

Pongal sizzles on campus

MADURAI, January 11, 2014:



“There are three interesting movies being shown on television on Pongal. I am yet to decide on which one to watch,” says R. Meera, a Class VII student.

Pongal celebrations, which meant get-together of family members, good cheer and bonhomie in the community is fast being replaced with television programmes and movie releases with convenience taking precedence over tradition. Hence it was a pleasant surprise to see some of the schools and colleges taking the mantle of guardians of Tamil traditions.

SARIS AND SMILES: Students of Sentamizh College celebrating Pongal on Friday.— Photo: G. Moorthy

On Friday, many schools and colleges set the festival mood in motion by making sweet Pongal and ‘Ven Pongal’ in pots.

Students from Sivakasi Nadars Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Ellis Nagar came together with the faculty to celebrate the festival. Both the varieties of Pongal were cooked in colourful pots placed over wood fire. The cooked Pongal was served to the students and was also taken to orphanages and old age homes. “Many city children don’t realise the significance of traditional practices. We are trying to make them aware of those aspects and in the process inculcate the importance of sharing,” says Principal V. Devasena.

The students said looked forward to Pongal celebrations every year. “We bring the ingredients from home. Students from many classes get to interact with each other and it’s lot of fun,” said J. Priya Dharsinee of Class 10.

Saris and dhotis

Bright saris and dhotis with silk shirts were donned by students of Sentamizh College who celebrated Pongal on Friday.

For the third consecutive year, Madura College scheduled the day-long festivities for Saturday. “A traditional festival such as this will wean youngsters away from their electronic gadgets. Pongal is all about our rich tradition and joining together for celebration,” explains Principal R. Murali.

The college plans to conduct traditional games and folk performances such as ‘karagattam,’ ‘oyilattam,’ ‘thappattam,’ ‘mayilattam’ and ‘silambattam’ during its Pongal celebrations.

Many schools had cultural programmes lined up with folk dances and traditional performances put up by students. Bethsan Special School at Sikkandarchavadi conducted traditional games. The school was transformed to resemble a rural village, decorated cow and the works.

“Even in other places where such games are held, these children often don’t get an opportunity to participate. So we organised a host of games for them. And they participated in them enthusiastically,” said school coordinator A. Jeyapal.

Bullock cart, pony races for Pongal

The Madras High Court Bench here has permitted the conduct of bullock cart and pony races in Thanjavur district during Pongal.

Petition

Disposing of a writ petition filed by one Meignanam of Peravurani in Thanjavur district, a Division Bench comprising Justices R. Sudhakar and V.M. Velumani permitted conduct of bullock cart and pony races on January 17 and 18. Mr. Meignanam had claimed in his petition that every year the races were conducted during Pongal, but this year the Thanjavur Collector and the police had declined permission.

The government advocate submitted that the road where the petitioner requests for grant of permission was under repair and thus not conducive for conducting the races, the reason why officials declined permission, he said.

In their order, the judges directed the authorities to grant permission for the races on an alternative route.

Laying conditions for the races, the judges said the bullocks and ponies certified fit by the veterinary doctors for taking part in the races should not be ill-treated, both the races should be conducted in a zone specified by the police, within a time limit the organisers should take safety measures for the public and intimate the animal welfare board for supervision.

Violation

If there is any breach or violation of the conditions, the authorities were at liberty to take action, including stopping of the race, the judges observed in their order.

Programme to popularise pulses cultivation

TIRUCHI, January 11, 2014:

As part of an initiative to popularise pulse varieties that mature in a synchronised manner facilitating mechanical harvesting, a training programme for Agriculture Department officials was organised at the Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute, Kumulur, this week.

Assistant directors of agriculture and agriculture officers of the district underwent the training organised under the National Agricultural Development Programme. The participants would promote the varieties among farmers.

K.Ramaswamy, Dean of the institute, said there was a need to increased pulses production in Tamil Nadu to meet the growing demand. Farmers hesitate to raise pulses as harvesting the crop is laborious and time consuming. To overcome the problem, the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has taken up an initiative to popularise synchronised maturing pulse varieties where all the pods mature at the same time, facilitating harvesting using machines.

The university has released synchronised maturing varieties such as TNAU black gram CO6, TNAU black gram Vamban 6, CO (GG) 8 green gram and CO (RG) 7 red gram, he said. Guru Raj Singh, Joint Director of Agriculture, said farmers could raise the synchronised maturing pulse varieties adopting improved technologies such as seed treatment, integrated weed management, supplemental irrigation, and harvest the crop with harvester for getting better income.

G.Kathiresan, Professor and Head, Department of Agricultural Sciences, said the TNAU has introduced a nutrient mixture for pulse foliar spraying called “Pulse Wonder” to increase yield.

S.Somasundaram, Assistant Professor (Agronomy), and B.Sudhakar, Assistant Professor, co- principal investigators of the project in the district, said demonstrations of mechanised cultivation of synchronised maturing pulse varieties will be organised in farmers’ fields and quality seeds will be supplied to the farmers.

For varieties that mature in a synchronised manner

Farmers briefed on integrated rearing of fish and chicken

THANJAVUR, January 11, 2014



double bonanza:A view of the integrated rearing system at Aduthurai .— Photo: B.Velankanni Raj

A demonstration on integrated rearing of fish and chicken was organised for the benefit of farmers at Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute (TRRI) at Aduthurai near Kumbakonam as part of the Regional Agriculture Festival on Friday.

According to scientists, chicken could be reared in a nest with a perforated base made of bamboos set upon an eight cent fish pond.

Excreta of chicken falling into the pond through gaps in the perforated base become the feed for fish.

While 40 chickens are reared in the nest of 10x12 feet size, 320 fishlings have been let into the pond. Scientists of TRRI said farmers could get Rs. 72,400 a year by rearing chicken and fish through the model. They would have to incur an expense of Rs. 30,000 a year.

