

Effective use of farm technologies will augment production, farmers told



In the face of climatic threats and human exploitation of nature, the challenge to agriculture is only increasing day by day. The developments in seed, fertilizer and water technologies has brought about an increase in production at the State-level, but there are notable discrepancies in the increase among crops, said Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University L. Ramasamy here on Saturday.

Addressing farmers at the State-level Farmers' Day meet held at the university, he said the State needed to increase the agricultural production. This would not be possible if new technologies did not reach farmers in arid and rainfed areas. "The reduction in land area has not only affected agriculture but also animal husbandry. Animals are unable to get good feed. While reducing land is a serious concern, there is another equal concern of the soil losing its quality in the available cultivable land. Excessive farming has led to loss of nutrients in the soil," he said. He called for focussing on agricultural research and extension activities that would give an impetus to the livelihood of farmers, rather than only working to ensure food and nutrition security.

Books, pamphlets, CDs, and other relevant material on latest technologies were released. Awards were given away to best seed centres, and scientists who have excelled in the production of good seed varieties. The Agricultural Chemmal awards were given away to give farmers for their achievements in production and innovation.

Earlier, the Vice-Chancellor inaugurated an automatic seed vending machine at the entrance of the Botanical Garden on Marudhamalai Road. The machine would dispense seeds in small quantities in pouches. He opened a central exhibition that had on display the various varieties of crops and technologies so far released by the university.

Sugarcane farmers to launch indefinite agitation on Jan. 13

Sugarcane farmers have threatened to launch an indefinite stir in front of the residence of the district in-charge Minister V. Srinivas Prasad, to highlight their unresolved grievances.

This was decided at a meeting of the State Sugarcane Cultivators' Association held in the city on Monday. Association president KuruburShanthakumar said the State government had "betrayed the interests" of sugarcane cultivators of Mysore, by fixing the support price at Rs. 2,500 a tonne. This has resulted in a loss of Rs. 500 a tonne for farmers.

'Exclude charges'

The association said the government should ensure that the harvesting and transportation charges were excluded from the MSP, and the net price should be Rs. 2,500.

Although the government had fixed Rs. 2,500 as the support price, some factories have ignored this and are paying farmers Rs. 2,400 a tonne.

Indifference

In view of the "indifference of authorities to the predicament of sugarcane farmers", the association in Mysore has decided to launch an indefinite stir outside Mr. Prasad's residence from January 13, said the association president.

Farmers' suicides drop by 50%: Pawar

Says country may head towards bumper production of wheat this year

Union Agriculture Minister SharadPawar said here on Sunday that farmers' suicides in the country had dropped by 50 per cent according to recent statistics.

“The efforts that we have been taking since 2005-06 have been bearing fruits,” he said while addressing the media after announcing ‘KrishiVasant,’ the largest agricultural exhibition to be held in Nagpur in February.

“The agricultural universities in the area have been entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of the families of the deceased farmers. The villages, where suicides have taken place, have been turned into model villages to ensure that farmers do not take such drastic steps again,” Maharashtra Chief Minister PrithvirajChavan said during the press meet.

Mr. Pawar indicated that the country might be heading towards bumper production of wheat this year.

“The overall crop condition of wheat is extremely good this year. Last year, we were the second-highest producers of wheat,” he said.

He refuted media reports that the country had to import sugar last year. He said the Centre and the State government were taking efforts to dissuade additional farmers from taking up sugarcane planting.

“ There has been no import of sugar in the past two years. In fact, today, we are number two in sugar production in the world. But when the production increases more than the demand, steps have to be taken to dissuade farmers from cultivating sugarcane. We have been taking a few steps like introducing excise cost. These will help us come out of the problem,” he said.

‘Only production not marketing’

When asked if he agreed with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s assessment that the government had performed well, but had failed to market itself, he said that his job was production, and not marketing.

“Six years ago, we had to import wheat. Today, India is a major player in the international grain market. This is an achievement of the government. There are incentives for export. We have brought Food Security Act to ensure that 65 per cent of the can buy food grains at cheaper rates,” he said.

