

2,500 acres to be covered under kuruvai package

Seed processing unit planned at Tirumanur at a cost of Rs. 37 lakh



Collector E.Saravanelraj inspecting solar-powered motor pumps at Tirumanur in Ariyalur district on Friday.— PHOTO: DIPR

About 2,500 acres will be covered under kuruvai special package in Ariyalur district during the crop season and State government has allocated Rs.1.02 crore for the scheme.The special scheme has been introduced in the district to encourage kuruvai cultivation through borewells and pumpsets in the areas which have comfortable groundwater, E.Saravanelraj, Collector, said.The Collector inspected the field of one Balamurugan, a farmer who has taken up mechanised transplantation of kuruvai nursery in his field. The Collector gave away nurseries to farmers covered under the scheme.At another field that belonged to Karthikeyan, the Collector inspected the motor operated with solar power used for irrigating sugarcane and paddy fields. The farmer had set up the green energy equipment at an expenditure of Rs. 3.99 lakh, including the State subsidy of Rs. 3.04 lakh.The Collector said a total of seven farmers had set up solar energy motors during 2012-13 and for the current year 20 beneficiaries had been identified of whom 11 had already set up green motors in their farms.

Later the Collector inspected the seed processing unit being set up in Tirumanur at an outlay of Rs. 37 lakh. Muralitharan, Deputy Director of Agriculture, Senthamizhselvan, Deputy Director, Watershed Area Development Programme, accompanied the Collector. Sandeep Saxena, State Agriculture Secretary, while addressing a meeting of the farmers of the delta districts recently had said that 500 beneficiaries had been covered in 10 villages in Ariyalur district under the Kuruvai special package scheme. More camps would be held in 31 centres. A total of 620 hectares had been covered: 20 under normal method and 600 under SRI method.

A success story in vegetable farming

Production touches 19,291 tonnes in 2013-14

The area under vegetable cultivation and the number of active farming clusters in the district have shown a considerable increase resulting in a striking increase in the total quantity of production in the last fiscal. As per the official records of the District Agriculture Department, production of vegetables, which stood at 4,140 tonnes in 2011-12, witnessed a multi-fold rise in the last fiscal with production touching 19,291 tonnes with a steady increase in the area under cultivation. Total production in 2012-13 was 6,224 tonnes. The area under vegetable farming is 1,677 hectares as per the consolidated figures released at the end of the last fiscal. In 2011-12, the area under vegetable cultivation was 460 hectares and in 2012-13, 707 hectares. Farming clusters, comprising both women and men, played a crucial role in the change in the production scenario. At present, no fewer than 160 farming clusters — each with at least 20 to 30 members — are part of the farming network as against the 60 clusters when the project was formally launched in 2010-11. “The situation in the district is truly an encouraging one as our efforts are finding results. Currently, we have a highly industrious group of farmers, who find it as an opportunity to venture into monsoon, winter

and summer vegetable farming,” says M. Abdul Latheef, Deputy Director of Agriculture. He says that it is summer farming — approximately in 250 hectares — that tops the chart with high yield.

Focus on marketing

The department is planning to invest more time and funds to strengthen the existing clusters with special focus on marketing of farm produce. Efforts are on to form of a marketing system like that of the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council, Kerala. In addition, 2014-15 will witness the formal enrolment of “ungraded clusters” — where individuals take-up small-scale farming without any external funding or support — with the approved farming clusters. Such clusters will be eligible for a fund of Rs.30,000 under the new scheme. Officials say that the project will contribute a great deal in supporting individual farming activities and indirectly result in the gradual increase in production.