Crop damage by animals makes headlines at council meeting

TIRUCHI, January 11, 2014

Officials urged to drill bore wells in forest areas for animals



Extensive damage caused to crops by wild boars, oxen, and monkeys, poor drinking water supply, and lack of connection to overhead tanks under the Cauvery combined drinking water supply scheme were the major grievances voiced by councillors at the district panchayat meeting held here on Friday. T.Rajathi, president, district panchayat, who presided over the meeting, also endorsed the councillors' demand

Animal trouble:T.Rajathi, president, district panchayat council, at the council meeting in Tiruchi on Friday.—
Photo:M.Moorthy

for prompt action for augmenting water supply urging forest department officials to drill bore wells for deer and other animals in and around the forest areas in Thuraiyur.

Initiating a discussion on the damage caused to the crops by animals in villages close to the forest areas, C.Pazhanisamy from Vaiyampatt said that wild boars caused extensive damage to crops in Mugavanur, Kumaravadi and Ponnambalampatti village panchayats. M.R.Rajmohan from Marungapuri ward said that monkey menace was rampant in Maniyamkurichi village panchayat where coconut plantations and paddy are damaged by the simians. Mookan of Manachanallur expressed surprise over the monkey menace in the fields in Tiruvellarai, a village quite far off from the forest .

Mr.Pazhanisamy, Mr.Rajmohan, K.P.T.Azhagarsamy of North Marungapuri, Pon.Vijaya of Thuraiyur and R.Sulochana of Musiri pleaded for augmenting water supply. Mr.Pazhanisamy said that the old overhead tank in Therkku Ammapatti village in Kumaravadi panchayat should be demolished and demanded water connectivity for the newly-built tank in Krishnarayapuram.

K.Thangavel from Thottiyam pleaded for immediate construction of overhead tanks sanctioned for five areas – Gandhi Nagar, Annai Sathya Nagar, Kangambal Samuthiram, Sriram Samuthiram, and Venkadanatham villages. Mr.Rajmohan wanted connectivity for water to the overhead tanks in Karumalai village and Kadaikonpatti village. A.N.Swaminathan, vice president, pleaded for expeditious construction of overhead tank at Vengur village near Tiruverumbur.

Two councillors pleaded for laying a road inside the forest to minimise distance between two villages. Mr.Rajmohan pointed out that the distance between the villages of Adaikampatti and Marungapuri, through the forest, was just 1.5 km but villagers have to travel a distance of 9 km via Thuvarankurichi, Yagapuram, and Kallupatti.

Mr. Pazhanisamy wanted a similar short link between Oonaiyur and A. Pudupatti. Enthusiastic over the presence of officials and their prompt replies, Mr.Thangavel pleaded for executing a work on setting up a 33-kv capacity

sub-station in Elurpatti for which land had been donated to the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation.

Imposition of fines by squads draws farmers' wrath

NAGAPATTINAM:

Fines slapped on farmers of coastal hamlets engaged in horticultural cultivation using domestic connections

The imposition of fines by ex-servicemen squads on households using domestic power for horticultural purposes drew ire from farmers led by Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam near Velankanni on Friday. Rallying behind the farmers by staging a road blockade, the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-affiliated farmers' wing alleged 'highhandedness' by the electricity department, and dubbed the move anti-farmers.

The special squads constituted by ex-servicemen to detect power thefts have slapped fines on farmers of coastal hamlets engaged in horticultural cultivation using domestic connections.

Allegations of seizures of meters and imposition of penalties ranging between Rs.10,000 and Rs.15,000 were made by villagers of Pradhanaramapuram, Kameshwaram, Vizhandamaavadi, and Vettaikaraniruppu along Velankanni-Vedaranyam road. The issue was raised at the farmers' grievance meeting recently.

According to V. Subramanyam, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, "They are marginal farmers, who could never be able to afford a commercial connection. They are subject to harassment by way of exorbitant fines." The domestic tariff per unit is Rs. 1 per unit while the commercial tariff is Rs. 5.30 per unit.

"Use of domestic connection for captive garden cultivation is permitted. However, extension of the connection to motor pumps across fields, and cutting across roads to irrigate fields is prohibited," says an Assistant Engineer,

Tangedco, on conditions of anonymity. “They fall under commercial use and require separate connection.” Besides, these are exclusive ex-servicemen squads and do not include staff of the electricity board.

“They come under the police department and are directly appointed by the State government with consolidated pay. We have nothing to do with them,” says the AE.

When contacted, Collector T. Munusamy said while the farmers wanted to use domestic service for horticultural crops, that would no be viable as per rules.

“I will hold joint talks with farmers and EB officials, and look for an amicable way,” Mr. Munusamy told *The Hindu* .

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- *'Exclusive ex-servicemen squads do not include staff of the electricity board'*
 - *Will hold talks with farmers and EB officials, and look for an amicable way: Collector*
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Supermarkets to source agri products from farmers

VIJAYAWADA :

NABARD officials, agricultural scientists, and procurement managers from different multinational companies on Wednesday advised farmers to tap alternative market sources.

The representatives of several supermarket chains — Reliance, More, Spencer, Walmart, and Metro — in the city explained their requirement of agri products to meet their demand from urban dwellers at the one-day interaction with the farmers.

The NABARD, in collaboration with Nestham, an NGO, conducted the programme to bring together corporate companies and farmers in Krishna district.

The representatives advised farmers' clubs in the district to register with them for supply of several agri products — mostly vegetables and fruits. Krishi Vignana Kendra scientist Srilatha and NABARD AGM N. Madhumurthy answered queries of the farmers on various crops and credit access from the government. Nestham director V. Suresh was present.

Farmers seek water release from Handri-Neeva

KURNOOL :

The farmers under the KC canal led by V. Janardhan Reddy urged the authorities to compensate them by pumping water into the KC canal from the Handri-Neeva Lifting station.

Mr. Janardhan Reddy said the government had done an injustice by diverting 5 tmcft of water from quota. The Handri-Neeva has 12 pump sets of which only two are in operation, while the rest are idle due to the constricted canal. If the Handri-Neeva management can spare two pump sets for the KC canal, the problems would be solved, he pointed out.

UAS comes out with plan to double farmers' income

BANGALORE, January 11, 2014

The University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, has drawn up an ambitious plan for the New Year to increase the yield and double the income of farmers through various innovative methods, including formation of village-level crop-based growers' associations in the districts coming under its jurisdiction.