On the onion export policy, he said the basis was to attain balance between sufficient domestic supply and giving decent price to the producer. “The prices of onion have stabilised now. While reducing the prices, it is necessary that the producer is not made to bear losses. That is being taken care of,” he said.

‘KrishiVasant’, the national agriculture fair cum exhibition, has been touted as the ‘Mahakumbh of agriculture’ by Mr. Chavan.

The five-day exhibition to be inaugurated by the President in Nagpur on February 9, is expected to attract footfall of more than five lakh farmers from across the country.

“The Indian agriculture has witnessed turnaround after a decade of slowdown. Exports have tripled in the last four years. This unprecedented exhibition has been organised on that background,” Mr. Pawar said. More than 50 lakh farmers would benefit from it as it would be webcasted in different parts of the country.

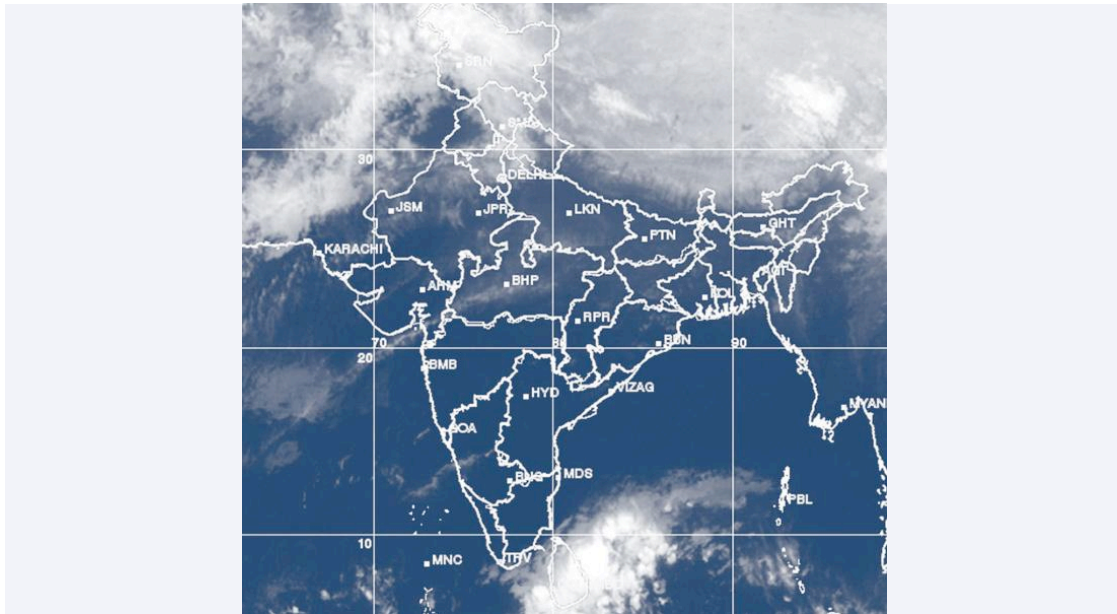
‘Most ambitious event’

“The event will be a watershed in Indian agriculture. It is the most ambitious agricultural exhibition ever attempted in the country. It will allow farmers to witness success stories. The highlights will be live demonstrations of crops. Every aspect of agriculture, rural economy have been showcased. There will be interactive sessions, use of information technology, address by massive number of experts from India and abroad. Arrangements have been made to ensure that the experts will speak to farmers in local language,” Mr. Chavan said.

He also talked about the delisting of fruits and vegetables from the APMC ambit in the State, and said the administration was still in talks with all the stakeholders on the issue.

“Farmers should be given a choice about whether they want to market their fruits and vegetables directly, or get them to APMC. Yes, we will have to create massive storage and logistics infrastructure for that,” Mr. Chavan said.

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on January 12.

Business Standard

Food law lags in Cong states, too

It guarantees five kg of rice, wheat or coarse cereals to each identified beneficiary each month at highly subsidised rates



[Swarn Kaur](#), a 48-year-old widow from Majri village in Panchkula, [Haryana](#), was hopeful she would at last be able to have at least two square meals a day when she learnt about the [Congress](#)-led United Progressive Alliance ([UPA](#))'s [food security scheme](#), introduced in the state on August 20 last year.

