

Strengthen lab-to-land initiatives: Minister

'Agri scientists should uphold ethical and professional standards'



Agriculture Minister S.S. Krishnamoorthy presenting the 'Best Extension Worker Award' to C. Karthikeyan, Professor, Agriculture Extension, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, at its 44th Foundation Day in Coimbatore on Tuesday. Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy is in the picture.— PHOTO: S.SIVA SARAVANAN

Agriculture Minister S.S. Krishnamoorthy has urged the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University to strengthen the lab-to-land extension activities. Addressing the participants at the University's 44th Foundation Day he said that it was imperative that the University did so because the increasing population's grain requirements had to be met, production had to be increased, efficiency of water usage had to be improved, rural farm sector had to be strengthened and access to finance in villages had to be made easy as they were the keys for the ever green revolution. **Power house** The Tamil Nadu Government had allocated Rs. 5,816 crore to usher in the Second Green Revolution by doubling the yield and tripling farmers' income. The objective was to make Tamil Nadu an agriculture power house. Mr. Krishnamoorthy said that the Government was farmer-friendly in that it gave them timely inputs, drip irrigation equipment, constructed 70,000 farm ponds for rainwater harvesting across the State and set up agricultural service centres for assisting farmers with the latest in technology. Comparing the agriculture scientists to doctors, he asked them to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards. Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy appreciated the faculty for making the University the first among agricultural universities in the country. The University had played a major role in helping the State get a record harvest of 110 metric tonne paddy, though there was paucity of rainfall. He promised funding and support for researchers. Registrar R. Rabindran said that from very few women in its initial days the University had reached a stage where 75 per cent students were women. Twenty-seven students from the Agricultural College and Research Institute, Killikulam, emerged winners in the ICAR fellowship examination. The Minister gave away awards to 147

scientists for completing 25 years in service and 14 awards for best researchers, teacher, extension worker, research scholars and non-teaching staff.

Central India may experience drought: Agriculture Minister

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Tuesday warned of drought-like conditions in Central India. Mr. Singh's statement follows an India Meteorological Department's (IMD) release showing 61 per cent rainfall deficiency in the region in June. With 43 per cent deficiency across the country, it was the fourth driest June recorded since 1901. However, conditions are expected to improve in July and August, the IMD has said. The Agriculture Ministry plans to put before the Cabinet a proposal to provide diesel and seed subsidy in areas declared drought-affected by the States, Mr. Singh said.

'Impose import duty on red gram'

The Karnataka Pradesh Red Gram Growers Association demanded that the Union Government impose import duty on red gram to stabilise its prices in the markets and save the farming community. President of the Association Basavaraj Ingin and organising secretary V.B. Karaddi said on Tuesday that the Centre which had increased the import duty on sugar to stabilise the falling prices of the sugar, should adopt the same formula for red gram. Mr. Ingin said that at least 35 to 40 per cent import duty should be established on imported red gram. The previous UPA government had proposed 10 per cent import duty but it had not been implemented so far. Instead the government was providing 15 per cent cash incentives for imported red gram. Mr. Ingin said that the Centre should also come out with a pro-farmer and consumer friendly pulses policy and regulate the import of the red gram based on the demand and supply. He said despite enough stock of red gram in granaries in the country, the government had allowed import of 7 lakh tonnes of red gram from Myanmar, and African countries and this would have an impact on the prices of the red gram in the wholesale market. He said the shortage of pulses was being estimated wrongly at 20 per cent plus of the production in the country. As per the information available with the association the country produced 19 plus million tonnes pulses as against the demand of 19 million tonne. Mr. Ingin said that no quality checks or importance of quality of the imported pulses was done and in future all the imported pulses should be made to undergo strict quality checks and ensure that they were fit for human consumption. He added that the present gap between the farm gate price and consumer price of the pulses should be reduced.

Rs. 236 crore yet to be paid to paddy farmers



Despite the government failing to clear the arrears for paddy procured as of yet, the cultivation of the additional crop (Kharif) is under way in Kuttanad. However, the delay on the part of authorities in disbursing subsidies has further burdened the farming community. As per official statistics, 1,23,846 tonnes of paddy had been procured in the district for which an amount of approximately Rs. 236 crore was to be paid to the farmers. The payment process is yet to be wound up nearly four months after procurement began. Around Rs. 70 crore is yet to be disbursed in the district, a major portion of which is due to the Kuttanad farmers, according to an official at the Paddy Marketing Office at Moncombu. A large number of farmers have relied on unauthorised moneylenders for purchasing seeds and fertilisers. “Call them what you may, but we were left with no other option to commence farming in our fields. We used to receive the paddy price within one-and-a-half months of procurement. The amount is used for the second round of cultivation. However, this year, it seems that the authorities have given scant regard in ensuring the timely disbursal of amounts,” says Joy Thomas, the secretary of the committee of Thengara Pacha ‘padasekharam’ (paddy polder) in Edathua, where the cultivation crossed the 41st day on Tuesday. With floods being a regular phenomenon in the region, they could not afford to delay the cultivation until they received assistance from the government, says Raju Thomas, a farmer. “Unlike the ‘puncha’ (Rabi) crop, the additional crop cultivation has to be managed with utmost care owing to the monsoon.” Adding to their woes is the delay in disbursal of subsidy amounts provided by the government.

The payment process is yet to be wound up nearly four months after the government began procuring paddy from farmers.

Area of paddy cultivation shrinks

Scanty rainfall in Chittoor district is said to be the reason



Due to delay in monsoon, farmers have been cultivating paddy in a small area as compared to previous years. —File photo

The tail-end Chittoor district, which held a whopping capacity to produce nearly three lakh metric tonnes of paddy per annum is facing dismal prospects for this important crop in the western mandals. In the last one decade, the area of paddy farming has come down drastically. The farmers have been slowly shifting to alternative crops and horticulture.