Onion price leaves consumers teary-eyed

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA

Average price ranged between Rs. 22 and Rs. 27 a kg



Costly: Onion, on sale, in Coimbatore. -PHOTO: S. SIVA SARAVANAN

Prices of vegetables are on the rise again, forcing hotels and households to look at ways of bringing vegetable purchases under their monthly budget. M. Rajendran, president of Thyagi Kumaran Market Vegetable Merchants' Association, told *The Hindu* on Friday that the wholesale price of big onion in

Coimbatore was Rs. 27 a kg for the best quality. The average price ranged between Rs. 22 and Rs. 27 a kg. However, the prices are relatively low in Coimbatore compared to other cities. Coimbatore is getting its supply now from Maharashtra. For the next four months, supply from Maharashtra will be what the farmers and traders have in stock. However, the price quoted at the markets in Maharashtra now is Rs. 26 a kg and the transport cost is almost Rs. 4 a kg. So the traders here are selling at a lower price. There are about 25 wholesale traders in Coimbatore for onion and prices are relatively low because of competition. Supply from the farms in Tamil Nadu will start by the end of this month and from Karnataka by next month. Yet, prices of big onion are expected to go up in the coming days, he says. Though the prices of small onion are very less now, prices of potato are going up. The wholesale price for small onion is Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 a kg. For potato, it is Rs. 22 to Rs. 25 a kg and it is expected to go up further. Mr. Rajendran says that though south west monsoon has set in, rainfall was very less last month and this is expected to affect almost all the crops. Jegan S. Damodarasamy, executive director of Sree Annapoorna Hotel, says labour costs have almost tripled in the last three years. Now, with vegetables prices also shooting up, hotels are affected. For instance, the price of coriander has shot up to Rs. 100 a kg. Some food items such as coriander chutney or garnishing are common and with prices going up hotels have no choice but to relook at purchase of some of these items. "We are looking at measures to manage the costs," he says. Photo caption: Prices of onion and potato have shot up in the last few weeks.

Banana growers can breathe easy

S. GANESAN



Inside view of the banana cold storage godown at Thiruchendurai near Tiruchi.— PHOTO: R.M. RAJARATHINAM

EXTENDING LONGEVITY

- **3.83-lakh tonnes of bananas produced every year**
- **Facility established at a cost of Rs.4 crore**
- **Tiruchi Market Committee to hold auctions, bear operational expenditure**
- **Facility would help reduce post-harvest losses**
- **Farmers could store their produce for at least 10 days**

A 1,000-tonne cold storage facility opened at Thiruchendurai

The integrated banana commercial complex established at Thiruchendurai near Jeeyapuram in the district is expected to help farmers improve post-harvest handling of the fruit grown in the region. The facility, declared open by Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Monday, has been established at a cost of Rs. 4 crore with financial assistance under the National Agriculture Development Programme. The complex includes a 1,000-tonne capacity cold storage, cleaning, sorting, grading, and packaging areas. It will get uninterrupted power supply. The complex is easily accessible to farmers in the banana-growing belt of

the region along the Tiruchi-Karur stretch on the National Highway 67. Banana is raised on about 8,500 hectares of land normally and the yield is put at 3.83 lakh tonnes a year. While banana varieties such as *nendran* and *neipoovan*, which are in good demand in Kerala and Karnataka, are directly procured by traders from the field, farmers raising other varieties mostly transport their produce to Gandhi Market in the city. Farmers have to shell out up to 13 per cent commission charges to intermediaries who auction the banana at the market. The establishment of the integrated complex at Thiruchendurai could help farmers get better price as auctions were to be held here through the Tiruchi Market Committee, which would bear the operational expenditure of the facility. Sources in the Department of Agri Business and Marketing said the facility would help reduce post-harvest losses. Poor post-harvest handling of the fruits resulted in 20 to 30 per cent loss. Farmers could store their produce at the cold storage at a nominal cost. Auctions at the complex would begin soon. At present, the harvest season in the district was over and arrivals were lean. "The facility will benefit farmers of the region as open auction could fetch them better prices. Besides, farmers can store their produce for some days at the cold storage if they are not able to get good prices immediately. Farmers can store their produce at least for 10 days even though experts in the field say the fruits can be stored for about 30 days if processed properly," said A. Nagarajan, president, Tamil Nadu Horticulture Crop Producers Association.