However, four months after the Act was notified in the state, Kaur has not received any grain and does not know whether she is one of the beneficiaries under the scheme. Her name does not yet figure on the list

of beneficiaries under the expanded [Antyodaya Anna Yojana](#) (which targets the poorest of the poor), despite the fact that she was part of three surveys for the scheme conducted by the state department. Swarn's three children and father-in-law are dependent on her.

Like Kaur's family, there are about 65 families in the village eligible under the Act but yet to receive the smart card or foodgrain promised under the scheme, despite the state including these in its surveys. Worse, in some cases [Below Poverty Line \(BPL\)](#) families have even stopped getting their normal quota of grains from November 2013.

The National Food Security Act, signed in September 2013 by President Pranab Mukherjee, provides a legal entitlement to receive cheap grain to almost 67 per cent of the population. It guarantees five kg of rice, wheat or coarse cereals to each identified beneficiary each month at highly subsidised rates, of Rs 3 a kg for rice, Rs 2 for wheat & Rs 1 for

coarse cereals. Haryana is not unique.

GRAIN BOWLS
Foodgrains allotment under food security Act (in million tonnes)

States	Average amt of grains availed	Estimated allocation under Act	Change
Uttar Pradesh	6.55	9.63	3.08
Bihar	2.66	5.60	2.93
Haryana	0.56	0.82	0.25
Andhra Pradesh	3.34	3.24	-0.10
Delhi	0.57	0.46	-0.11
Tamil Nadu	3.78	2.57	-1.20

Note: The average offtake has been calculated based on three years (2009-10 to 2011-12) offtake of wheat and rice. Those states which were expected to receive lower quantities of foodgrain have been assured that their quota will be protected.
Source: Department of Food and Consumer Affairs

In Andhra Pradesh, too, officials said the Act would be implemented fully by June 2014, well after the general elections are over.

"With the current political situation in

the state not encouraging, we expect implementation only after the general elections," said a state civil supplies department senior.

In fact, as a top official from the Union food ministry told Business Standard, until now, no state, including those that have formally notified the scheme, have approached the Centre with an updated list of beneficiaries. In its absence, states are purchasing grain from the central pool at the old rates, not at the new price.

"State governments will have to adjust this amount later with the Centre," the official said. As BS found out, in Haryana's Majri village, a

large section complained about the little on-ground progress of the scheme despite lofty announcements. Similarly, in Andhra, the government plans to introduce e-point of sale system, which helps capture the fingerprints of eligible households to curb leakages but it might take years before it is fully operational.

Sohan Singh another BPL card holder showed his ration card which did not have any new entry since October 2013. “We are finding very difficult to manage. My husband is a daily wager. We didn’t get any wheat or rice from November. We thought that if the government implements the scheme effectively, we would have benefited. In reality though, in the absence of the scheme starting and regular rations, we are forced to buy from the market,” Sohan Singh’s wife complained. Neema Kaur who is physically challenged also echoed the same sentiment.

In Haryana around 1.2 crore people are to be covered under the Food Act as against the existing 55 lakh ration card holders, while in Andhra Pradesh around 45.9 million people are to be covered under the scheme, less than the state’s estimate of 79 million people.

“There are over 65 eligible families, but none have received any communication ... or wheat or rice at subsidised rates, neither did people in the neighboring village of Ramgarh,” Majri headman, Balvir Singh said.

In Haryana around 12 million are to be covered under the Act against 550,000 ration-card holders. In Andhra Pradesh, 45.9 million are to be covered, less than the state’s estimate of 79 million.

[U.S. job growth falters as cold weather grips nation](#)

Unemployment rate fell 0.3 percentage point to 6.7%

U.S. employers hired the fewest workers in nearly three years in December, but the setback was likely to be temporary amid signs that unusually cold weather may have had an impact.

The surprisingly weak [job growth](#) figures reported by the Labor Department on Friday, however, could cause some discomfort at

the [Federal Reserve](#), which last month announced plans to scale back its massive monetary stimulus program.

Nonfarm payrolls rose only 74,000 in December, the smallest increase since January 2011 and well short of the 200,000 jobs or so that most economists had expected.