On an average, a farmer in Palamaner and Kuppam constituencies used to raise paddy in at least five acres half-a-decade ago, but now the area was limited to an acre or two. Some holdings were reduced to below half acre. A few years ago, the farmers in Palamaner Agriculture Sub-Division were cultivating paddy in over 5,000 hectares. But, the current position is that the extent of area had dropped to below 2,000 hectares. Despite having an agriculture college in Tirupati, and supported by research station, the farmers deplored that they were not taught about any modern techniques to cope with the changing scenario due to adverse climatic seasons.

No access of knowledge to farmers

Though certain varieties of paddy were developed which required less quantum of water, the knowledge had not reached many farmers. The western mandals in the district experienced severe drought in 2009. Though rains favoured the zone in 2010, the later years brought scanty rainfall. The ongoing kharif season witnessed below normal rainfall putting the paddy farmers in utter dismay. Coupled with this, the ground water table too had decreased over the years in the district. Meanwhile, the agriculture officials have been contemplating steps to educate the farmers on specific varieties of paddy like 'Sri' which can sustain even with minimum water supply.

Many farmers have shifted to alternative crops as rainfall was scanty in the last few years

Naidu seeks report on protecting forest wealth

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to prepare a comprehensive report on protecting forest wealth and implement a plan to regain the loss suffered so far. At a review meeting held on red sanders here with officials and Ministers on Tuesday, he said the forest wealth was looted without any check during the previous regime and suggested that the report be prepared after studying satellite imagery in this regard.

Swaminathan bats for GM crops

Noted farm scientist M.S. Swaminathan explained that though there is some concern about GM (genetically modified) crops, the government should develop a mechanism to bring out its benefits. "People should have confidence that the benefits outweigh all other things. There is nothing like GM and non-GM. It is an evolutionary process," he affirmed, and also observed that it would take some more time for a new radical technology to be accepted. The scientist also stated that the GM crops alone cannot be blamed for farmers' problems and suicides in the past, as there were more fundamental problems in the agriculture sector in India and also, the economics of farming have become adverse.

Former Minister dons the role of farmer



Kotla Jaya Suryaprakasa Reddy in the cow pen at his village Laddagiri in Kurnool district.— Photo: U. Subramanyam

Former Union Minister of State for Railways Kotla Jaya Suryaprakasa Reddy, who faced the wrath of Seemandhra voters along with other Congress leaders in the recent elections, has taken solace in farming. Immediately after the election results, Mr. Suryaprakasa Reddy, who lost Kurnool Parliament and his wife Sujathamma, who was defeated in Aluru Assembly, travelled to Delhi, threw a sumptuous dinner to over 500 guests and personal friends, vacated the official quarters and returned to settled down at Laddagiri, a non-descript village near Veldurthi. In spite of his busy schedule as Member of Parliament for eight years and Union Minister for one-and-half years, he never neglected the farm operations. He operated through his farm assistant Prakash Reddy and 16 other

workers. In an informal chat, Mr. Reddy told *The Hindu* that development of the family farm got stagnated in the past few years. He immediately attended to pruning of the mango grove on 50 acres and laid additional pipeline to meet the water demand. He cultivated 26 varieties of mangoes. The most interesting aspect of his farming is rearing of cows. Long ago he bought two cows, which proliferated into more than 100 cows. On the sale of bulls every year, he earns an amount of Rs 10 lakh and retains a few for personal farm operations. Mr. Reddy says with pride that all cows recognise him and moo whenever they see him. According to him, his biggest achievement was not disposing of an inch of land inherited from his father. However, he along with wife is worried about the attitude of his children who are not interested in farming. The couple is planning a rural-based enterprise for the children instead of expecting them in farming. Unlike his other Congress colleagues, Mr. Reddy is not broken-hearted after the rout of the party. He said the Congress in Seemandhra made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of their Telangana counterparts but they also failed to reap the benefits. He is very positive that things would be in their favour soon. Mr. Reddy and Mrs Sujathamma were understood to have been invited into the TDP but he stoutly refused saying that he could not indulge in self-deception.

Kotla Jaya Suryaprakasa Reddy optimistic that things will turn in favour of the Congress soon

Ensure payment of dues to sugarcane farmers: HC

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday directed the Uttar Pradesh government to ensure that dues of sugarcane farmers, running into crores of rupees, were recovered from sugar mill owners and paid to them at the earliest. A Division Bench of Chief Justice D. Y. Chandrachud and Justice Dilip Gupta said: "It is the duty of the state government to use all possible measures under the law and see to it that farmers' dues are paid to them after being recovered from mill owners." The court fixed July 24 as the next date of hearing. The order was passed on a Public Interest Litigation filed by Rashtriya Mazdoor Sangathan.-PTI

Vegetable prices soar due to short supply

Along with prices of petrol and diesel, people in the city are struggling to cope with skyrocketing prices of vegetables. Over the weeks, the prices of vegetables in the biggest veggie market here at Chhatrabazar have gone beyond the reach of common people. Barring the prices of potatoes and onions, which have registered marginal increases due to government control, the prices of other green vegetables have increased nearly three times during the past one week. "The green vegetables come from local areas and due to the rains and end of summer season, the availability of seasonal vegetables has been affected. But once the vegetables grown during rainy season hit the markets, normalcy would return," said a vegetable vendor in Chhatrabazar. However, the towering prices of vegetables have hit the poor and downtrodden, including the daily-wage earners the most.