Skymet revises prediction, says probability of drought is 60%

PHEROZE L. VINCENT

Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, M.P. are the worst hit States

Private weather forecaster Skymet has revised its previous prediction of probability of drought from 25 per cent in April, to 60 per cent now. drought is a deficiency of 10 per cent rainfall from the normal, cumulatively. Skymet predicts a

deficit of 9 per cent in rainfall with an error margin of four per cent. The driest parts of the country are North-West, West and Central India where the probability of drought ranges from 75 to 80 per cent and foodgrain output is expected to fall by more than 10 per cent. Skymet CEO Jatin Singh said: "Our prediction, which is based on data using several international models, is that there is a 60 per cent probability of overall drought and a 30 per cent probability of below normal rainfall. There is only a 10 per cent probability of normal rainfall." India has already seen a 43 per cent deficit this year. This is being attributed to the El Nino effect or the warming up of Pacific waters. The effect is expected to peak between November, 2014 and January, 2015, which could lead to deficient rainfall in Australia too. Mr. Singh added that as per data available right now, the drought was not as bad as 2002 and 2009 when India had 23 per cent deficient rainfall. The worst-hit States are Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. While the north western region is well irrigated, Central India is likely to suffer low Kharif output. "Production of soyabean in Madhya Pradesh and groundnut in Gujarat is expected to be hit. Overall food production may fall by 10 to 20 per cent. This will not have any impact on availability of food, as there are food reserves. But, it will result in loss leading to a fall in the gross domestic product and employment," D. R. Sikka, Chairman of the Scientific Review and Monitoring Committee of the National Monsoon Mission told *The Hindu*. After the release of the forecast, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said: "Right now it is not a panic situation... Signs are that some people will try to take advantage of this situation. So the benchmark of good governance is to anticipate the problem."

DC warns against sale of poor quality seeds

Deputy Commissioner D.K. Ravi on Thursday warned that action would be initiated against traders if they sold substandard seeds and caused loss to farmers. He was addressing a meeting of officers and farmers' representatives

following complaints about sale of substandard seeds by seed manufacturing companies. Mr. Ravi also suggested that the farmers demand receipts from the seed traders as well as nurseries, which would be helpful taking action against the errant in the event of cheating. Manjula, seeds section officer of the Department of Horticulture, explained about the laws regulating the seeds that stipulate supply of quality seeds to farmers. District Krishik Samaj president D.L. Nagaraj presided over the meeting.

Crop insurance extended till end of July



Crop damage through water logging or excess water, is one of the conditions for which farmers can claim insurance.— PHOTO: H.S. MANJUNATH

Paddy growers in Dakshina Kannada can enrol to claim crop insurance for this kharif season under the Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana till the end of July. Earlier, the government had fixed June end as the last date for enrolment, an official release said. While the insurance was mandatory to those who have availed a crop loan, farmeres without a loan could also claim insurance, the release said. Farmers under 172 gram panchayats except under Mangalore A hobli (city area) are eligible for enrolment. Agriculture Insurance Company of India implemented the scheme in Dakshina Kannada with an insurance amount of Rs. 30,909 per hectare. The premium amount is Rs. 618.18 (two per cent) per hectare during

registration. Farmers would have to inform the company within 48 hours of crop damage to claim the insurance.

Saplings for sale

Meanwhile, a release from the Department of Horticulture said that different varieties of saplings were available in its nurseries for sale to public. In its nursery at Padil in the city, saplings of Ullal-1 variety of cashew, coconut, mango and cocoa were available. In Puttur, saplings of jackfruit, black pepper, papaya, jasmine and drumstick were available in addition to the ones available at Padil. People can visit the department's nurseries at Thumbe, Vitla, Maddakka (Belthangady), Hosagadde (Sullia) and Charmadi to purchase them at the rates fixed by the department, the release added.

Permude farmers fear crop damage by proposed layout

Residents of Jantabettu near Permude on Thursday poured out woes before the Chief Executive Officer of Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat Thulasi Maddineni over artificial flooding in their fields because of a layout coming up at an elevated place. The residents expressed their anguish over Permude Panchayat allowing a layout to come up in a 16-acre plot located higher above them. A few days ago an embankment done on a portion of the proposed layout collapsed, resulting in the muddy water entering some paddy fields located downhill. Following complaints by residents, Ms. Maddineni had come to see the damage. "Last year too this embankment had collapsed and let muddy water damage paddy that was sown," said Loknath, a farmer. He said the silt accumulated on his field was now knee-high. "The paddy field tilling machine could not enter the sludgy field," he said. Taranath Shetty, another farmer, said the flow of muddy water had filled silt in the two open wells that were source of irrigation for the paddy fields. Residents fear damage to more land this year due to accumulation of silt. The former

president and current member of Permude Panchayat Sridhar Shetty said the panchayat gave permission for registration of about four of the 16 acres of land sold by the land owner to 18 persons despite opposition by residents. He accused the Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) of colluding with the land owner in allowing construction on the land. Ms. Maddineni directed the PDO to produce documents related to the plots likely to be affected by the embankment. "I will inquire into the allegations," Ms. Maddineni told reporters.