While the unemployment rate fell 0.3 percentage point to 6.7%, its lowest level since October 2008, the decline mostly reflected people leaving the labor force.

Michael Feroli, an economist with [JPMorgan](#) Chase in New York, called the report "an ugly mix" but said: "We'd guess the underlying trend in job growth hasn't materially shifted."

U.S. stock prices were little changed, but yields on benchmark Treasury debt fell by the most since October. The U.S. dollar slipped against other currencies as traders bet economic weakness would further delay any eventual increase in interest rates by the Fed.

The step back in hiring was at odds with other indicators that have painted an upbeat picture of the jobs market.

Tempering the blow, the government's survey of employers found 38,000 more jobs were added in November than previously reported. For all of 2013, the economy created 2.2 million jobs.

Construction employment fell last month for the first time since May and leisure and hospitality payrolls rose only marginally, providing hints that extremely cold weather in some parts of the country had held back hiring.

In addition, transportation payrolls recorded their first decline in five months, and the average workweek for all workers slipped by a tenth of an hour to 34.4 hours.

The smaller survey of households from which the jobless rate is derived showed 273,000 people stayed at home because of the bad weather, the most since 1977 and well above the 100,000 average for the month of December.

Economists said the cold weather may have dampened job growth by as much as 100,000 last month.

"We do not think that the disappointing December payroll number marks the beginning of a renewed downward trend," said Harm Bandholz, chief U.S. economist at UniCredit Research in New York. "We continue

to expect nonfarm payrolls will accelerate towards 200,000 to 225,000 in the course of this year."

The labor force participation rate, or the proportion of working-age Americans who have a job or are looking for one, fell 0.2 percentage point to 62.8%, returning to the more than 35-year low hit in October.

The decline, which may have partly reflected end-of-year retirements, accounted for two-thirds of the drop in the jobless rate, although a gauge of employment in the household survey also rose.

FED SEEN HOLDING COURSE

The report offered a cautionary note after a string of data - from consumer spending and trade to industrial production - that had suggested the economy ended 2013 on strong footing and was positioned to strengthen further this year.

Other data on Friday showed wholesale inventories rose more than expected in November, leading some economists to upgrade their forecasts for fourth-quarter growth.

GDP growth this year is expected to top 3%, a sharp acceleration from the 1.7% forecast for 2013.

In a sign of growing confidence in the economy's prospects, the Fed announced in December that it would trim its monthly bond purchases to \$75 billion from \$85 billion.

Despite the weaker-than-expected jobs data, most economists held to the view that the Fed would enact a further, similar-sized cut at its next meeting on January 28-29.

Fifty-seven of 61 economists polled by Reuters after the report said they expected the U.S. central bank to trim its purchases by \$10 billion at each of its meetings this year.

"I don't think the Fed is going to change its mind," said Bill Cheney, chief economist at John Hancock Financial Services in Boston. "The trend, in a broad sense, still looks quite favorable."

Indeed, two Fed officials, St. Louis Fed President James Bullard and Richmond Fed chief Jeffrey Lacker, suggested as much. "I would be disinclined to react to one month's number," Bullard said. "For now we're on a program where we're likely to continue to taper (asset purchases) at subsequent meetings."

NOT ALL WEATHER

The private sector accounted for all the gains in employment last month, with government payrolls falling 13,000 after rising 15,000 in November.

Manufacturing employment rose 9,000. While that represented a fifth straight month of gains, it marked a slowdown from November's hefty 31,000 count. The number of construction jobs fell 16,000, snapping six consecutive monthly increases.

Utilities jobs fell by the most in a year.

Not all the job losses could be blamed on the weather. The information sector shed 12,000 positions and healthcare employment fell for only the second time since 1990.

Employment in the retail sector accelerated after slowing in November. There were also payroll gains in professional and business services.

Average hourly earnings rose two cents. Over the past 12 months, hourly earnings have risen only 1.8%, a sign the tepid wage gains that have characterized the U.S. economic recovery continue.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Prime Minister calls for bridging gap between oil import, output
TNN | Jan 13, 2014, 06.53AM IST GREATER NOIDA: [PM Manmohan Singh](#) on Sunday called for resolute efforts to bridge the gap between energy imports and [domestic production](#) to fuel India's economic growth, while [oil minister M Veerappa Moily](#) stressed the need for staying the course with bold decisions even in the face of criticism.