Disclosing this to *The Hindu*, UAS Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda said that the focus was to make farmers self-reliant and also instil a sense of confidence in them to arrest migration to urban areas in search of menial jobs as that may pose a threat to the country's food security besides denting the economy itself.

Underscoring the importance of crop-based growers' associations, he said that this would help farmers in 20 tasks — right from procuring agricultural inputs to marketing and value addition.

Dr. Narayana Gowda, who earlier won the national award of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research for his work as the head of a pilot project of the Union Department of Biotechnology that used such growers' associations, among other interventions, to increase farmers' incomes in 75 villages of Doddaballapur taluk, recalled that it had been possible to increase farmers' incomes three-fold under that project.

Explaining how growers' associations help farmers, he said that they were spending heavily on transportation costs — getting sowing seeds, fertilizer, and taking their produce to market. But when done in a group, the cost of transportation would come down.

Similarly, taking the produce to market in a group would help in bargaining for better prices. Also, the groups would help share experience and knowledge, he said.

He pointed out that the formation of a jackfruit growers' association in Tubagere hobli of Doddaballapur taluk had led to farmers getting remunerative prices for their produce due to collective marketing.

Such associations would also help create conducive atmosphere in villages, he said. However, the university could only provide a model and motivate the farmers to form such groups, while it is the farmers and development agencies which have to play a crucial role in such a process, he said.

The university has also decided to broad-base its extension activities by involving innovative farmers in not only spreading their own innovations but also creating awareness among fellow farmers about the latest crop patterns, technologies and also facilities being provided by the government. Involving innovative farmers in extension activities would help in effective dissemination of information.

Besides, such innovative farmers would be available round the clock for any assistance as they would be staying in the same or nearby village.

At present, the grassroots extension work was suffering as it was difficult to get people willing to reside in villages to be available to farmers as and when they needed them, he said.

Cattle feed subsidy

KOZHIKODE, January 11, 2014

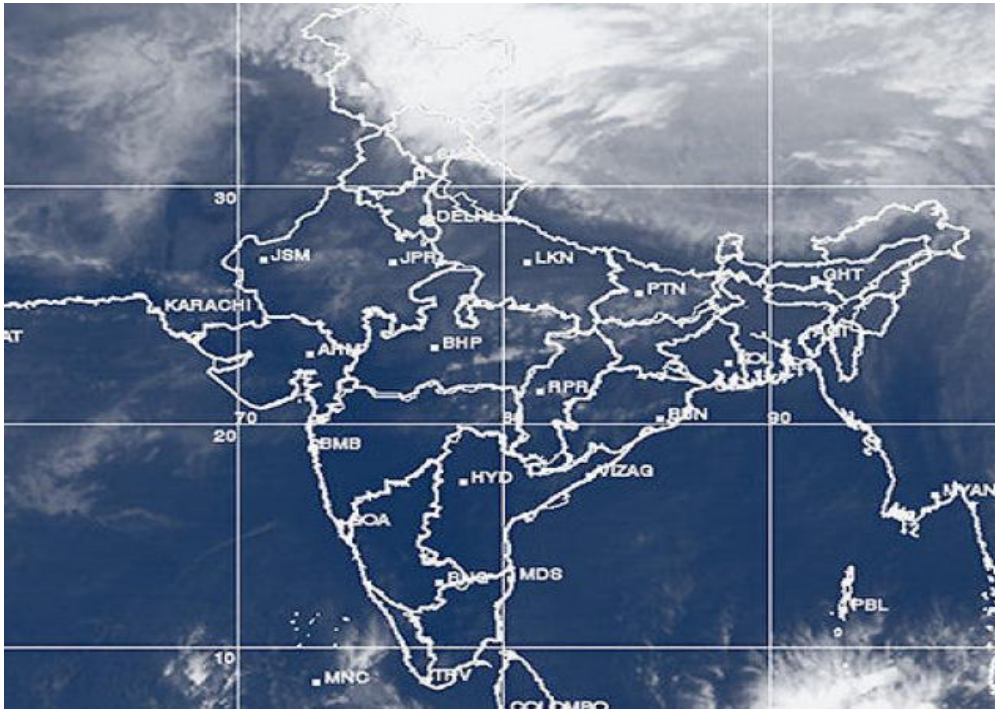
The distribution of cattle feed subsidy announced for dairy farmers has started in the Balussery block panchayat limits. The benefit of the scheme, being implemented at a total cost of Rs.18 lakh, will be available for farmers in seven grama panchayats.

Water level

TIRUNELVELI, January 11, 2014

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Friday stood at 93.80 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 4,660.50 cusecs following 48 mm of rain and no water was discharged from the dam. The water level in Manimuthar dam stood at 81.25 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 4,664 cusecs following 9.20 mm of rain and no water was discharged.

Weather



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

Tea Board to sponsor study tours for small growers

Coonoor, Jan :

A total of 15,566 tea small growers from different parts of the country will benefit from study tours sponsored by the Tea Board. They will also attend field workshops and conventions this year.

“The Board has sanctioned Rs 87.62 lakh for this purpose aiming at providing the much-needed exposure to small growers to improve field productivity and leaf quality.

Focus will be laid on sensitising growers towards safe and optimal use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers,” Tea Board member S. Ramu told *Business Line*.

Of this, Rs 37.40 lakh will be spent for conducting 13 study tours and programmes in different places spread over 136 days to benefit 196 growers; Rs 38.63 lakh will be spent on 152 field workshops and 14,070 small growers will benefit.

Tea Board to promote mini, micro tea processing facilities

Kolkata, Jan :

capital subsidy

Improvement drive: A view of fermented tea leaves being transported at a factory. Farmers can avail up to 40 per cent capital subsidy to set up such factories.



Farmers can avail up to 40 per cent capital subsidy to set up such factories through self-help groups, according to the scheme.

Small growers currently sell their produce either to large plantations or bought-leaf-factories.

The factories are viewed with concern due to quality issues.

According to a senior Tea Board official, the project had earlier been rolled out as part of the “Quality upgradation and Product Development” campaign. To provide focus to implementation of the project, it will now be spearheaded by the newly-formed Small Tea Growers’ Development Directorate.