Weather-based insurance cover for more crops

R. RAMABHADHRAN PILLAI

Weather-based insurance cover is being extended to farmers in Kerala for the ongoing kharif season under the scheme formulated by Agricultural Insurance Company of India Limited, a Central government enterprise, in association with the State government. With the addition of nutmeg this year, more than 10 crops are covered under the scheme. The crops include paddy, pepper, cardamom, ginger, banana, sugarcane, pineapple, turmeric, coconut and arecanut. Insurance cover was provided to about 10,000 farmers during the last kharif season in Kerala. The scheme is applicable to all the districts except Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta where the farmers are covered under a different scheme. The claims under the scheme, introduced last year, are being settled, according to the company officials. Farmers who had taken loans from banks were covered under the compulsory insurance scheme of the banks, said D. Rajesh, head of the company in the State. Last year's monsoon was good and much damage had not been reported except in some pockets, he added, implying that the claims could be more this year in case the monsoon remains weak. About 140 weather stations are providing data across the State on weather conditions such as temperatures and rain. Parameters have been set by authorities for weather conditions suitable for each crop. Higher temperatures or deficit rain which could

affect each crop would indicate adverse climatic conditions, in which case, all the farmers who have registered under the scheme would be eligible for compensation. Weather stations set up by Indian Meteorological Department as well as Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK) are part of the network being utilized for recording the weather details.

101 ways to farm-fresh produce

JABIR MUSHTHARI

Under Niravu, vegetables will be grown on premises of 101 houses; excess produce will be sold

'Knowledge, art, and sweat for a better society,' is the slogan of Niravu Vengeri, a progressive residential forum here. Exemplifying its motto is a new project, conceived by its farmers' club with the help of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard). The project, titled 'Village Livelihood Safety Programme,' which was launched at Vengeri on Friday, by Ramesh Tenkil, Chief General Manager of Nabard, envisages producing items from vegetables to milk to spices at members' backyards and marketing them through a centralised system. All the 101 residents who are members of the club will cultivate vegetables, organically, on the premises of their houses. Each resident will grow five varieties, says Babu Parambath, project coordinator. Ten neighbourhoods will keep dairy units, comprising three cows, for milk and manure. The cowshed will be set up with financial aid from Nabard. The cows will be purchased with low-interest loans from Canara Bank, which is also associating with the project. There will be an outlet to sell the excess produce. "A vehicle will be purchased with financial assistance from Nabard to take the produce to different places. The outlet will be opened at Nadakkavu soon," says Mr. Parambath. A seed and sapling nursery too is part of the project.

Dual fruits of pineapple farming

MITHOSH JOSEPH



In the hilly regions of Kozhikode, pineapple cultivation is slowly catching on. At Thiruvambadi, Koodaranji, and Koombara, farmers lease out their land, mostly new rubber plantations, to seasoned pineapple cultivators. Two purposes are served — the fruit, planted as an intercrop, gives reasonable returns to both the landowner and the tenant; and it prevents soil erosion. K. Johnson, a farmer and the leader of a prominent farmers' organisation, says the trend has gained popularity in the past three years in the region. "Only a few landowners opt to cultivate pineapple. They usually lease out their property," he adds. In rural Kozhikode, landowners get a minimum of Rs.30,000 for leasing out one acre of land for a year for the intercrop cultivation. Young landowners say they enjoy several indirect benefits, other than the revenue they get as lease amount from cultivators. "If pineapple is grown in newly planted rubber estates, the manure used for the fruit crop will speed up the growth of rubber saplings," says Binu Jose, a farmer. A major benefit, farmers say, is that both landowner and the pineapple grower are equally rewarded. "Whatever be the price of the produce, the landowner is sure to get his lease amount and protection from soil erosion. If the season and demand are favourable, cultivators too enjoy a good harvest," they say.