"An adequate supply of energy at affordable prices is critical to our economic growth... There is a need to bridge the ever-increasing gap between demand and domestic supply. As India configures its policy framework to get back to the high growth-rate trajectory envisioned in our 12th Five Year Plan, the development of the energy sector and particularly the hydrocarbon space must be given particular attention," the Prime Minister said while inaugurating Petrotech-2014.

Taking a cue from the PM, Moily said the government must take decisions if India's energy needs were to be secured. There are systems and there is nothing to fear if decisions are taken transparently to move forward for the nation's benefit, Moily said. "Produce or perish. For this we need to mine our minds before mining fields," he said, hinting there was a need for policymakers to change their mindsets towards energy issues.

Over 8.67 lakh Tamil Nadu farmers left agriculture in the last decade

COIMBATORE: Nearly 8.67 lakh farmers have quit agriculture and shifted to other sectors during the last 10 years in Tamil Nadu as per the 2011 census, a farmer's body leader said today.

Federation of Tamil Nadu Agricultural Associations Secretary S Nallasami said that the Census suggested that from 2001 to 2011, 8,67,582 farmers have stopped agriculture due to various reasons, including huge loss.

Moreover, there was an increase in the number of agricultural labourers during the period, as the farmers sell their land to real estate and prefer to work on daily wage, he said in a release here.

He attributed the reason for the plight of the farmers to wrong import policy of the Centre, unremunerative prices for farmers' produce, industrialisation and urbanisation, coupled with the failure to divert the rain and other waters going to sea to the farmers' fields, by linking rivers.

On fixing prices for the produce, like sugarcane, Nallasami said while the Government was implementing the recommendations of the Pay commission immediately, it was not bothered about the suggestions of the Commission for Agriculture Cost and Price, leaving the farmers in the lurch and at the mercy of the middlemen

DECCAN
Chronicle

SANKRANTI EFFECT: VEGETABLE PRICES DOWN



Hyderabad: Sankranti has provided a much-needed breather from soaring prices of vegetables. The prices have come down almost three times than what they were in September and October last year. Common people are all smiles.

Vegetable prices, which had skyrocketed in the beginning of the festival season in October, have now plummeted, thanks to increased supplies to city markets from neighbouring districts and states. Prices of onions and tomatoes, which had peaked to Rs 50 per kg and Rs 80 per kg respectively, a couple of months ago have now eased to about just Rs 10 per kg. All common vegetables are now available for less than Rs 20 per kg.

Farmers, however, are upset as they are incurring losses and are not able to recover even the transport cost that has witnessed a steep increase owing to frequent upward revision of petrol and diesel prices.

P. Ramulu, a vegetable vendor at Monda market in Secunderabad, said, "The adverse weather conditions like heavy rains and cyclones between September and November last year led to destruction of crops in all parts of the state.

However, since then, the weather has been favourable. There has been a bumper harvest in neighbouring districts like Ranga Reddy, Mahbubnagar, Medak and Nalgonda. The supplies have increased to city markets leading to drop in prices."

Erra Saidulu, a farmer from Mahbubnagar, who supplies vegetables to Erragadda Rythu Bazaar, said, "We had a bumper harvest of perishable crops such as tomatoes in the winter. These vegetables have to be consumed within a day or two else they get spoiled. We are left with no option but to sell them at a low price to avoid losses."

THE HINDU Business Line

IIM-A discusses the rural challenge at agribusiness summit

Top Indian business school IIM – Ahmedabad hosted its annual agribusiness, food and rural management summit Amaethon on January 11 and 12. The purpose of the summit was to brainstorm on the dynamics of ‘emerging landscapes in food and agribusiness’. The event strives to bring together students, academia and professionals in the agriculture and food sectors on a common platform.

Over 250 students from various agriculture and agribusiness institutes across the country participated in the two-day event. The highlights of the summit were management workshops for students and young professionals, panel discussions, and business strategy competitions.