“We are awaiting the Planning Commission’s approval for announcement of the Small Growers Development Scheme to be operated by the directorate. Our focus this year will be to promote factory development by small tea growers,” the official told *Business Line*.

Figures available with the Tea Board show that production by small tea growers between April and November 2013 increased by nine per cent to 339 million kg, against 312 mkg during the corresponding period.

Buoyed by the growth in production, a slew of quality improvement initiatives have been taken up and these will be implemented by newly-recruited officers of the Directorate.

“While the development officers will regularly hold workshops and tea conventions to give lessons to teach small tea growers on quality improvement, some of them will be taken to Kenya and Sri Lanka to experience the global practices,” the Tea Board official said.

Copra crushing units shut on poor coconut oil sales

Erode, Jan. :

Coconut oil prices increased, but copra rates fell in Erode markets on Friday.

“The price of coconut oil touched Rs 1,580 for a 15 kg loose pack (Rs 106.50/kg). Only a negligible quantity was sold. More than 90 per cent crushing units in Kangeyam and surrounding areas are closed and no crushing has taken place in the last few days due to the poor sales,” said R.M. Palanisamy, a coconut oil dealer.

Coconut oil price has increased in the international market but there are no buyers. Prices will fluctuate till mid-February and drop drastically, said Palanisamy.

Copra is available at Rs 7,500 a quintal in the open market, but very fine quality is quoted at Rs 8,000. In the regulated markets, copra fetched below Rs 7,500. At the Avalpoondurai Regulated Market Committee, 100 tonnes of copra arrived (2,000 bags) for sale, and only local buyers (from Kangeyam, Madurai, Theni) and from North Tamil Nadu purchased copra.

First quality copra was sold at Rs 7,125-7,425, while second grade was sold at Rs 5,610-7,235.

Spot rubber skids on lack of buyers

Kottayam, Jan.10:

Physical rubber prices were weak on Friday. Traders remained under pressure, following weakness in domestic futures.

Sheet rubber declined to Rs 155 (Rs 156.50) a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, according to the Rubber Board. The grade moved down to Rs 152 (Rs 153.50) as quoted by the dealers. The trend was mixed and the volume low.

January futures weakened to Rs 154.75 (Rs 155.72), February to Rs 156.91 (Rs 158.18), March to Rs 159.30 (Rs 160.61) and April to Rs 162.52 (Rs 164.28) for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) slid to Rs 147.31 (Rs 147.62) at Bangkok. January futures closed at ¥266.0 (Rs 156.96) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates were Rs/kg: RSS-4: 155 (156.50); RSS-5: 146 (148); Ungraded: 144 (144); ISNR 20: 154 (155) and Latex 60%: 133 (133).

Nigerian team interacts with Rubber Board

Kottayam, Jan :

A team of officials and rubber smallholders from Nigeria has arrived in Kerala to visit rubber estates and smallholdings in India besides interacting with the Rubber Board.

The visit is under the Rubber Project of International Rubber Study Group (IRSG) funded by Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) with IRSG as the supervisory body. The team is headed by Timothy Unuigboje, Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN). India is a member State of both CFC and IRSG and Nigeria is a fraternal member state in IRSG.

Lend for buying fishing boats, tech: Anand Sharma to banks

Key to achieving fisheries sector \$10-billion export target



Chennai, Jan. :

If the country has to take advantage of its 8,000-km coastline and 20 lakh sq km of exclusive economic zone, financial institutions should help the fisheries sector in buying vessels and promoting aquaculture, said Commerce Minister Anand Sharma.

“The idea is to create an ecosystem that will encourage farming of shrimps, technology adoption, and promotion of exports,” he said inaugurating the 19th edition of the India International Seafood Show.

Promoting aquaculture: Anand Sharma, Union Commerce Minister, and Leena Nair, Chairman of MPEDA, at the inauguration of the 19th India International Seafood Show 2014 in Chennai on Friday. — Bijoy Ghosh

He also launched a book chronicling the contribution of Marine Products Export Development authority over the last four decades on the occasion.

Accent on aquaculture

Sharma said cluster farming initiatives by the MPEDA in the four Southern States have led to “an exponential growth in production and exports.”

He said furthering the growth shown by these coastal States means loans to establish cold storage facilities for value-addition.

Value-added exports in India’s seafood exports basket are only 17 per cent and they could increase in the wake of higher financing to the seafood processing industry.

Exports in 2014-15 will touch the \$5-billion mark, he said, adding that the target of \$10 billion by 2020 is also achievable.

The chief contributor to exports has been the network of testing laboratories set up by MPEDA to clear residue-free shrimps, a sought-after species in the West.

These quarantines have helped bring in special brood stock, not only the Vannamei shrimp, but also the native Black Tiger variety.

The multiplication centre set up in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, for Black Tiger shrimp is another step aimed at grabbing a higher share in the exports market, he said.

Avertano Furtado, Goa’s Fisheries Minister, said more investments are now being directed towards seafood processing facilities, and aquaculture. He said that Goa, with only 14 seafood processing units, achieved a five per cent increase in value-added seafood exports during 2012-13. They are bound to go up with more investments.

Tamil Nadu exported Rs 3,332 crore worth seafood last fiscal, with 247 exporters and 42 processing units.

It has spent Rs 245 crore in the last two years to support fishermen into deep-sea fishing, especially the tuna, said State Fisheries Minister K.A. Jaypal.

Call to amend MPEDA Act

Chennai, Jan. :

The Seafood Exporters Association of India has sought an amendment to the Marine Product Exports Authority of India Act, 1972, for larger representation of the seafood industry on the board of the authority and widening its role in setting norms for aquaculture in inland and coastal waters. A.J. Tharakan, President, SEAI, who made a pitch for such an amendment to Commerce Minister Anand Sharma at the India International Seafood Show here on Friday, told *Business Line*: “We want the role of MPEDA clearly defined so that we know who calls the shots where. And, a wider role for MPEDA will help better regulate the aquaculture industry.”

The board of MPEDA, comprising 30 members, has only six seafood industry representatives.

Officials from State Governments, three elected members from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and other fisheries-related institutions constitute the majority on the board.