TANUVAS yet to get new Vice-Chancellor

P. OPPILI

Eight months have passed since the last incumbent's tenure ended

Nearly eight months have passed since the tenure of the previous Vice-Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University expired, but the university still has no head. Sources in the Animal Husbandry Department said the tenure of the earlier Vice-Chancellor ended in October last. Even before this, the State government had announced the formation of a search committee with three members — A.K.K. Unni, Chairman, Research Coordination Division, Amritha Institute of Medicals Sciences and Research Centre, Kochi; Anil Kumar Srivastava, Director and Vice-Chancellor, National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal, Haryana; and Ajay Kumar Ghelot, Vice-Chancellor, Rajasthan Veterinary University. According to highly placed sources in the government, the search committee did recommend three names to the Governor in March, but the list was found “unsatisfactory.” Therefore, the government is forming a new committee that will submit a fresh list to the Governor, the sources say. In the meanwhile, the Animal Husbandry Department introduced a Bill to amend certain provisions of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University Act, 1989. Among the amendments recommended in the Bill, called the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (Amendment) Act 2014, is one to empower the government to appoint a person to the new search committee if the Chancellor is not happy with the panel of names suggested by the original committee. Earlier, the Chancellor would nominate one member, the Academic Council, one, and the Board, one. Instead of the board, it will now be the task of the government. Further, there was no provision to enable the government to nominate one member to the committee for selection of Vice-Chancellor. To ensure uniformity, the government decided to make a provision in the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University Act of 1989.

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 47.47 feet on Friday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 2,913 cusecs and the discharge 2,000 cusecs.

hindustantimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Saturday, Jul 5

Max Min

36° | 27°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:47

Humidity: 67

Sunset: 06:39

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Sunday, Jul 6

Max Min

39° | 29°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Jul 7

Jul 8

Jul 9

Jul 10

Jul 11



36° | 27°

37° | 28°

36° | 27°

37° | 27°

36° | 27°

Cloudy

Cloudy

Cloudy

Cloudy

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:28
Humidity: 67 Sunset: 07:22
Wind: normal Barometer: 1002



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

For a better MGNREGA

The scheme should be refocused towards creating durable assets in agriculture.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has a significant influence on agricultural operations and cultivation costs. If its present focus on community works can be reoriented to proactively promote improvements on the landholdings of small and marginal farmers through the creation of durable assets, it will be beneficial for agricultural productivity and incomes. Critics say that the MGNREGS draws labour away from agricultural operations and hikes up costs through increased wages. They hold that leakages and corruption have vitiated rural work culture and the assets generated do not justify the huge expenditure (budget outlay of Rs 33,000 crore in 2013-14). Supporters see a model of inclusive development, creating durable assets. The scheme is credited for mitigating distress migration, improving household food security, enhancing the bargaining power of rural labour, generating “green employment” and fostering climate-resilient agriculture.

The linkage of the MGNREGS with agriculture is in-built in the legislation. Permissible works include land development and soil conservation, water harvesting, irrigation provisioning, drought proofing, horticulture, tree-plantation

and afforestation. Works under the MGNREGS can be taken up on both community and private lands. Small and marginal farmers, SC/ST and Indira Awaas Yojana beneficiaries are eligible for taking up works on their own lands. Some people think durable assets mean only brick and mortar structures. But a different school of thought recognises that a rejuvenated and replenished natural resource base — land, water, biodiversity — is an even more valuable asset. For the lives and livelihoods of millions of small holder farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers, herders and fisher folk depend upon the productive capacity of these natural resources. The thrust of the MGNREGS in the past eight years has been to open up works on community lands. The proportion, last year, of works taken up on private lands was a mere 11 per cent. This needs to be raised to at least 50 per cent. The impetus to agriculture will be triggered when there is greater asset creation on individual farms. Such a shift in emphasis would incentivise small holders to take up works leading to restoration and revitalisation of their own farmland, higher productivity and consequently more agricultural employment. Landless unskilled labour could benefit from the additional employment generated from small farms and also continue to supplement their income from the MGNREGS, albeit on a lesser scale. The productive value of small landholdings could be enhanced further with material and technical inputs from effective convergence with other ongoing agricultural development programmes such as the National Food Security Mission, the horticulture mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission and the National Agroforestry Policy. A study on the creation of assets on the lands of small and marginal farmers, SC/ST and Indira Awaas Yojana beneficiaries in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha,