The summit’s first workshop was on Rural Marketing, with the theme ‘Opportunities beyond imagination’. The workshop was conducted by PradeepKashyap, CEO of MART, a rural marketing consultancy. Kashyap highlighted the dramatic transformation of the rural sector in the last decade by citing various examples and anecdotes.

He emphasised that the rural economy is growing faster than the urban economy and is highly heterogeneous, which is a challenge for marketers. India can bank on its back-up markets – the small town and rural markets – to drive demand, a press release quoted Kashyap as saying. The main challenges in tapping the rural markets were reach, distribution channels and innovation. Co-creation and use of social infrastructure will go a long way in meeting the needs of the rural consumer, he observed.

The panel discussions on the first day centred on ‘Reinventing agribusiness - building competencies and delivering growth’ with experts from government and industry on the panel. The discussions on the second day were ‘Leveraging the transformation in food demand – unlocking the potential’ and ‘Rural development, empowerment and inclusive growth’.

Other workshops that IIM-A held on the second day included a Supply Chain and Logistics Workshop by IIM-A faculty in partnership with ScNext, and Food and Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Workshop by Ashutosh Kumar Sinha, Co-Founder and Director, Villgro Innovations Marketing.

Other major competitions held during Amaethon are the Venture Challenge – a business plan competition, and Rural Crusaders – a rural marketing competition.

IIM-A's Post-Graduate Programme in Agri-Business Management (PGP-ABM) has been ranked number one globally in the Eduniversal Best Master's Ranking in Agribusiness/Food Industry Management for three years in a row.



Food inflation may ease but supply-side woes pinch farmers, consumers



While a fall in headline inflation numbers will ensure some breathing space for embattled policy makers, the sharp surge in food inflation to a 41-month high of close to 20 per cent in November hides an even more disturbing fact — that despite the consistent spike in the year-on-year agri price levels at the wholesale level, farmers are simply not among those benefiting from the higher prices of their produce. With the exception of fine cereals such as rice and wheat, where repeated MSP (minimum support price) boosters have served to push up returns, prices of key food crops have seen a unprecedented crash at the mandi-level till mid-December. Sugar, oilseeds, pulses, chick-pea and coarse cereals have moderated sharply, selling below last year's wholesale price levels, while prices of maize, groundnut and bajra have actually dipped below their respective MSPs. The two crops where inflation continues to be a worry are fine cereals and fruits and vegetables. According to chairman of the commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices Ashok Gulati, the price increases in rice and wheat can be attributed to the “mismanagement of public stocks”, considering that the government is holding surplus stocks to the tune of around 20 mt of rice and wheat. Conversely, there is the problem of comparatively lesser vegetable cultivation, which have got priced out by the MSP-guaranteed fine cereals, apart from the problem of lesser storage options for them as well. Plus, in case of vegetables, as government policies do not permit produce to be bought directly from farmers, the high market levies in most states feed in at the retail levels. For instance, in Gujarat, where the arhatiya (commission agent) fee is just 50 paise for every Rs 100 or 0.5 per cent in groundnut and cotton, the total levies in the state do not add up to more than 3 per cent. In Punjab, the arhatiya commission is 2.5 per cent and the total levies add up to 14.5 per cent in case of wheat and paddy.

In case of fruits and vegetables, just the official arhatiya commission is as high as 6 per cent (of price) at Delhi's AzadpurMandi and 8 per cent in Mumbai's Vashi Market, and much higher at 10 to 14 per cent at the unofficial levels. A December report by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations noted that if the inflation in food products was to be brought under control, a robust food processing sector, for just promoting FDI in multi-brand retail might not suffice and this will have to be backed up by a favourable tax regime. At the issue of the report, Union agriculture minister SharadPawar corroborated the view, saying that GST implementation would be an essential boost to

the food processing sector, which is struggling with myriad tax structures. So even for cereals the wholesale inflation in November 2013 was a high of 11.32 per cent on an annual basis despite coming on top of a high base in the same month of previous year, when it rose 17.84 per cent. - See more at:

<http://indianexpress.com/article/business/business-others/food-inflation-may-ease-but-supply-side-woes-pinch-farmers-consumers/#sthash.JV4qfu27.dpuf>