Crop Holiday

Leena Nair, Chairman, MPEDA, told *Business Line*: “The Minister has said it will be looked into. The contours of what has to be strengthened have not emerged. We have to wait.”

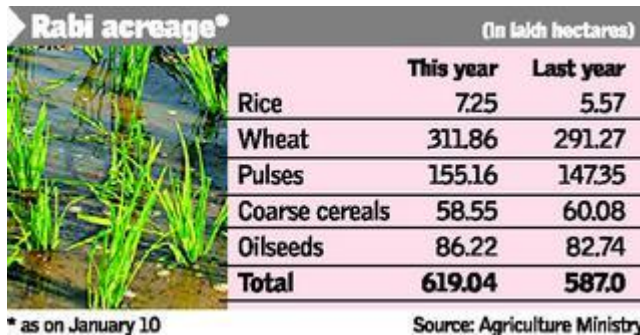
In late November last year, the MPEDA suggested hatcheries in the country suspend operations to prevent the spread of Early Mortality Disease, that causes premature death of shrimp and hits exports.

However, another Union Government body Coastal Aquaculture Authority, set up in 2005, put out a notification on November 27 that saying that it has not given any permission to officers of MPEDA to enter into any hatchery or farm related to the purpose of disease surveillance. It also said any violations could be informed to it.

With such a tussle leading to Government departments working at crossroads, the industry faces a lot of uncertainty, according to seafood industry sources. Addressing the India International Seafood Show here, Tharakan said: “Unfortunately, the fishing industry in the country is spread over five ministries: exports under Commerce; deep sea fishing, aquaculture and fishing research under Agriculture; seafood processing under Food Processing; Coast Guard under the Defence; and coastal fishing and inland water bodies under the jurisdiction of coastal States.”

Asked if such an amendment will see the light of the day, Sharma said: “We will do what is required.”

Record wheat, gram sowing boosts harvest hopes



The table is titled 'Rabi acreage*' and is subtitled '(In lakh hectares)'. It compares 'This year' and 'Last year' for various crops. The crops listed are Rice, Wheat, Pulses, Coarse cereals, and Oilseeds, along with a 'Total'. The data shows a significant increase in wheat and a decrease in pulses. A small photograph of rice plants in a field is positioned to the left of the table. Below the table, there is a note '* as on January 10' and the source 'Source: Agriculture Ministry'.

	This year	Last year
Rice	7.25	5.57
Wheat	311.86	291.27
Pulses	155.16	147.35
Coarse cereals	58.55	60.08
Oilseeds	86.22	82.74
Total	619.04	587.0

* as on January 10
Source: Agriculture Ministry

New Delhi, Jan :

Prospects of a bumper harvest have brightened with rabi planting data trickling in from States pointing to record coverage in wheat and gram (chana).

wheat

Wheat acreage touched a new high of 311.8 lakh hectares (lh) with farmers in Madhya Pradesh planting 11.4 lh more area under the cereal crop.

Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra have seen increase in acreages.

Last season, wheat was planted on 296 lh against 299 lh in 2011-12. Wheat planting will go on till mid-January mainly in Uttar Pradesh where sowing of the cereal crop was pushed back by the delayed start to sugarcane crushing.

Higher storage in major reservoirs and better soil moisture levels boosted rabi plantings.

Total rabi acreage has crossed 619 lh surpassing last year's 587 lakh ha.

pulses

Pulses acreage has also increased.

Till now, 155.16 lh have been covered against 147.35 lh during the corresponding period a year ago.

Gram has been planted on 101.83 lh against 92.68 lh.

The area under oilseeds has increased to 86.22 lh, up from 82.74 lh last year.

mustard

Rapeseed/mustard acreage has been reported at 70.35 lh against last year's 66.22 lh. Total area under rice in the rabi season has also increased to 7.25 lh against 5.57 lh in the corresponding period a year ago. However, the area under coarse cereals continues to trail at 58.55 lh , against 60.08 lh a year ago, mainly on account of lower area under jowar.

At \$283.60/t, Dubai-based Al Ghurair is highest bidder for STC wheat export tender

New Delhi, Jan :

The State Trading Corporation (STC) has received a marginally better response in terms of bids and prices for its 70,000-tonne wheat export tender compared with the previous one.

Eight buyers placed bids for wheat to be exported from Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns in Chennai.

Dubai-based Al Ghurair Group put in the highest bid of \$283.60 a tonne for 25,000 tonnes, followed by Glencore at \$282.69 for 55,000 tonnes.

In the previous tender that opened on Wednesday, STC received seven bids and the highest was \$282.62 a tonne for shipment from Mundra port.

On Friday, all eight bids received for the Chennai tender were higher than the floor price of \$260.

A firm trend in global wheat prices in recent days, coupled with improved buyer response, is likely to prompt the Government to revise the floor price for exports.

India has decided to export about two million tonnes of wheat before the new crop arrives in April.

Total wheat exports from India, including shipments by private players, are estimated at around four million tonnes in the current fiscal.

Wheat has firmed up on concerns of cold snap affecting the crop in the US. The crop data expected from the US may influence prices in the days ahead.

Also, logistics issues that have cropped up with the onset of winter may slow down exports from Russia and Ukraine.

Meanwhile, aggressive buying by countries, such as Egypt and Algeria, has lent support to wheat prices.

Over the past week, Egypt has bought 5.35 lakh tonnes from Ukraine, Russia and France at an average price of \$317 a tonne.

Algeria and Syria have bought five and two lakh tonnes, respectively.

Black Sea wheat, which competes with the Indian variety, is traded around \$305 on free-on-board basis.

Rs 450/quintal rise in turmeric price this week

Erode, Jan. :

Spot turmeric prices have increased by Rs 450 this week and topped Rs 6,000 a quintal.

When sales commenced on January 2, turmeric was sold at Rs 5,960. It has increased slowly to Rs 6,414 on Thursday. Prices of the hybrid variety have increased by Rs 612 in a week's time, according to R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Following the death of a member of the Erode Turmeric Merchants' Association, trading took place only at the regulated market committee. Of the 1,497 bags that arrived, only 361 were sold. However, this week, 24,600 bags arrived for sale and on average 65 per cent was sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety fetched Rs 5,199-5,966 a quintal, the root variety Rs 5,099-5,899.