“The daily essential vegetables for us like potato and onion are vanishing from our kitchens”, said a construction worker at Markat Nagar. Potato is selling at Rs.18 to Rs. 20 per kg and onion is priced at Rs. 28 to Rs. 30 per kg in Chhatrabazar and the same are priced a little higher in sub-urban and other local markets. All the green vegetables are selling at exorbitant prices between Rs. 40 to Rs. 120 per kg, mainly due to short supply. “There is no question of hoarding the green vegetables aiming to book profit at a later stage because they are perishable”, said Kuna Patra, a vegetable grower. The district supply department officials are on their toes to ensure that the potato and onion prices do not shoot up due to hoarding by unscrupulous traders. At least four district-level teams are keeping a watch over the market and the retailers are asked to fix rate charts in their kiosks showing at what price they have purchased potato and onion from wholesale markets.

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 46.22 feet on Tuesday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 6,634 cusecs and the discharge 2,000 cusecs.



Govt warns of possible drought over western India, food prices may rise

With this year’s monsoon getting off to its weakest start in five years, the government warned on Tuesday of a possible drought-like situation in parts of western India where sowing of summer crops has slowed and distress among farmers is rising. So far, the impact of an erratic monsoon has been the worst on Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan which are among the country’s biggest producers of sugar cane, cotton, pulses, soybean, vegetables and fruits, leaving the government fretting over possible supply pressures that can drive up food prices. In particular, authorities in Maharashtra have pressed the alarm button after deficient rains raised fears of a massive drinking water shortage. The state government has ordered that reserves in dams be used only for drinking, leaving the state’s farmers and large industries wary of the effects on their output.



“Monsoon is delayed. Western India is expected to be worst affected and drought-like situation might prevail in some pockets,” Farm minister Radha Mohan Singh told reporters, referring to a region with a history of suicides among farmers over failed crops. “Vidharbha region is drought-prone. We will think of all possible measures to help farmers so that they are not forced to commit suicides due to crop failure.” He said the government was working out a separate contingency plan for drought-prone regions, such as Vidharbha in Maharashtra, to ensure there is no shortage of drinking water and fodder. Good rains will be crucial for the new government’s efforts to prop up the economy from its slowest growth since the 1980s as well as to cool inflation that rose to a 5-month high for May.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Wednesday, Jul 2

Max 39° | Min 28°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 59

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:46

Sunset: 06:39

Barometer: 1007

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Jul 3

Max 37° | Min 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Jul 4	Saturday Jul 5	Sunday Jul 6	Monday Jul 7	Tuesday Jul 8
36° 29° Cloudy	37° 27° Cloudy	36° 27° Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:46
Humidity: 59 Sunset: 06:39
Wind: normal Barometer: 1007



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Low Rainfall: Crop Situation to Be Reviewed Every Week



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday asked all the district collectors to review the crop situation in their respective areas on a weekly basis in view of the emergency situation following scanty rainfall over most parts of the State. While reviewing the crop situation of the districts with the collectors through video conferencing at the secretariat, the Chief Minister asked them to prepare a contingency plan within a week to meet the eventuality. He also stressed on the provision of safe drinking water, lift irrigation, care of livestock, extension of agricultural loans to the farmers and undertaking labour intensive programmes in areas facing deficient rainfall. All the districts barring Nabarangpur, Balasore and Koraput have received 56 per cent less rainfall than normal. Naveen directed the collectors to extend the time-limit for supply of drinking water through tankers wherever the situation demanded. The Chief Minister asked the Panchayati Raj department to prepare plans in advance for undertaking labour-intensive programmes, especially in southern and western Odisha. It was decided at the meeting to provide additional 50 days work under MGNREGS in Balangir and Nuapada districts. Large scale migration are reported from these two districts. The Water Resources department was asked to draw up plans for maintaining abundant water in the reservoirs for irrigation and drinking purposes. While asking the department to set up new lift irrigation points wherever necessary, the Energy department was asked to ensure power supply to all the existing lift irrigation points. While stressing on the availability of loans to farmers at the time of need, the Chief Minister directed the officials to ensure that farmers are extended credit for kharif crops by July 31. In the event of crop damage, fresh loans should be provided to the affected farmers immediately by converting short-term loans to medium-term loans, whenever the need arose. The India Metrological

Department (IMD), which had predicted deficient rainfall during the current monsoon, told the meeting that there would be some improvement in the situation in July as the State is likely to receive 5 per cent more rainfall than normal. The meeting was attended by Excise and Cooperation Minister Damodar Rout, Agriculture Minister Pradip Maharathy, Revenue Minister Bijayshree Routray, the Chief Secretary, the Development Commissioner and secretaries of the departments concerned.

Dry Spell Worries Potato Growers

Farmers are anxious following the withering of potatoes grown on 22,000 hectares due to the dry spell in the district. Despite heavy losses due to the dry spell and diseases, most of the farmers have not stopped growing potatoes. Hassan taluk stands first in the district with 60 per cent of the area under potato cultivation. Hassan taluk is followed by Arkalgud, Channarayapatna, Holenarasipur and Alur taluks. Potato growers have allegedly failed to follow the instructions of the Horticulture Department on protecting the crop. The department had set up a counter at APMC yard to create awareness among the growers on controlling the diseases affecting the crop. Horticulture assistant director Shakeel Ahmed said: "Usually the farmers sow Kufri Jyoti, the oldest variety of seeds, despite the department recommending the disease-free varieties - Kupri Surya and Kupri Himalini. These two varieties which are temperature resistant are developed by the Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla." Some farmers in Arkalgud taluk saved potatoes grown over 2,500 acres by sowing certified seeds, recommended by the members of the Potato Club. According to sources, a number of small and medium farmers, owning less than 5 acres have leased their land for farmers from Kerala who have cultivated ginger on 18,000 hectares in the district. Some small farmers switched to maize as the risk is lower and it is a short term cash crop. They had suffered heavy losses by growing potatoes.