Five key policy measures Narendra Modi government can take to revive India's economic growth

The India story stands at the door of opportunity. Although growth has slowed in the last five years, at 4.5-5 per cent levels, it is still above that of the OECD markets and most of our Brics counterparts. The new government must seize the day. To this end, five key policy measures can help revive India's growth. India's 300 bps slowdown in growth can be decomposed into four factors: global downturn (c. 150 bps), monetary tightening (c. 75 bps), slowdown in capex (c. 50 bps) and weather shocks (c. 25 bps). The global economy is unlikely to turn around till 2015. An El Nino can slow down growth by as much as 50-75 bps, push up consumer price index and, as a result, delay RBI rate cuts. This means that the new government will have to focus on creating enabling conditions for the RBI to cut rates on the one hand and improve investment climate on the other. The government must focus on improving the supply chain in agriculture to douse agflation and strengthen rural incomes and, by extension, rural demand. Extension of FDI in retail should help in this process. Second, amendments to the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act should help foster greater competition in agricultural markets and bring down prices. Third, there will have to be greater thrust to create agricultural infrastructure in terms of cold storages, etc. Finally, deepening of financial inclusion will bring succour to the rural poor. The government must spearhead revival of investment.

First, a friendly manufacturing policy coupled with an effective land acquisition Act and a clear and transparent tax regime will improve the investment climate. Greater thrust to encourage and partner in game-changing bigticket infrastructure projects and implementation of time-bound single-window clearance mechanism is the need of the hour. Encouraging FDI in defence will attract flows and help strengthen security. The insurance industry has seen years of investments from foreign partners who have helped us develop a good insurance industry. It is time for us to relax FII/FDI cap in insurance to 49 per cent. Then, we must implement the new goods and services tax (GST) regime. This should replace all indirect taxes levied on goods and services by the central and state governments. This, in turn, will help cut down transportation time and help to speed up growth. Fourth, the government must curtail twin deficits that often pose a concern to asset allocators that deploy global capital. This should prevent any further downgrade by international rating agencies.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Farm labourers to get jobs if rain plays spoilsport

The district agriculture department has prepared a plan worth Rs 3.19 crore to provide employment opportunities to agriculture labourers in the district. The plan comprises initiating soil and conservation projects at 2,000 places in the district. Officials said the plan is being prepared to tackle adverse conditions that may arise if monsoon fails to arrive by July 15. The department has conducted a review in the district and said the agriculture conditions may worsen in the eastern parts such as Hatkanangale and Shirol taluka in the next 10-12 days.

Around 3-4 lakh people are dependent on daily wages by working in farms. The delay in arrival of monsoon has hit their families hard. Anticipating tough days in the coming months, the agriculture department has started taking steps in this direction. According to the plan, the department has authorised the gram panchayats (individually or jointly with other villages) to take a call on implementing soil and conservation project in the 8-km periphery. The gram panchayats will send their requirement to the district agriculture office, which will allot them work order and funds, an official said. The agriculture office has also written a letter to the water resources department to use at least one rotation through out the district for irrigation. One rotation requires 3 thousand million cubic feet (TMC) water for the district. The district has just over 6 TMC water available in its dams. With light showers recorded in the western parts such as Gaganbavda and Radhanagari, the agriculture department was briefly relieved. However, if the monsoon is delayed by 10 more days, the paddy crops will be lost totally, the official said. Hence, the agriculture department consulted the city-based Agriculture College last week and has also prepared an alternative crop pattern for the district. "We are prepared for the worst possible condition. We have also planned re-sowing of paddy, if needed," said Mohan Atole, district agriculture officer. Besides Mahabeej, the department is reaching out to private seed supplying companies to make arrangements for re-sowing. "In the worst case scenario, we will be able to supply 30% seeds immediately to the farmers," Atole added. We are facing the worst crisis in the district. In 2011-12, when almost all parts of the state were reeling under severe drought, Kolhapur received good rainfall. This year, the rain has dropped to 40% of its long term June average. However, we have prepared alternative plans to save agriculture business."