Of the 1,497 bags that arrived, 316 were sold.

Demand may push cotton to Rs 42,000/candy



Rajkot, Jan. :

Cotton price moved up on the back of strong demand from domestic mills. According to traders, cotton price may touch Rs 42,000/candy level in the next few days.

Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton traded higher by Rs 100 to touch Rs 41,700-41,800/candy of 356 kg. Cotton prices have increased almost Rs 800/candy this week.

Kapas or raw cotton price traded higher by Rs 5-7 to hit Rs 1,010-1,015/20 kg. Gin delivery *kapas* traded at Rs 1,020-1,030/20 kg.

About 50,000-55,000 bales of cotton arrived in Gujarat and 1.85 lakh bales arrived in India. On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, April contracts gained Rs 6 at Rs 1,030 for a *maund* of 20 kg, with an open interest of 13,885 lots.

“Domestic mills’ buying increased and in comparison, supply was short. Cotton gained this week and it may increase further,” traders said.

According to a Rajkot-based cotton broker, farmers are holding on to their produce as they are not willing to sell at lower prices.

Dow Jones reports: Cotton futures ticked up on Friday morning ahead on the ICE Futures US Exchange.

Cotton for March delivery was up 0.7 per cent at 83.41 cents a pound.

Analysts expect federal forecasters to lower US production and raise exports of the fibre, leaving the US with just 2.8 million bales at the end of the marketing year in July. That would be a 6.7 per cent reduction from last month's forecast.

Masur rallies as cold snap hits shipments from Canada



Indore, Jan. :

Cold snap affecting shipments from Canada has resulted in masur prices rallying by Rs 100-200 a quintal this week.

In the local mandis, masur (bold) on Friday ruled at Rs 4,450 a quintal, while masur (Madhya Pradesh) ruled at Rs 3,800-Rs 4,200 a quintal (up Rs 200 from last week).

According to Prakash Vora, a local wholesale pulse trader, as no shipment has been made from Canada, fears of short-supply grip the market driving prices higher, said Vora, adding that prices may come down once the arrival of imported masur resumes.

Moreover, arrival of domestic masur in the local mandis in February is expected to add to the bearish sentiment in the coming days.

Though the production is expected to be lower due to decline in sowing area, availability of cheap imported masur is expected to rein in any uptrend in prices in the coming days, Sanjay Agrawal, another trader, told *Business Line*. Rise in spot masur also lifted its dal in the last one week by Rs 100 with masur (medium) in local mandis on Friday quoted at Rs 5,150-5,250 a quintal, while masur (bold) ruled at Rs 5,400-5,450 a quintal.

Moong ruled firm on strong buying by millers ahead of the *Makar Sankranti* festival, with moong (bold) being quoted at Rs 6,400-6,700 a quintal. Moong (medium) ruled at Rs 5,500-6,000 a quintal. A rise in demand also lifted moong dal in local mandis by Rs 300-400 a quintal in the last one week. Moong dal (medium) ruled at Rs 7,200-7,500 a quintal; moong dal (bold) at Rs 7,600-7,800 a quintal, while moong mongar also ruled at Rs 7,600-7,800 a quintal.

Weak arrival and improved buying support also lifted urad, with urad (bold) ruling at 4,450-4,500, while urad (medium) quoted at Rs 4,000-Rs 4,200 (Rs 3,600-Rs 3,900 last week). Urad dal ruled steady on subdued demand; urad dal (medium) in the local mandis was quoted at Rs 4,900-5,000; urad dal (bold) was quoted at Rs 5,100-5,200; urad mongar ruled at Rs 5,600-5,900.

Pepper loses sting with global cues



Kochi, Jan. :

Pepper prices in futures and spot markets continued to fall on slack demand and selling pressure on Friday. January and February contracts on the National Multi Commodity Exchange and IPSTA dropped.

In tandem with the lower international prices, Indian pepper prices fell, market sources told *Business Line*.

Severe cold in the northern States and cold snap in the US and Canada have slowed down buying activities, they said. However, availability continues to be thin.

Pepper from the southern districts of Kerala is being traded at Rs 480- 490 a kg, while the spice from the high ranges sold for Rs 490-500 a kg.

Tamil Nadu-based inter-State dealers were buying from primary markets and farmers on cash-and-carry basis, they said.

On the NMCE, January and February contracts fell by Rs 85 and Rs 301 a quintal, respectively, to Rs 51,450 and Rs 51,200 a quintal. Turnover increased to 20 tonnes. Net open position declined to 17 tonnes.

On the IPSTA, January and February contracts were unchanged at Rs 49,000 and Rs 47,518 a quintal.

Spot prices fell further by 300 a quintal to Rs 49,000 (ungarbled) and Rs 51,000 (garbled).

Indian export prices remained unchanged at \$8,450 a tonne c&f Europe and \$8,700 tonne c&f for the US.

Rice likely to rule around current levels



Karnal, Jan. :

The rice market is unlikely to see any major change in the next few days. The market may continue to rule around the current levels with marginal fluctuation, said trade experts.

A mixed trend was seen in the rice market with Pusa-1121 varieties rising by Rs 100-200 a quintal, while other aromatic and non-basmati varieties remained unchanged on moderate buying.

Amit Kumar, proprietor of Ginni Rice, told *Business Line* that the uptrend in Pusa-1121 is unjustified as it is not backed by fundamental factors.

Prices of Pusa-1121 varieties increased by Rs 500-700 a quintal over the last 4 days.

Traders see this situation as a temporary phase and expect the market to see a correction in the coming days, he said.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) moved up by Rs 200 to Rs 9,200 a quintal, while Pusa-1121 (sela) improved by Rs 100 to Rs 8,100.

Pure Basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 12,500. Duplicate basmati (steam) was sold at Rs 7,000.

Pusa-1121 (second wand) was quoted at Rs 7,000, Tibar at Rs 6,000, while Dubar at Rs 5,000.