Deficit Rainfall Leaves Farmers in A Lurch



The cheer that southwest monsoon brought to the farmers after it rained 14.58 mm on June 20 proved to be short-lived as the district ended receiving merely 33.65 per cent of 221 mm normal rainfall in June. While the scanty rainfall is bound to have a bearing on the crop target, the farmers are worried about their fate as threat of drought looms large. The district recorded 18.64 mm of rainfall till June 19 and 14.58 mm on June 20 which left the farmers happy who were restless till then. Normally, cultivation in rainfed areas

start in the second week of June and the farmers had expected the process would be delayed by a week. But now with monsoon playing truant, they have been left in a lurch. Reports said the district received 74.37 mm of rainfall in June with Rairakhol block registering highest rainfall of 103 mm and Jujumura block 50 mm. Similarly Rangali, Naktideul, Jamakira and Bamra blocks registered 83 mm, 82.6 mm and 76.8 mm of rainfall respectively. Likewise, Dhankauda block which includes Sambalpur Sadar received 73 mm of rainfall, Kunchinda and Maneswar blocks 63.9 mm and 51 mm respectively. Of the nine blocks, Dhankauda and Maneswar are completely irrigated while Jujumura block is partially irrigated and the rest areas are rainfed. Earlier, the Sambalpur District Agricultural Strategy Committee (SDASC) had chalked out a plan to augment paddy production during the current kharif season. It targeted to cultivate high yield, hybrid and local variety of paddy in 1,04,800 hectares with a production target of 4,22,900 tonnes against 2,51,916 tonnes in the last kharif season. Deputy Director, Agriculture, Ashok Mohanty said only broadcasting of paddy has been completed in one-third of the area compared to June last year. However, he hoped that the rainfall would be compensated in the days to come.

Farm Insurance from This Kharif

The State Government on Tuesday decided to implement National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) during kharif-2014. This was decided at the State-level Coordination Committee meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary JK Mohapatra. Considering the comparative advantage of NAIS, it has been decided to adopt the scheme during current kharif season as it puts less premium burden on farmers and also provides 100 per cent crop insurance coverage, said a senior officer of the Cooperation department. The premium is only around 2.5 per cent of the value of all major crops. A subsidy upto 10 per cent has also been envisaged for small and marginal farmers having land holding of two hectares or less. Mohapatra directed the officials to make the process less burdensome and more farmer-friendly. It was decided that insurance enrolment will be done by Agricultural Insurance Company of India. Under NAIS, the unit area for insurance of paddy will be the gram panchayats, municipalities and NACs. For crops like maize, groundnut, jute, cotton, red gram, niger, turmeric, ginger and banana, the unit area of insurance will be the block. Angul, Balangir, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Bargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Gajapati districts will be covered under groundnut insurance. Maize insurance will be available in 15 districts. Fifteen blocks of Koraput, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Phulbani and Kalahandi districts have been enlisted for niger crop insurance while Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Cuttack, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj have been enlisted for jute crop insurance. Turmeric crop of Kandhamal district and ginger crop in 19 blocks of Kandhamal, Koraput and Sambalpur districts will be covered under the scheme. The directorates of Economics and Statistics, Agriculture and Food Production and Horticulture have been asked to furnish yield rate of the identified crops being enumerated under the supervision of the Cooperation department for onward transmission to the company in time.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Don't blame GM crops alone for farm distress: MS Swaminathan



Farm gyaan MS Swaminathan, eminent agriculture scientist, presenting publications to S Ayyappan, Director-General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, at the inauguration of the centenary batch of the foundation course for Agricultural Research Service at the NAARM in Hyderabad on Tuesday. PV SIVAKUMAR

Eminent agriculture scientist MS Swaminathan has said it is not right to put the entire blame on the GM (genetically modified) crops for the farm distress in the country. He said it is one of the several factors that affect the farm sector and requires a different approach to tackle it. "I am not defending anything but putting the entire blame on GM crops would be oversimplifying the fundamental problem of farm distress. The Government has set up a mechanism to look into the concerns on the GM issue," he said. "There are conventional methods available to identify a gene. Before you go for GM method, you must ask yourself whether you could achieve the same result using the conventional methods," he said. Swaminathan, who was here on Tuesday to inaugurate 100th Foundation Course of Agricultural Research Services at the National Academy of Agricultural Research, told *Business Line* that the Governments could waive loans if they could afford to do so. "It is a political decision. But what must they do is to put money in areas that would help farmers improve their income. There is a huge mismatch between the production and post-harvest technologies. They should build infrastructure such as cold storages," he said. He said the Government is setting up a Genetic Garden at Kandahar in Afghanistan and a Rice BioPark UN Myanmar. "Efforts like these require specially qualified scientists to help other developing countries. It's time for ICAR to establish International Agricultural Research Services," he said. Similarly, the ICAR should start a sub-cadre to take care of special needs of agriculture in North-Eastern States, he said.