Veggie prices are high and quality is low

Skyrocketing prices of vegetables in the city are once again upsetting the budgets of common people. The prices, which had already climbed up by 25-50% about two months ago, posted similar hike on Thursday. The rates of vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes and onions are flying high in the markets and are expected to go still higher in the coming days. Hotelier Murthy said tomato prices have shot up drastically. "A fortnight ago, I had brought them for Rs 8- 10, but now it has gone up to Rs 30-40. Even many vegetables are witnessing a high price. I have reduced the quantity of vegetable pulao, though demand is high for the item. But I cannot serve them at the usual normal price now," he said, adding that burden is high on people who run eateries like him. Shanthamma, a homemaker, said though prices are high, quality of vegetables is low. Shopping for vegetables at the Doddakere market, she griped, "I am not getting good quality tomato and many vegetables are bad. Sellers say they don't get vegetables. I have reduced the quantity of vegetables to manage my budget. Prices are too high. I purchased only a kilo of tomato, beans and few bunches of green leaves and they cost me Rs 100." Other than tomatoes, potatoes and onions, prices of many other vegetables are also seeing drastic hike as the supply has been severely affected. Retailers and wholesalers said vegetables arriving in the wholesale market declined around 25-30% than normal, thereby pushing the prices by 25-50%. Though the quality of vegetables is low due to drought situation and diseases, prices are high due to lack of supply, they say. Kumar, a retailer at Devaraja Market, said farmers and vegetable suppliers are anticipating tough situation leading to escalation in prices. "The rates of tomatoes, onions, potatoes and carrots have almost doubled in last 15 days," he said. Prices normally go up due to monsoon season and month of Aashada. But this hike is due to uncertainty over rains and due to diseases like root rots. Low quality seeds are the reason for various diseases,

said a farmer and wholeseller, Siddaraju from Airahalli. Another retailer Manju from Bilikere said the increase in cost of transportation had also contributed to rise in prices. "Increased goods vehicle charges and hike in petrol and diesel rates have also forced the retailers to hike the prices," he said. Hopcoms managing director K D Krishnamurthy says it is demand versus supply factor that is playing. There is no problem for market, but supply hits the market due to delay in rains, poor quality of seedlings. "Compared to last month there is around 25% to 30% rise in price of various vegetables. Tomatoes, potatoes and onions are at worst hit," he said, predicting the prices may further go up. The rise in onion prices is due to heavy demand in neighbouring states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, he said, adding, "Hundreds of tonnes of onion are exported to neighbouring states causing huge demand," he said. Only good monsoon can bring back the situation back to normal, he opined.

Sugar mills told to pay cane dues to farmers by July 31

The state sugarcane industries department has issued an ultimatum to the sugar mills in the state, declaring July 31 as the deadline for settling the bills of cane farmers for the crushing year 2013-14. Sugarcane industries minister Ranju Geeta on Friday said appropriate actions would be taken against sugar mill owners if they failed to clear the dues of the farmers in time. Addressing newsmen after a meeting with department officials and GMs of the mills, the minister said bills amounting to Rs 70 crore were settled last month. "But I'm not happy with the progress," Geeta said and added the mills owe Rs 489 crore to the cane growers. Geeta said the government had agreed that the mills could pay in cash to the farmers if the amount was up to Rs 20,000. "It was earlier decided that cane growers would be paid through bank transfers or account payee cheques. Since many farmers do not have bank accounts, we have allowed the relaxation only for the crushing season 2013-14," she said adding the mill officials were instructed to provide assistance to farmers in opening their

accounts. The department has also made arrangement for regular monitoring of the payments by the joint cane commissioner and other officials to avoid irregularities in the cash transactions. "The mill owners have given a number of excuses like low rate of sugar etc, but we will no longer entertain excuses," Geeta said.