and soymeal.

Import of soyoil rose more than three times from a month ago to 174,236 tonnes in January, the data showed. India imports small quantities of soyoil from South America.

## Tea prices drop over poor grade

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Average [tea prices](#) in India, the world's second-biggest producer, fell at this week's auction as buyers sought hefty discount for [poor grade leaf](#).

The CTC (crush-tear-curl) grade leaf was sold at Rs 115.63 (\$1.85) per kg this week, down 3.8 per cent from the previous auction, while prices of the dust grade edged up 1 per cent to Rs 118.12 per kg.

"This week demand was good but buyers were seeking season-end supplies at lower prices," said a Kolkata-based dealer.

The highest price for top Kenyan tea slipped to \$4.13 per kg at this week's auction from \$4.41 per kg last week, [Africa Tea Brokers](#) (ATB) said on Wednesday.

India's tea production in 2013 rose by 6.5 per cent from a year earlier to a record 1,200 million kg, the Indian Tea Association said, as small growers in the north-eastern part of the country plucked more leaves.

## Refined oil imports rise on inverse duty structure

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[Refined oil](#) imports jumped 58 per cent in the first quarter of the [oil year](#) (November – October) due to inverse duty structure levied by exporting countries including Malaysia and Indonesia. India meets around 55 per cent of around 16.5 million tonnes of its annual consumption through imports.

Import of refined oil was reported at 580,333 tonnes in the first quarter of the current oil year as compared to 367,054 tonnes in the corresponding period last year.

**ALSO READ: [Edible oil prices ease due to higher production expectations](#)**

Import of refined, bleached and diodized (RBD) palmolein increased to 208,000 tonnes in January 2014 compared to 164,000 tonnes in December 2013, while crude palm oil ([CPO](#)) import has fallen to 340,000 tonnes from 692,000 tonnes in previous month due to [RBD palmolein](#) (refined oil) working out to cheaper by \$15-20 per tonne than CPO, the raw material.

Before the inverted export duty imposed by Indonesia in October 2011, RBD palmolein used to be sold at least \$60-80 per tonne higher than CPO which was giving some comfort level to Indian refiners to import and process CPO. In view of increased import of RBD palmolein in last two years, capacity utilization of domestic refiners reduced from 55-60 per cent to 30 - 35 per cent and many units closed down or on a verge of closure due to continuous disparity in processing of CPO, said B V Mehta, executive director of the [Solvent Extractors' Association](#).

## Potato falls for third day on higher supply

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Continuing its losing streak for the third straight day, [potato](#) futures declined 0.24 per cent to Rs 1,157.30 per quintal today as speculators offloaded positions due to higher supplies from producing regions.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato for delivery in April declined by Rs 2.80, or 0.24 per cent, to Rs 1,157.30 per quintal in a business turnover of 45 lots.

The March contract shed Rs 2.30, or 0.21 per cent, to Rs 1,115.50 per quintal in 247 lots.

Market analysts said offloading of positions by speculators, driven by higher supplies in mandies from producing regions, mainly kept pressure on potato prices to surrendered ground at futures trade.

## Chana up 0.5% on rising demand

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Amid rising domestic demand, [chana](#) prices rose for the third-straight day by adding 0.51 per cent to Rs 2,981 per quintal in futures trade today.

Reports of lower estimate of output also influenced chana prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in February increased by Rs 15, or 0.51 per cent, to Rs 2,981 per quintal with an open interest of 18,510 lots.

The April contract added Rs 8, or 0.26 per cent, to Rs 3,062 per quintal in 92,020 lots.

Analysts attributed the continued rise in chana futures to rising demand at spot market and fall in arrivals from producing regions.

# Refined soya oil up 1% as demand rises

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Supported by rising demand in the spot market, refined [soya oil](#) remained higher for the second day and prices added 0.95 per cent to Rs 694.50 per 10 kg in futures market today.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, refined soya oil for delivery in March added Rs 6.55, or 0.95 per cent, to Rs 694.50 per 10 kg with an open interest of 99,410 lots.

The February contract gained Rs 5.85, or 0.85 per cent, to Rs 697 per 10 kg in 7,940 lots.

Market analysts said pick-up in demand in the spot market driven by ongoing wedding season mainly helped refined soya oil prices to rise for the second day at futures trade.

# Crude palm oil extend gains on strong demand

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[Crude palm oil](#) extended gains for the second straight day with [prices](#) rising 1.40% to Rs 563.80 per 10 kg in futures trade today after speculators created positions amid strong demand in the spot markets.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), crude palm oil for delivery in March shot up by Rs 7.80, or 1.40%, to Rs 563.80 per 10 kg in a business turnover of 428 lots.

Similarly, oil for delivery in February moved up by Rs 7.50, or 1.35%, to Rs 562 per 10 kg in 248 lots.

Analysts said speculators enlarged positions on the back of strong demand in the spot market against limited supplies from producing regions which mainly kept crude palm oil prices higher at futures trade.

# Cardamom gains 0.9% on rising demand

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[Cardamom prices](#) rose 0.89% to Rs 700 per kg in futures trading today as speculators enlarged positions on a firm trend at spot market.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in February rose Rs 6.20, or 0.89%, to Rs 700 per kg in a business turnover of just one lot.

Likewise, spice for delivery in March edged higher by Rs 2, or 0.25%, to Rs 801 per kg in 231 lots.

Market analysts said rising demand in the spot markets and a firming trend at producing belts led to rise in cardamom prices at futures trade.

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