Pakistan eats into India's share of onion exports

“Pakistan is not only gaining in terms of market but also in price,” said Madan Prakash, Director of Chennai-based Rajathi Group of companies that exports agricultural produce. Pakistan is certainly gaining market share since its onion is priced \$50-60 a tonne lower than India,” said CB Holkar, member of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation. “Some Pakistan exporters are quoting just \$10 lower than our offers,” said Prakash. With domestic prices rising to their highest since the first week of December, offers for exports are being made above \$400 a tonne. “We are currently quoting above \$400 and there are some buyers for Indian onion,” said Holkar. Some buyers abroad, especially in Malaysia and West Asia, prefer Indian onions for their pungency. Even Pakistan is not able to match it, according to Holkar. During 2013-14 fiscal, onion exports totalled 13.58 lakh tonnes valued at Rs. 2,877 crore. Besides Malaysia and Gulf, Indian onions find their way to Singapore, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal.

Onion soars to 7-month high despite higher arrivals

Speculation that dry spell might affect kharif planting driving the price surge



Even as onion prices near seven-month high, a section of the trade is blaming speculation for the edible bulb turning costlier by 75 per cent in the last one month. On Tuesday, the modal price or the rate at which most trades took place at Lasalgaon Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) yard, Asia's biggest for onion, was Rs. 1,850 a quintal for fair average quality. For quality produce, the rates were as high as Rs. 2,300. On June 2, the modal price was Rs. 1,050.

Higher arrivals

“There is no problem with supply. We see ample onions coming to markets in Maharashtra. Speculation that the current dry spell will affect onion planting and its arrivals later this year is driving up prices,” said a source, who did not want to be identified, from Nashik in Maharashtra. Data on onion arrivals in some of the primary markets such as Lasalgaon, Pimpalgaon, Pune and Solapur APMC yards in Maharashtra

show that arrivals have been higher in June this year compared with last year. For example, at Lasalgaon, daily arrivals since the second fortnight of June have been in excess of 1,500 tonnes against less than 1,000 tonnes last year. According to the Agriculture Ministry, onion production this year is a record 19.2 million tonnes (mt), up from last year's 16.81 mt.

Cartel seen

“There seems to be no genuine reason for the current surge since we don't have any problem with supplies. It is likely that some sort of cartel is operating,” said a trading source in Chennai. A probe ordered by the Competition Commission of India two years ago concluded that some influential traders in the Nashik region were in collusion with a few in select cities.

Crop fears

“Prices are rising on fears of the kharif crop being affected due to lack of rains,” said RP Gupta, Director of National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation in Nashik. Till now, kharif onion growing States such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have not received any rain under the influence of the South-West monsoon. As on June 30, the monsoon has been 31 per cent deficient across the country. However, the deficiency is above 70 per cent in these States, barring Karnataka. CB Holkar, member of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation and a grower, denies there is any speculation or cartel behind the surge.

Waiting for showers

“There was unseasonal rain during March in Maharashtra. At least 50 per cent of the rabi crop was affected by it. But for the damage, you should be able to get onion at Rs. 500 a quintal now,” he said. “Only average quality onions are arriving these days here. Therefore, prices are rising,” said another trader from Lasalgaon. “We see prices rising more since the dry spell is a cause for concern,” said Holkar. “Kharif planting has already been delayed by 15 days. There could be further delay since growers will begin sowing only after getting some showers. As a result, arrivals in September-October could be delayed by at least 15 days,” said Gupta of NHRDF. “There is a small area that is covered by early kharif onion. It has already taken a hit,” he said.

Delayed inflow

“Delay in arrivals means pressure on the supplies that will come to market from August onwards. We are not sure how much of the rabi onion is left with growers and traders,” Holkar said. Onion is grown in both kharif and rabi seasons. While kharif onion has a lower shelf life, the rabi produce can last up to six months. This helps the supply pipeline

going until kharif onion arrivals begin with the Andhra Pradesh crop in late August or early September. The Centre is taking various steps to rein in the price surge, which is resulting in food inflation. It has raised the minimum export price to \$300 a tonne and asked States to crack down on hoarders.

Deficient monsoon is no cause for worry, says ICAR



The ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) has said that there is no cause for concern over the delay of rains in the country. ICAR Director-General S Ayyappan told *Business Line* here on Tuesday that moisture in the fields was good thanks to good rains last year. The moisture present in the soil can take care of the needs for now.

Yield may hit

Scant rains delayed sowings in several parts of the country. Scarce rains for over a month have delayed sowings in several parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The delay in the spread of monsoon could impact yield levels. "There is still time and we can wait for 15-20 days more. There is no need to panic," Swapan Dutta, Deputy Director-General of ICAR, said. The ICAR officials were here in connection with the inaugural of 100th Foundation Course of Agricultural Research Services at the National Academy of Agricultural Research. "The condition is far better than 2009. We are assured of rains in July-August," Ayyappan said. The Council had suggested to the farmers to go for short-term crops, coarse cereals and millets to mitigate the adverse conditions.

Climate resilience

Earlier in the day, Ayyappan, who is also the Secretary in Department of Agricultural Research and Education, inaugurated phenotyping platform facility at the Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture here. The facility was set up under the National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture project launched by ICAR to develop adaptation and mitigation strategies to deal with climate change impact. "We are planning similar centres in Delhi, Bangalore and Pune," he said.

Arecanut prices zoom to record high on short supply



Prices of red and white varieties of arecanut topped Rs. 500- and Rs. 300-a-kg mark, respectively, last month. Prices are at a record high for both varieties. Raveesh Hegde, General Manager of the Sirsi-based Totagars' Cooperative Sale Society (which markets arecanut), told *Business Line* that both the red and white varieties are in short supply. Stocks of red arecanut are almost drying up. Of the total production of around 3 lakh tonnes of red variety, only about 10,000 tonnes are available now, he said.