In the non-basmati section, Sharbati (steam) was sold at Rs 5,000, while Sharbati (sela) was quoted at Rs 4,800. Permal (raw) was sold at Rs 2,300; Permal (sela) at Rs 2,350; PR-11 (sela) was sold at Rs 2,900; PR-11 (raw) at Rs 2,800; and PR14 (steam) at Rs 3,200.

Paddy Arrivals

About 8,000 bags of different paddy varieties arrived at the Karnal Grain Market Terminal. About 4,000 bags of Pusa-1121 arrived and were sold for Rs 4,100-4,200; 1,000 bags of Sugandha 999 were sold at Rs 2,600; 2,000 bags of PR at Rs 1,300-1,330; while 1,000 Sharbati bags were sold for Rs 2,200-2,220.

Reuters reports: In other Asian markets, Thai 5 per cent broken grade white rice was offered unchanged from last week at \$420 a tonne.

Vietnam 5 per cent broken rice eased to \$410 to \$415 a tonne, free-on-board basis, from \$415 to \$420 in the last week of December.

Its 25-per cent broken rice was quoted at \$385 a tonne, against a range of \$385 to \$390 on December 25.

Glut situation turns prospects bleak for sugar



Mumbai, Jan :

Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market declined by Rs 10 for S-grade on Friday. Prices have dropped by Rs 40-80 a quintal this month. The medium grade variety ruled unchanged, following steady naka and mill tender rates. Continuous selling by producers and enough stocks in the market kept volumes low.

“There is no positive sign in the near future for the sugar market. Mills are carrying surplus inventories and the production season is in full swing,” a trader said.

Mills have to pay money to farmers for cane, hence are forced to sell even at lower prices. Upcountry and exports demand is also lacking since long, he said. World sugar prices are also not in favour. So, there is sufficient and continuous supply pressure on markets.

Arrivals on the Vashi market were 59-60 truckloads (each 100 bags), while local dispatches were 58-59 loads. On Thursday, 14-15 mills offered tenders and sold 46,000-48,000 bags at Rs 2,620-2,700 (Rs 2,620-2,700) for S-grade and Rs 2,720-2,880 (Rs 2,720-2,880) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs 2,772-2,955 (Rs 2,782-2,965) and M-grade Rs 2,936-3,082 (Rs 2,936-3,082).

Naka delivery rates were: S-grade Rs 2,730-2,830 (Rs 2,730-2,830) and M-grade Rs 2,830-3,000 (Rs 2,830-3,000).

Uttar Pradesh rates were: Mathura Rs 3,260.

Import duty hike fails to heat up edible oils



Mumbai, Jan. :

The edible oils market witnessed a weak trend on Friday despite local refineries raising palmolein rates by Rs 7 for 10 kg, after the Government increased import duty on refined palm oil to 10 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

On the Bombay Commodity Exchange, palmolein rose by Rs 5, rapeseed oil by Rs 2, while soyabean refined oil fell by Rs 2. Groundnut, sunflower and cotton oils ruled steady.

On the domestic futures market, soya oil extended its bearish streak tracking weak overseas palm-soya complex that weighed on physical market. The volume remained thin as traders turned cautious. The rise in import duty could result in demand for crude palm oil rising, benefiting Malaysian exporters, as it charges a lower duty on overseas sales than rival Indonesia. But investors fretted that exports of refined palmolein could be hit hard. The long-term looks bearish as India is a main consumer, said an analyst.

Slack demand pulled down the moral in the spot market despite the Government hiking import duty. Hardly 80-100 tonnes of palmolein were traded in isolation.

Towards the day's close, Liberty was quoted palmolein at Rs 573; super palmolein at Rs 597; super deluxe palmolein at Rs 617; soyabean refined oil at Rs 645; and sunflower refined oil at Rs 700. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 570; soyabean refined oil at Rs 638; and sunflower refined oil at Rs 670. Allana quoted palmolein at Rs 570; soyabean refined oil at Rs 640; and sunflower refined oil at Rs 670.

At Rajkot, groundnut oil was quoted at Rs 1,190 (Rs 1,190) for telia tin and Rs 760 (Rs 760) for loose (10 kg). On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, February contracts closed at Rs 671.50 (Rs 675.60); March ended at Rs 667.20 (Rs 669.85); and April at Rs 666.20 (Rs 669.55).

Vikram Global Commodities (P) Ltd quoted Rs 605/10 kg for Malaysia super palmolein January delivery.

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil February contracts settled lower at MYR 2,499 (MYR 2,522); March at MYR 2,517 (MYR 2,539); and April at MYR 2,528 (MYR 2,550).

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: groundnut oil 780 (780); soya refined oil 638 (640); sunflower exp. ref. 610 (610); sunflower ref. 670 (670); rapeseed ref. oil 730 (728); rapeseed expeller ref. 700 (698); cottonseed ref. oil 605 (605); and palmolein 570 (565).

Business Standard

Mandi Act needs a new recipe

Sporadic and inconsistent reforms in the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act, which determines the prices of fruits and vegetables, are helping neither the cause of farmers nor consumers.

Ever since Congress Vice-President [Rahul Gandhi](#) declared that the solution to containing [food inflation](#) lay in removing fruits and [vegetables](#) from the purview of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee ([APMC](#)) Act, the legislation has been much debated.

Is the [APMC Act](#), which came into being nearly 50 years ago with the aim to protect the interests of farmers and ensure organised trading of agricultural produce, really the reason why people have to shell out more and more for fruits and vegetables?

The states-implemented Act had led to the creation of regulated markets, also called *mandis*. Today, the country has 7,246 such *mandis* each of which caters to an average area of nearly 450 sq km. The *mandis* control almost the entire wholesale trade of agricultural goods. How these *mandis* operate has a huge bearing on the retail prices of fruits, vegetables and other agriculture produce.

Studies show that though only 20 per cent of the over 242 million tonne of fruits and vegetables produced in India is traded through regulated markets, it is this 20 per cent which determines the price of the entire lot. Because of the cartelisation, the 20 per cent of the farmers are forced to sell at very low rates, which then affects the prices for the remaining 80 per cent. So, the *mandis*, as they exist today, serve the interest of neither the farmers nor the consumers.