Supply squeeze

“Paan masala” manufacturers need around 20,000 tonnes of arecanut a month. Normally they use around 60 per cent of red variety, and mix white variety for the rest. Because of the shortage in the market now, they are forced to use around 20 per cent of red variety, he said. Last season, there was over 40 per cent crop loss due to the fruit rot disease in arecanut plantations following heavy rains. Suresh Bhandary, Managing Director of the Mangalore-based Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco), said that the control of the illegal import of arecanut by the Centre has also helped farmers to get good price this year. All these years, import was taking place when the market for white arecanut reached the Rs. 170-180-mark. It is reported that there was crop failure in the countries from where arecanut was exported to India, he said.

Maximum price

The maximum price of white arecanut, which was above Rs. 220 a kg in the beginning of June, touched around Rs. 300 by June-end. The maximum price of red arecanut, which was above Rs. 360 in the beginning of June, crossed around Rs. 500 by June-end.

Pacific cyclone may limit monsoon's gains

A low pressure area showing up over North Bay of Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh has opened up the possibility of interaction with a passing western disturbance parked over Jammu and Kashmir. This type of interaction is what helps monsoon extend coverage of

area under its footprint in North India. The western disturbance is also obliging the monsoon with a “bow” over plains of North-West India. The disturbance has rolled down an offspring cyclonic circulation from the Himalayan hills into the plains, which will interact with the monsoon easterlies from the Bay of Bengal.

Breaks jinx

The interaction will take place along the corridor provided by a trough that extends from Punjab to East-central Bay of Bengal across Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and the centre of the ‘low.’ India Met Department said on Tuesday that the monsoon has managed to break out of its two-week-long jinx over central parts and advanced further into parts of north-west. The Met said conditions are favourable for its further advance to more parts of Madhya Pradesh, remaining Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Punjab and parts of north Rajasthan during next two days. However, the extended outlook for the monsoon as global models see it is not rosy. The immediate threat is in the form of a typhoon (cyclone) developing to the north-east of Philippines.

Rains for coast

This will develop as a low-pressure area by the weekend and grow to become a strong typhoon by early next week. The European Centre for Medium-Term Weather Forecasts sees the typhoon moving in a north-northeast direction into East China Sea and making a landfall over South East China coast by July 10. The impact for India will be in the form of heavy rains growing heavy over the West Coast and Peninsular India. The US Climate Prediction Centre sees a below-average monsoon to persist in India into the week starting July 2.

Are sugar mills privately-managed PSUs?



In April 2013, the Centre decontrolled the sugar industry. But it still allowed the States to fix the advisory price (SAP) on sugarcane, which mills pay to farmers, while keeping the Fair Remunerative Price (FRP) fixed by it as an indicative one. Political “fixing” of SAP has turned out to be a monster for the industry because it defies market realities. The solution lies in taming SAP instead of uncalled for frequent and vague interventions by the Centre. The current mess is the due to the Uttar Pradesh Government fixing a SAP of Rs. 280/quintal– ignoring the rationale FRP of Rs. 210, which is logically arrived at. Leave aside SAP, UP mills have not paid full FRP to farmers either. For the last 25 years

or so, the trio of farmers, sugar mills and Government have played game of blaming one another, devised ad-hoc solutions. As a result, the nation continues to pay a price for this imbroglio. On June 23, 2014, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, after a high-level meeting, announced a hike in import duty on white sugar from 15 to 40 per cent. He also announced interest subvention on additional loan of Rs. 4,400 crore, over and above already sanctioned amount of Rs. 6,600 crore with softer terms of repayment of 5 years (from the earlier 3 years), and readiness to recommend ethanol blending of 10 per cent from the present 5 per cent to oil marketing companies. Raw sugar export subsidy of Rs. 3,300/tonne will also continue till September (instead of September 2015), he said.

Government as Santa Clause

All that the industry wished was agreed to by policymakers who acted as a Santa Clause, subject to mills furnishing a written “assurance” that they shall clear pending cane payment of farmers around Rs. 11,000 crore. Of this, UP alone accounts for over Rs. 5,000 crore dues till May. Sugar inventory of major UP mills as on end-March 2014 is about Rs. 11,000 crore. Defaulting on cane arrears by the mills – even non-payment of full FRP – to farmers for the cane already crushed and converted to saleable sugar cannot be defended. Building pressure on political establishment, continuing irrational and inappropriate WTO non-compatible subsidy disguised as incentive out of Sugar Development Fund, blocking imports though higher duty, hoarding sugar and making the Government accomplice for pushing up market prices cannot be justified either.

Ascending inflation

When an entity *prima facie* is in a default mode by not honouring FRP, how can another dose of relief be considered?

The hike in import duty pushed up domestic prices from Rs. 32/kg to Rs. 34 within three days. With 15 per cent duty, the landed price of Brazilian 150 Icumsa sugar (\$510 cif) will be Rs. 36-37/kg – saleable at Rs. 38-39/kg. At 40 per cent duty, Brazilian’s landed cost would be Rs. 43-44. By October 2014, there is likely to be a carryover stock of 7.5 million tonnes. Sending panic signal by hiking the import duty is unwarranted. Do the industry and Government want to push up domestic price beyond the benchmarked Rs. 36-37/kg? The moot point is: why should the Government be supportive of needless inflationary pressures? Domestic inefficiencies beyond 15 per cent are unthinkable. The argument that higher sugar price will enable mills to pay arrears to farmers cuts no ice because the market can pare gains to Rs. 31 or less. Thus deficits to growers may still remain unpaid while duty stands at 40 per cent. Restoration of duty to 15 per cent will be the right approach for keeping inflation in check. There is no controversy over FRP of sugarcane of Rs. 210/quintal while SAP’s fixation is often ad-hoc, albeit debateable. Before any engagement with millers, at least FRP to farmers should be ensured by the Government. It will be naïve to consider any “written assurance of payment of

outstanding cane arrears” as sufficient and workable solution. Will Banks agree to be co-signatory for this assurance? If there is lack of compliance on assurance, what is the remedy or recourse? Sugar corporates have assumed themselves to be PSUs for financial support, exploiting in the name of farmers. The Government has willy-nilly accorded that status. This is an untenable state of affairs of private profits and public losses. A remedy for perpetual relief could be the Government promulgating an Ordinance that FRP will be the base price or National Sugarcane Price and divest States of SAP. The Modi Government with absolute majority can do it. It will be the right governance, more governance and less of Government. The writer is a trade analyst.

Business Standard

Odisha CM asks collectors to be ready for drought situation

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik today asked all the district collectors to review the crop situation in their respective districts on regular basis in view of scanty rainfall over most parts of the state. "It has been decided to review the crop situation on weekly basis at the district level," said P K Mohapatra, special relief commissioner with state government after the review meeting, which was attended by several ministers and top bureaucrats.

As per data provided by local weather office, 27 of the 30 districts have received 56 percent less rainfall than normal in the monsoon season that started on June 1.

In the meeting, the CM directed the Panchayati Raj department to prepare plans in advance for undertaking labour intensive programmes especially in southern and western Odisha. It has been decided to provide additional 50 days work under MGNREGS in Bolangir and Nuapada districts. While stressing on the availability of loans to farmers at the time of need, Patnaik said crop loans should be disbursed before July 31. The meeting also deliberated on provision of immediate fresh loans to farmers in the event of crop damage and converting short term loans to medium term loans.

The department of Water Resources has been directed to draw plans for maintaining abundant water in reservoirs for irrigation and drinking water purposes. The energy department has been asked to ensure power supply to all existing lift irrigation points. Officials representing meteorological department informed that there would be some improvement in the situation in July as the state is likely to receive five percent more rainfall than normal. Apart from preparedness for possible crop loss, Patnaik told the collectors to continue with provision of drinking water through tankers, wherever the situation demanded.

Farm sector to remain base of economy in Madhya Pradesh



The state government on Tuesday indicated in the Assembly that the farm sector would continue to remain the bedrock of the economy. The budget, which state finance minister termed as the foundation of government's Vision 2018 document, earmarked an outlay of Rs 22413 crore (20%) of the total budget for agriculture. The total budgetary provisions touched Rs 117,040 crore. The agriculture sector would be provided an amount of Rs 4 crore for skill upgradation to provide training to women to lure them to farm sector. State finance minister Jayant Malaiyya has gone for skill upgradation and private sector investment for creation of jobs. An amount of Rs 450 crore has been sanctioned for investment promotion schemes. Further, an amount of Rs 66 crore has been allocated for Mukhya Mantri Swarojgar Yojana, aimed at motivating young entrepreneurs to set up their own enterprises. Additional outlay of Rs 5,714 crore has been earmarked for irrigation purpose to cover an area of 35 lakh hectare in the 12th five year plan. However, non-plan expenditure is estimated to reach Rs 62,750 crore or 15% more than that of the previous year. "Of this, Rs 30,000 crore approximately goes to salaries and pension. But it cannot be pared," the finance minister said. Boasting 25% growth in agriculture sector, the minister said that agriculture would continue to get succour from state government. He announced Rs 150 per quintal bonus on maize crop as it is mainly grown by tribal farmers. "There will be a provision of Rs 1,050 crore for the purpose," the minister said. He also made a power tariff subsidy of Rs 2,500 crore, Rs 950 crore for separation of power feeders to ensure more power supply to farm sector, Rs 900 crore for crop insurance scheme which was just Rs 48 crore in 2013-14, Rs 421 crore for short term loans at zero percent interest farm loans, Rs 861 crore for veterinary activities, Rs 590 crore for horticulture and Rs 227 crore for grant on agriculture pumps. For creation of better infrastructure, Malaiyya allocated Rs 5,646 for roads, Rs 7,985 crore for energy sector, Rs 589 crore for drinking water project and Rs 11,922 crore for primary education, Rs 5,296 crore for higher education, Rs 4,828 crore for health, Rs 16,875 crore for social sector including Rs 778 crore for Ladli Laxmi scheme. The Home department has been allocated Rs 4,817 crore of which an investment of Rs 429 crore would be made for installation of closed circuit television camera. Environmental improvement has been allocated Rs 2,712 crore.

Nursery sowing of onions 60-70% short this season



So far this kharif season, farmers have completed just 30-40 per cent of nursery sowing of onions, owing to deficient rains in major growing areas. This might lead to a shortage during seed transplantation and, consequently, lower production. At the beginning of the kharif season, it was predicted this time, the monsoon would be deficient due to the El Niño weather phenomenon. Therefore, the Maharashtra government had disconnected water supply connections from dams, canals and rivers for irrigation of kharif crops. As a result, only a small number of farmers managed to sow onion seeds, with the help of borewells. "Till June 30, farmers covered just 20-30 per cent of the sowing area for seed germination. Usually, by June-end, more than three quarters of sowing area is covered for seedling, for final transplantation. Despite the fact that the seedling area needs less water for sowing, farmers remain apprehensive in covering larger areas due to fear of re-sowing on revival of the monsoon rains," said R P Gupta, director, the National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation. Once the monsoon revives by early next week, as forecast by the India Meteorological Department, onion seeds will be sown for preparation of seedlings in 45 days. As such, transplantation of onion seedlings will be delayed accordingly. Further, in case of uneven rains, productivity will be hit. An impact on prices and arrivals has already been seen. Through the past month, onion prices have almost doubled in most spot mandis. In Lasalgaon (Maharashtra), Asia's largest spot mandi for onions, prices rose by 80.49 per cent to Rs 1,850 a quintal. "Stored onion is supplied from cold storages to mandis between June and mid-September due to sowing of the kharif crop. Thereafter, the new-season crop, especially from Karnataka, starts hitting the market. This year, however, sowing has already been delayed, resulting in delay in harvesting and, therefore, supply of the new-season crop. Since a very little quantity is left from the previous season, the price is likely to remain firm in coming months," said Ajit Shah, president of Horticulture Exporters' Association.