The APMC Act was first amended in 2003 to bring it in sync with the changing needs of the agriculture processing and food sector. The amendments in the model Act took into account modern concepts like contract farming, promoted gradation and standardisation and dispensed with the licence system. The buyer and the seller in the [mandi](#) both were, until then, required to have a licence to trade.

However, one crucial factor was ignored. The Act continued to allow the states the power to exempt any agriculture commodity brought for sale in the market area from the mandi tax. It is this power that has been, time and again, used by state governments to exercise control over the trade of fruits and vegetables.

Farmers point out that the gap between the wholesale price and the retail price is a whopping 100-150 per cent. "In the last one year, the input cost like the price of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, labour et cetera has gone up 50-60 per cent, but the wholesale price at which the farmer sells to the traders remains more or less the same. As a result, farmers are not very keen on growing vegetables. Only small and marginal farmers, with land holdings of less than four acres, grow vegetables," says Shamsheer Singh, a vegetable farmer from Punjab's Mohali district.

ACTING ON REFORMS	
STATE OF REFORMS IN APMC	STATES
States where reforms have been brought in the APMC Act for direct marketing, contract farming and markets in private/co-op sectors	Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Tripura
States which have introduced APMC reforms only for contract farming	Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh
States which have introduced APMC reforms in direct marketing	Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh
States which have introduced APMC reforms in direct marketing	Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh
States which do not have the APMC Act	Bihar, Kerala, Manipur, Andaman & Nicobar islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli
States where administrative action has been initiated on reforming APMC	Meghalaya, Haryana, J&K, West Bengal, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Puducherry
States where APMC Act already provides for reforms	Tamil Nadu
States which have exempted fruits and vegetables from market fee	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal (Partial)
<i>Source: Report On Food Processing Industry In India by ICRIER</i>	

Punjab is a classic example of how despite successive governments pursuing reforms in the APMC Act, prices of fruits and vegetables continue to soar. Though it is primarily an agriculture-dependent state, Punjab has not amended the APMC Act in its entirety. Farmers here can only sell their produce in government-mandated markets (*mandis*) to licenced middlemen.

The consequence of this is that just like in many other part of the country, the retail price of most vegetables in the state is 100-150 per cent higher than the wholesale price.

Shamsher Singh also alleges that there is cartelisation of traders and commission agents who fix the price of an agricultural produce. As a result, farmers are forced to sell their produce at the price this 'cartel' offers.

Gurbakhsh Singh, another farmer, says, "Farmers with large land holdings are not very keen to grow vegetables because this requires a lot of labour and constant monitoring as compared to wheat and rice. It is the only small farmers who grow vegetables for cash flows." He adds, "In last few years we have seen that fruits and vegetables are not as remunerative as they used to be because of the high input cost. It is the traders or the middleman who make profit."

Traders, meanwhile, blame the huge gap between wholesale and retail prices of vegetables on taxes like the market fee, rural development fee, commission for the *arhityas* (middlemen), besides loading and unloading charges.

Even modern concepts like the 'Kisan Mandi' and 'Apni Mandi' (where farmers can sell their produce directly to consumers) have not been very successful. Here too traders, middlemen and commission agents rule.

"Since most of them are small-time farmers they cannot afford to sit in *mandis* from morning to late evening to sell their produce. They also have to take care of their cattle and work in the field. So they come to the Kisan or Apni Mandi in the morning and sell their produce to the traders at whatever price they offer," says Kulwant Singh, a farmer in one such mandi. Kulwant Singh says he can afford to take time out and be at the mandi through the day because he lives in a joint family and has others at home who can take care of the cattle and the fields in his absence.

Not everybody, however, agrees that APMC is the reason fruits and vegetables are high. "Delisting fruits and vegetables will not cool down prices overnight," says Ajay Vir Jakhar, chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj. "Along with this crucial bit of reform, physical infrastructure of market places also needs to be improved, and research and development in newer and better varieties of fruits and vegetables has to be incentivised."

Jakhar says that China and India started the process of protected agriculture (by creating greenhouses) around the same time. China now has around 2 million hectares of land under protected agriculture, while India has only 26,000 hectares. In greenhouses, the producer can control the yield of the crop by creating ideal conditions. "This shows how we have neglected basic infrastructure for development in agriculture," Jakhar says.

"Along with delisting fruits and vegetables, you also need to ensure seamless and barrier-free movement of perishable commodities, so that the produce from one state can smoothly move into another without a sizeable mark-up in its price," says another expert.

Ramesh Chand, director, National Centre for Agriculture Economics and Policy Research, says that agriculture marketing is a state subject and hence, it is primarily the duty of the state to undertake broad reforms in farm marketing. "There are many facets of amendments to the APMC Act. If those are not brought about comprehensively, prices of fruits and vegetables will not come down," says Chand. "Half-hearted attempts," he adds, "won't serve any purpose."



Industry Must Join Government in Lifting Agricultural Research

Renowned farm scientist M S Swaminathan has said there is no field where the benefit-cost ratio is as high as in agricultural research and development (R&D). This statement is borne out by the success of harnessing agricultural research to boost productivity in basmati rice, cotton and maize. The common factor in the success stories is not just one of technological intervention translating into higher crop yield and farm incomes, but also the role of the private sector—be it seed companies, millers, processors or exporters—in ensuring effective transfer of research knowhow in labs to farmers' fields.

What these examples point to is the need for a totally new public-private-partnership (PPP) framework for agricultural R&D. It could involve the likes of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute partnering with private seed companies for large-scale production and multiplication of publicly-bred material to reach farmers. The PPP approach could further extend to sponsored or joint research collaboration with industry—say, breeding of barley varieties yielding more malt for brewing purposes. All this requires huge investments, making the case for collaboration further compelling.

While the population growth continues, the quantum of land not only remains static, but its availability for agriculture is showing a declining trend with industrial, infrastructural and residential needs. Also, global warming

can cause erratic weather patterns, thereby augmenting the already existing problems of flooding and drought and affecting crop production. Research is of vital necessity, therefore, to guard against both the vagaries of nature and the impact of industrial and urban development. The responsibility of feeding a growing population is not the government's alone, but also of the private sector that has to curb its instinctive focus on profits to allocate more funds to laboratories and field experiments.