SHEDDING TEARS

Market	Model price (₹/quintal)		Change (in %)	Arrivals (quintal)		Change (in %)
	June 2	July 1		June 2	July 1	
Chennai	1,900	2,800	47.36	5,000	5,000	-
Delhi	1,105	1,919	42.42	1,867	11,734	528.49
Kolkata	1,312	2,375	81.02	16,480	2,830	-82.73
Lasalgaon	1,025	1,850	80.49	14,640	13,500	-7.79
Mumbai	1,450	2,150	48.28	13,900	6,900	-50.36

Source: National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation

Meanwhile, the government fears western states, including Maharashtra, will see a drought-like situation this year. Consequently, arrivals in mandis have started declining.

Barring the Delhi spot mandi, where the Food and Supply Department raided about 500 traders for possible hoarding, arrivals have plunged.

Traders believe prices will continue to surge in the coming weeks. In case of uneven rains, prices might soar to record levels. Gupta, therefore, urged the government to begin imports to keep prices under control. Data compiled by the National Horticulture Board showed, India's onion production stood at 19.30 million tonnes (mt) in 2013-14, with a cultivation area of 1.22 million hectares, compared with an output of 16.81 mt across 1.05 million hectares in 2012-13.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Onion prices stable, may rise in August

The city administration has claimed that there is no shortage of onions in the city and prices are stable, warning of an increase in August. There has been little difference between wholesale and retail prices, indicating that the steps being taken by the government to control price rise were working. However, administration said that the wholesale rate of onions may go up to Rs 40 per kg in August. But, there was a massive difference in retail prices across the city. In south Delhi's Gautam Nagar, onions were being sold for Rs 20 per kg against Rs 30 per kg in east and central Delhi. "The best quality onion sold for Rs 25 per kg in the Azadpur wholesale market while the lowest was Rs 13.75 per kg," sources at Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) said. The APMC also took out an advertisement indicating prices of onions, tomatoes and potatoes at Mother Dairy outlets and their wholesale rates. Development commissioner Puneet Goel held a meeting with APMC officials on Tuesday, after which the government decided to set up 40 stalls across the city where onions and potatoes would be sold at wholesale rates. The number of stalls will be increased to 200 within two weeks. "Arrival of onions and potatoes in Delhi has been more than the requirement. On Tuesday, 1,200 MT of onions and 1,299 MT of potatoes arrived in the capital, which is much more than the daily requirement of Delhi," said Goel. Government premises, from where the sale is proposed, include the offices of food and supply officers, offices of the development department, district magistrates, SDMs and inquiry offices of Delhi Jal Board, said Goel. Anil Malhotra, committee member of APMC, said that the 70 tempos going into the city with onions and potatoes were returning with some amount of stock each night, indicating that there was sufficient supply in the city and rates had not risen. "We intend on having the 200 stalls in place till at least September or till prices remain high. These stalls will sell other expensive vegetables as well. A rise in onion prices is expected but that should happen in August. If the rain is delayed further, the high prices will remain till October," he said. Surinder Sawhney, proprietor of Gujarat Onion Co said that April 15 to September 15 is a lean period for onions and they are often stocked to meet the demand then.

Admissions to 2 Pvt Agri Colleges Stopped

by S Mannar Mannan

Coimbatore: The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has stopped admission in two private agricultural colleges in Pollachi and Perambalur, after it was found that they were functioning without approval.

The TNAU also removed these two colleges from the ongoing single-window counselling for admission to undergraduate programmes.

Corrective measures are being taken, TNAU Vice Chancellor K Ramasamy told *Express* on Tuesday.

To start a private agricultural college, a trust or society has to first apply to the TNAU. The university will scrutinise the application, send an inspection committee to check the availability of facilities and faculty members to run the courses. Once the Board of Management gives its approval, the application will be forwarded to the state government, which will issue the necessary orders, based on the university's report, TNAU

sources said.

"These institutions were started when the university did not have a full-time vice chancellor and a person in charge of the post was administering the university. We are now taking corrective measures," Ramasamy said.

He compared the situation to polytechnic colleges running engineering degree programmes.

“These institutions were started when the university did not have a full-time vice chancellor and a person in charge of the post was administering the university

Theni; Imayam Institute of Agriculture and Technology, Thuraiyur; PGP College of Agricultural Science, Namakkal and RVS Agriculture College, Thanjavur - have been included in the ongoing single window counselling for the TNAU's undergraduate programmes.

Admissions to two colleges - Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru College of Agriculture and

--- **K RAMASAMY**, TNAU Vice Chancellor

Ramasamy also thanked three professors who had retired from the TNAU for helping to unearth the malpractices of these two private agricultural colleges.

TNAU has 11 constituent colleges and nine private colleges affiliated to it.

Only five colleges - Adhiparasakthi Agricultural College, Kalavai; College of Agricultural Technology,

Research Institute, Karaikal and the Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology, Thanjavur - will be made by the two institutions themselves.

"The colleges in Pollachi and Perambalur were not included in the counselling process as they did not have the necessary approval to function," said a TNAU official.